HEARING STATEMENT ON PROPOSED MAIN MODIFICATION MM74

On behalf of the Danworth Lane Action Group

INTRODUCTION

This statement relates primarily to MM74 Land North of Willow Way and Talbot Mead, Cuckfield Road. However, as requested by the agenda, the wider area and other allocations are referred to, by way of illustration of the lived experience, effects on "place" characteristics and the effects on the local road network, across the historic village of Hurstpierpoint.

As an appendix to this statement, we include references to the NPPF (December 2023) where we would ask that the overall soundness of the plan is considered.

A. MOVEMENT

Access points - From the developer's Regulation 18 Representations and other documents we are not fully clear regarding access points, however we understand that the proposed development would be accessed from two junctions on the Cuckfield Road, with possibly a road access/egress point on Chalkers Lane.

If there is indeed a vehicular access from the development on to Chalkers Lane, we would ask that early engagement with Development Control is sought, to consider the suitability and sustainability of this proposed arrangement. During peak times for dropping off and pick-up at Hurstpierpoint College it is highly likely that this through route would experience the same congestion as Chalkers Lane currently.

Furthermore, the proposed development would place considerable additional load on the parts of Cuckfield Road immediately to the north of the existing built-up area boundary, where there is no footpath. This land features a key water course, taking the surface water discharge from surrounding fields, built up areas and further afield, through areas releasing into the stream that passes under Chalkers Lane and follows the existing BUAB to the west past Talbot Mead, under Cuckfield Road and past Court Bushes recreation ground. This stream already floods along its length and the flood risk surrounding this stream is well documented across consultation submissions and would be added to by the new discharge from MM74. *Reference in Appendix 1 Infrastructure and Drainage Capacity.*



Flooding at the stream under Chalkers Lane, which is the southern boundary of MM74 – 27th January 2026

Effects on the road network - The consultation representations made by our Parish Council, the Hurstpierpoint Society and other local groups and individuals, have clearly illustrated the significant strength of feeling and practical problems with regard to further increases in the loading of a range of local roads within Hurstpierpoint and the surrounding area, given the quantum of Main Modification additions to the MSDC Draft District Plan. Simply put, the road network of Hurstpierpoint can already barely cope with the traffic using the roads and streets.

The traffic study commissioned by the Hurstpierpoint Society gives a great deal of factual detail on the potential impacts of traffic, based on in-combination effects on local roads and we support fully the findings of that study. We would like to expand further on the quality and depth of the In-Combination Testing of Transportation, within the original draft Plan and subsequent additional testing carried out in the middle of 2026. In-combination testing, has been carried out at a limited "strategic" level, studying Stone Pound junction at Hassocks and the slip-roads from the A23. As we have long observed, the in-combination testing of transport must include local road impacts such as at Hurstpierpoint College and commercial developments, to properly reflect the lived experience of residents, new residents and visitors.

We believe that Chalkers Lane has not received sufficient coverage in studies, including the traffic study mentioned above. Residents who have lived on the lane for over 30 years report that traffic has increased significantly. The number of pupils attending the College has grown over the last 20 years from 600 to 1350 alone. The College has 480 staff and with daily trips for students/staff we estimate 3,500 vehicle movement daily are likely being made, this manifests very clearly on Chalkers Lane and surrounding roads. In previous submissions we have shown the huge congestion at peak times, caused by a combination of the school run and commuters traveling to/from Burgess Hill and Hassocks. Parents who live on Danworth and Chalkers already find these roads too dangerous to walk their children into school – an issue recently covered on BBC Sussex. *Reference in Appendix 1 Transport Evidence at the Relevant Scale.*



Chalkers Lane and Danworth Lane junction 3rd September 2026 0820 hrs

The increased loading of Chalkers Lane with cars, buses and construction vehicles continue to provide a maintenance burden on the lane with severe misshaping of the road indicating base-level failures and the inevitable failure of key utility services serving properties. Through October 2026, Chalkers Lane and Danworth Lane are undergoing significant emergency gas works due to leaks from fractured mains along the lanes. Flooding and surface water issues are prevalent during large parts of the year due to capacity of and damaged to drainage apparatus across the drainage network, freshwater equipment and sewerage apparatus. Further loading of rural lanes cannot continue in this way. The "evolved" road network that we have was never designed to accommodate the traffic levels we now have, let alone further significant housing increases generated by a District Plan across the immediate parish area, of over 50%.

Road safety and mitigation measures – Many of the safety points we feel should be emphasised, go hand in hand with the above points of significant increases in traffic that will be put on the roads of Hurstpierpoint, due to the development of this MM74 allocation, in combination with other allocations and approved locations (DPSC1).

The draft plan relies heavily on road risk and traffic congestion being reduced by the further development of Active Travel principles and uptake of Public Transport. We see no innovative approaches to road risk (apart from the unconnected 20 mph study for local roads, which would not address volume of traffic) in any of the draft plan documents, only the repetition of Active Travel and Public Transport as the answer District-wide.

The draft Infrastructure Development Plan appears to give little or no reassurance that there is any capital infrastructure development currently considered. Besides that, we would observe as residents, that the local roads in question are not able to receive engineering solutions such as widening, signal-controlled junctions, safety realignments, footpaths and other amenity for non-motorised users. Many roads pass through conservation areas, are bounded by private owners over long lengths, and are in areas where topography alone would make adequate development to reduce risk, unfeasible.

Our final point about road safety and risk is a heartfelt plea from our Danworth Lane Action Group. As provided in our consultation representation submission, we have for some time campaigned to achieve a safe route for residents. Many young families live in this area and encourage Active Travel, only to be met with unsafe roads. The situation already feels fraught daily, without additional traffic.

Sustainable travel and the footpath network, including the ability to deliver policy requirements – new Policy Requirements include provision of some new footpaths in the area of Chalkers Lane and Danworth Lane to give access to connecting footpaths and public transport. We would highlight that MM74 policy requirements do not meet all the access issues that local Chalkers Lane and Danworth Lane residents have. The MM74 policy requirements do not extend footpath mitigations east along Chalkers Lane to allow all properties to have a safe route to walk/cycle. *Reference in Appendix 1 Highway Mitigation and Access and Consistent with National Policy – Safety and Accessibility.*

We understand MSDC is guided by the concept of the ’20-minute community’. The MM74 site would not adhere to this. The nearest amenities and facilities are on Hurstpierpoint High Street, which (from lived experience) is at least 20-30 minute walk away from the site. It is not realistic for all potential future residents to cycle (e.g. many are prohibited from doing this if they have young family members with them, or health problems) Additionally, bicycle storage in the village is limited. Hence, it is inevitable that residents will rely on cars to travel to the village and beyond; the vision of active travel at this site is not demonstrated to be realistic when considering the demands on modern families. Additionally, with the increased traffic this and other sites will bring to Cuckfield Road, cycling will become increasingly unsafe, this appears inconsistent with paragraph 109 of the December 2023 NPPF, which requires significant development to be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. It also raises questions under paragraphs 114 and 116 as to whether appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport have genuinely been taken up and whether safe and suitable provision for pedestrian and cycle movements can realistically be achieved at this site. *Reference in Appendix 1 Consistency with National Policy – Sustainable Location, and Consistency with Local Policy – 20-Minute Neighbourhood and Connectivity.*

For wider policy requirements we would question the inclusion of blanket mitigations and requirements throughout the Plan, such as one that is frequently stated across the Draft Plan that is “Improvements at Hassocks Station”. It would be expected that much further detail, measured and quantified, would be provided as evidence of how such improvements could reasonably mitigate the increased traffic and use, from significant upscaling of housing. *Reference in Appendix 1 Infrastructure Needs Alongside Housing.*

B. VILLAGE CHARACTER, HERITAGE AND THE COUNTRYSIDE

Effect on the separate identity of settlements – Appendix 4 of the SSP3 documents (Site Selection Conclusions (2024), states that the Council has previously rejected the MM74 site as not being suitable for allocation in the District Plan 2021-2039 due to the 'potential for this site to contribute to the coalescence of settlements which is in conflict with the strategic objectives of the Plan." The Council previously considered the risk sufficiently serious to make the site unsuitable for allocation. We ask, therefore, what evidence, if any, has the Council produced to demonstrate that its original concerns about settlement coalescence have been satisfactorily addressed? Has the Council undertaken a new landscape and settlement coalescence assessment that explains this, previously considered unsuitable for allocation, is now acceptable? *Reference in Appendix 1 Reversal of Site Selection Decision.*

Coalescence must be considered by looking at the cumulative impact of allowing MM60 and MM74 (together with DPSC1). Doing so would reduce the gap of agricultural countryside currently separating Burgess Hill and Hurstpierpoint from around 1.5km to less than 500m, much of which is already occupied by Hurstpierpoint College. The two new allocations would, in combination with the College, form a single continuous block of development extending from the existing edge of Burgess Hill to the main residential areas of Hurstpierpoint, causing the effective merger of the two settlements.

Currently there is a clear line marking the built-up area around the southern section of Burgess Hill that is defined by Jane Murray Way. The two parcels of MM60 will extend that into a tongue of developments with no clearly defined boundary. There will be an inevitable loss of a clear sense of leaving one area and entering another, as the development at MM74 will merge traffic along Danworth Lane into the western section of MM60 which will then merge along another busy connecting road to the eastern section of MM60 – there will be no clear sense of leaving Hurstpierpoint and entering Burgess Hill.

MM74's proposed allocation includes a landscape buffer along the northern and northeastern boundaries to minimise the perception of coalescence with Burgess Hill. However, it is important to distinguish between mitigating the *visual perception* of settlement coalescence and preventing the *physical merging* of settlements. *Reference in Appendix 1 Cumulative Site Separation and Landscape Effects.*

Hurstpierpoint is a historic village that is mentioned in the Doomsday Book of 1086 and the home to many historic buildings, conservation areas and a gateway to the South Downs National Park. It attracts people who value its character as a traditional Sussex village and enjoy access to it. Travelling south towards the village and towards the South Downs, you are greeted by wonderful views across the village including the beautiful buildings of Hurstpierpoint College, the ancient Holy Trinity Church at the heart of our village, and the South Downs and Wolstonbury Hill to the south. If MM74 is allowed to proceed, the impression visitors will get will be the advancement of urbanisation in a rural and historic Sussex setting.

In the Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2015, the northern built-up area boundary (BUAB), of Hurstpierpoint was changed, moving it further north towards Goddards Green with the establishment of the Talbot Mead and Hurstbeech Close development. That is now up for further redefinition, stretching further north, east and west across the northern side of the village. This illustrates continued creep and erosion of the separation of settlements.

Residents ask that the Inspector does not allow any further redefinition of the northern BUAB in Hurstpierpoint, to retain the character of our village and prevent coalescence with Burgess Hill and the industrial areas adjoining the A2300.

Effects on heritage assets – as highlighted in detail by the Hurstpierpoint Society and Parish Council, Hurstpierpoint is rich in heritage, conservation areas and listed properties. The High Street is part of a significant conservation area in the village and Danny House Estate is currently

seeking conservation status as a significant heritage asset to the south of the village. All of this points to the depth of heritage and historic importance of Hurstpierpoint.

We believe that if MM74 and other developments in the village are allowed to be built, the strain placed on infrastructure through and around such historic areas, will compromise the heritage assets themselves with increase pollution, vibrations from traffic, and inevitable ongoing utility maintenance. By surrounding heritage assets with new development, the character and intrinsic value of such buildings and structures will become less accessible, and less a visible part of our historic village.

Countryside and wildlife - Outside of built assets and areas of conservation, Hurstpierpoint bounds historic open countryside of significant importance. The South Downs National Park is directly adjacent to the village. Lesser-known historic areas include the Sussex Low Weald and in particular its southern arc that encompasses Hurstpierpoint and Burgess Hill. The nature and character of Hurstpierpoint is defined by its position within the Low Weald, providing beautiful Sussex countryside, a wonderful backdrop to the historic buildings and the quiet, rural nature of our village. MM74 as proposed is directly adjacent to open, green countryside in this area and ultimately detracts from the value of this natural asset.

The countryside is home to flora and fauna which has been commented on throughout previous submissions by many groups and people, with specific reference to MM74, the land north of Hurstpierpoint is home to many countryside animals. With the thick woodland coppices and the ponds formed by the Low Weald clay sub-strata, the area is a rich habitat attracting rare bats, dormice, badgers, mice, grass snakes and great-crested newts. Roe Deer and Fallow Deer are common in the area and live in harmony with the many breeds of grazing livestock to the north of the village and all around Hurstpierpoint.

C. INFRASTRUCTURE

The subject of infrastructure has been included in several areas of this statement. The single most important point that we wish to raise, and the main impediment to delivery, is that Hurstpierpoint and its surrounding local road network cannot be engineered to adequately and sustainably receive the additional traffic that MM74 and other proposed allocations would bring. Areas where infrastructure could develop to be of adequate capacity and safety, would need land-take from many private landowners, and/or encroach on protected areas throughout the village.

Utilities and any potential impediment to delivery - With regard to public utilities, a large number of previous submissions have illustrated clearly the inadequacy of the local utility infrastructure: local water treatment plants, existing discharges to watercourses, drainage assets, fresh water supply sustainability, and the general integrity or lack of it, with aged utility assets. As we stand today, the village has significant numbers of utility problems of capacity, integrity and basic functionality. We do not understand what measures are being sought from developments to mitigate more widely the problems of a village where new development will only add to the burden on already inadequate utility assets. *Reference in Appendix 1 Infrastructure and Drainage Capacity and Infrastructure Needs Alongside Housing.*

IN CONCLUSION

Hurstpierpoint is a historic, rural village that is clinging on to its identity as an important rural asset. The sense of “place” remains in the village due to the resilience of residents of many generations who make it work. The lived experience in Hurstpierpoint has changed, while the essence of living in Hurstpierpoint retains the character of our unique place. It attracts visitors who love the rural idyll of Sussex, and the countryside of the Low Weald and South Downs surrounding it.

MM60, DPSC1 and MM74 must be evaluated cumulatively. When viewed together, these proposals would place huge additional pressure on the already stretched local road network,

reduce the actual separation between settlements and alter the character of the countryside between Burgess Hill and Hurstpierpoint, and Hurstpierpoint itself.

While development is inevitable and our country needs to provide for its population – Hurstpierpoint has provided additional housing developments over recent years – this new pace of accelerated development seems wholly disproportionate to the area and not sustainable when considering local road networks, amenities and infrastructure. The villagers of Hurstpierpoint are asking that our heartfelt plea is heard and understood by the Inspector, and more realistic recommendations are made to MSDC as a result. We expect change wherever we live, but not at such cost, with physical coalescence and the eventual closing of greenfield countryside gaps between settlements. The impacts of over-development cannot be corrected later if habitats and quality of life are destroyed.

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Attendance

It is proposed that the following members of Danworth Lane Action Group will attend the hearing, and one will make oral submissions on behalf of the Group in addition to the points raised above:

Rob Gillespie
Kevin Maddeman
Susannah Jenner

16th October 2026

APPENDIX 1

References to December 2023 NPPF measures of soundness.

Soundness of MM74: matters for the Inspector

We ask the Inspector to consider the following potential deficiencies against the four tests of soundness in paragraph 35 of the December 2023 NPPF. These are matters requiring a clear evidential response, rather than assertions that an individual concern automatically makes the allocation unsound.

• **Justified — reversal of the site-selection decision.** The Council previously found SHELAA 1075 unsuitable because of settlement coalescence. The revised allocation should identify what new landscape evidence, changed circumstances or mitigation now outweigh that concern, and why reasonable alternatives are less appropriate (NPPF paragraph 35).

• **Justified — cumulative settlement separation and landscape effects.** The combined effect of MM74, MM60 and development west of Burgess Hill should be assessed, including the remaining physical and perceived gap. A landscape buffer addressing views alone may not resolve the earlier coalescence objection (NPPF paragraph 35; national policy on valued landscapes and local character).

• **Justified — transport evidence at the relevant scale.** The Council should explain how its strategic in-combination modelling captures peak-time conditions, junction safety and potential diversion onto Chalkers Lane, Danworth Lane and Cuckfield Road, alongside the other allocations (NPPF paragraphs 35 and 114).

• **Justified — Sustainability Appraisal and reasonable alternatives.** The site-selection and Sustainability Appraisal evidence should explain how adverse transport, landscape, drainage and other effects were weighed against reasonable alternative locations, and whether cumulative effects alter the conclusion (NPPF paragraph 35).

• **Effective — deliverable safe walking and cycling links.** MM74 relies on pedestrian and cycle connections, but the statement identifies missing footways on Chalkers Lane and Danworth Lane. The Council should establish the precise works, land control, funding and delivery timescales needed to make routes safe and continuous (NPPF paragraphs 35, 114 and 116).

• **Effective — highway mitigation and access.** The allocation should demonstrate that proposed Cuckfield Road junctions and any Chalkers Lane connection are feasible and safe and clarify whether the latter is for vehicles or active travel only. Indicative promoter drawings should not substitute for an evidenced delivery strategy (NPPF paragraphs 35 and 114).

• **Effective — infrastructure and drainage capacity.** The Council should show that road, drainage, wastewater and other necessary upgrades can be funded and delivered in step with occupation, taking account of existing constraints and cumulative growth (NPPF paragraph 35).

• **Consistent with national policy — sustainable location.** The reported 20–30-minute walk to village services and limited practical cycling options raise questions about whether MM74 offers genuine travel choices and limits car dependency. This requires assessment of actual routes and services, not a rigid 10-minute distance test (NPPF paragraph 109).

• **Consistent with national policy — safety and accessibility.** Uninterrupted, accessible walking and cycling routes for children, families and less-mobile users should be demonstrated before reliance is placed on active travel to mitigate traffic impacts (NPPF paragraphs 114 and 116).

• **Consistent with local policy — 20-minute neighbourhood and connectivity.** The Council should explain how MM74 meets the proportionate ambitions of emerging Policies DPB1 and

DPT1, including safe links to daily services and public transport; these policies do not impose an absolute walking-time threshold.

• **Consistent with national policy — environment and heritage.** The cumulative effects on local landscape character, nearby heritage settings, watercourses and habitats should be addressed through proportionate evidence and deliverable mitigation, rather than relying solely on later application-stage assessment.

• **Positively prepared — infrastructure needs alongside housing.** The additional homes should be accompanied by a credible strategy for the transport and community infrastructure they require; this is a question for the overall plan strategy as well as MM74 (NPPF paragraph 35).

Unless the Council can demonstrate through proportionate, site-specific and cumulative evidence that these matters have been adequately resolved, we ask the Inspector to consider whether MM74 is justified, effective and consistent with national policy, and whether its infrastructure requirements support a positively prepared plan.