

Examination into the soundness of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2039

Matters and Issues for Examination

Preamble

It is important to read the accompanying Inspector's Guidance Note which sets out details of the organisation of the examination and the hearings.

The plan will be examined under the transitional arrangements set out in paragraphs 234 and 235 of the December 2024 National Planning Policy Framework. That includes the pre-December 2024 standard method for calculating local housing need. Thus the relevant policies for the purposes of the examination will be those in the December 2023 Framework.

The questions below are the key matters and issues that relate to the plan's soundness. Together with my associated comments, they should be addressed by the Council and other relevant parties in their hearing statements.

I have not referred to every policy or allocation and have not addressed every aspect of the plan. The questions only concern those matters that I need to know more about at this stage.

I have separately commented in writing on the soundness of particular development management policies and have invited the Council to draft revised wording where this is necessary for soundness. As these matters are being addressed in writing I do not intend to hold a general hearing session on development management policies.

Following recent government announcements I will not be holding a hearing session on the duty to cooperate although I will consider alignment with neighbouring authorities as part of the discussions on housing and other matters.

From my reading of the plan and representations, my preliminary conclusion is that the plan's preparation has complied generally with the necessary legal requirements and I have therefore not included these in my matters and issues.

After the hearing statements have been received and the number of participants is known, I will issue an agenda for the hearings with approximate timings. If I consider that any matter has been satisfactorily addressed in the written statements it will not be included in the agenda for the hearings. The questions below are therefore likely to be refined and/or reduced in extent for the hearings.

A number of landowners and developers seek to promote sites that have not been allocated in the submitted plan. It is the purpose of the examination to

consider the soundness of the submitted plan, not to consider sites that have not been allocated (“omission sites”), so time will not be allocated to omission sites in the hearings. However, the overall soundness of the spatial strategy will be scrutinised.

Matters and Issues

1. The housing requirement

Whether the plan's housing requirement makes sufficient provision for new homes.

- a) Local housing need
- b) Unmet need from neighbouring authorities and its effect on the plan's housing requirement
- c) Whether the housing requirement needs to be uplifted to meet any other need such as that for affordable housing
- d) Whether a stepped requirement is appropriate

2. Housing supply and headroom

Whether enough housing land has been allocated to ensure that, along with existing permissions and commitments, enough housing land will come forward to meet the housing requirement through the life of the plan and that a 5 year housing land supply will be maintained.

- a) Anticipated housing supply over the plan period
- b) The amount of potential supply headroom over and above the housing requirement
- c) The supply trajectory over the plan period
- d) The potential for lower than anticipated supply arising from delivery impediments, longer lead in times and slower build out rates
- e) The resilience of the plan against such contingencies
- f) The 5 year housing land supply position at adoption
- g) The ability to maintain a rolling 5 year housing land supply

3. Homes to meet the needs of all the community

Whether the plan's policies will enable enough homes to come forward to meet the needs of all groups.

- a) The plan's proposals in respect of a mix of sizes and types of home
- b) Affordable housing
- c) Homes for older people
- d) The provision of accessible homes
- e) The provision of student accommodation and other specialist accommodation.
- f) Self-build and custom homes.
- g) Rural housing
- h) Rural exception sites
- i) Sites to meet the accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.

4. Meeting business and industrial needs

Whether business and industrial needs are adequately catered for by the plan.

- a) Existing commitments and whether the plan makes sufficient provision for business and industrial needs
- b) The approach to distribution, including strategic distribution
- c) The existence of any growth sectors or clusters and the plan's approach to them
- d) The plan's approach towards high tech operations, laboratories, R&D and data centres
- e) The approach to, and provision for, retail need
- f) Flexibility towards changes of use (dealt with primarily in writing)
- g) Whether the plan sufficiently supports rural business (dealt with primarily in writing)

5. The spatial strategy

The effectiveness and soundness of the proposed distribution of new development in meeting social, economic and environmental objectives, whether it will achieve more than the sum of its parts and whether it will amount to positive planning.

- a) Whether the plan's apportionment of development to larger and smaller settlements and freestanding allocations, and to different sizes of site, is effective in ensuring delivery and in meeting community needs
- b) The relationship between the spatial strategy and transport objectives, transport infrastructure and transport constraints
- c) Whether the spatial strategy takes an appropriate approach, at the strategic level, towards climate change mitigation, countryside protection, environmental protection, flood risk and heritage

(Detailed site-specific matters will be dealt with separately in relation to the individual sites.)

6. The selection of sites for allocation in the plan

The rationality and effectiveness of the site selection process.

- a) The soundness of the process which led to the inclusion of site allocations in the plan and the exclusion of other sites, including the consideration of mitigation measures to address constraints
- b) The rationale behind the selection of the strategic and larger site allocations

7. Site allocations

For each of sites DPSC1, DPSC2, DCSP3, DCSP4, DCSP5, DCSP6, DPSC7, DPA7 and DPA12

Whether the plan adequately lays the framework for the sustainable development of each site.

- a) How good urban design would be created, including good building design, legible layouts, attractive streets and open spaces, active frontages, the integration of sustainable transport and climate change mitigation
- b) The implications for the wider transport network (including the impact on nearby communities) and how necessary mitigation measures would be delivered
- c) The implications for the impact on, and provision of, social and community facilities (such as schools and health facilities) and how necessary new facilities would be funded and provided
- d) The implications for access to retail and employment centres
- e) The effect on the appearance of the area including the character of the countryside, taking into account any mitigation measures
- f) The protection of wildlife and biodiversity and opportunities for enhancement
- g) The protection of heritage assets
- h) The funding and delivery of necessary infrastructure and other necessary mitigation measures
- i) The position regarding the existing condition of the site and its deliverability
- j) Whether the Council's assumptions are realistic in respect of densities, start dates, number of suggested outlets and build out rates, and hence the delivery trajectory

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INSPECTOR

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