Dear Inspector Bore

Mid Sussex District Local Plan Examination (2021 - 2039)

Hearing Statement of Hassocks Parish Council in Relation to Main Modification MM71: Land West of Ockley Lane, Hassocks

We would like to make the following additional points regarding the proposed Main Modifications, in particular MM71, and the effect on the soundness of the submission local plan.

a) Landscape and Coalescence

We maintain our objection to MM71 on the basis that it would erode the gap between Hassocks and Burgess Hill and inevitably lead to the coalescence of the two settlements.

The photograph below was taken from Batchelors Field (an area of public open space owned by Burgess Hill Town Council) in October 2026, looking south across the MM71 site towards the recently constructed Ockley Park development of 500 homes. It demonstrates how Ockley Park creates a highly visible new urban edge to Hassocks, even allowing for the greenspace buffer that was supposed to integrate the site into the countryside. The view highlights the importance of the remaining fields in maintaining spatial and visual separation between Hassocks and Burgess Hill. If an additional 250 homes are developed in this gap, only one field will remain between the development and the parish boundary, a distance of approximately 450m.



Figure 2Credit: Google Maps



Figure 1Taken 13 October 2026 looking south from Batchelors Farm Nature Reserve

We fully support any steps that can be taken to guarantee that there will be no development in the northern part of the proposed allocation. But again we raise our concern as to how the proposed policy requirement (point 15 of MM71) can be made effective in perpetuity. We ask you to test this with both Mid Sussex and with the site promoter and to ensure that, should it be agreed (which it should not be), MM71 is subject to a legally sound and 'watertight' provision which safeguards the remaining gap.

b) Transport and Movement

The parish council has already expressed its serious concerns about the pressure on the local highway network from further development at Ockley Lane and questioned whether this has been fully evaluated. We see that in its objection to the Main Modifications[1] West Sussex County Council as highway authority says (our emphasis added):

> *Further technical work is ongoing including the highway safety study and sensitivity test for assumptions related to the proposed Crabbet Park site allocation and the allocated Burgess Hill Science & Technology Park. As these technical assessments were not available during the main modifications representation period, it was not possible to consider this when submitting representations.* ***The technical assessments may identify issues that require mitigation and further modifications to the plan to ensure it is consistent with the NPPF.*** *Specific changes to main modifications have been suggested which are detailed below, however* ***as stated above additional changes may be required to ensure the plan is sound following the conclusion of the further transport evidence****.*

The highway authority's position appears to be that the plan as a whole cannot currently be considered sound because the impact of the Main Modifications on the highway network has not been fully evaluated. If that is so, it cannot yet be assumed that any new allocation is deliverable – either 'at all' or with the currently proposed mitigation. We respectfully suggest that consideration of the Main Modifications (including MM71) should be deferred pending confirmation from the highway authority that every aspect of their effect on the highway network has been tested and can be satisfactorily mitigated.

[1] Mid Sussex District Plan (2021-2040) – Main Modifications Consultation West Sussex County Council Officer-Level Response September 2026

That assessment should include further detailed consideration of the impact of traffic turning south out of the proposed development onto Ockley Lane and onward through Hassocks village or Ditchling village via the B2116 Keymer Road, which are both already heavily congested. It should also consider the impact on Lodge Lane, which provides access to the B2112 out of Keymer. This is a narrow country lane which already has significant problems caused in particular by HGV traffic.

Traffic heading north on Ockley Lane will turn onto a section of road that is too narrow for central road markings, leading to the roundabout at Junction Road and Station Road in Burgess Hill which is already congested. Also, there is no mention of pedestrian or cycle routes along Ockley Lane toward Keymer Road.

If and when the highway authority completes its 'further transport evidence' all of their requirements for highway improvements and mitigation should be incorporated into the policy requirements of MM71. The parish council and residents would expect to see significant highway improvements which improve safety and to manage the flow of additional traffic on Ockley Lane, and around Hassocks village centre.

We also have concerns regarding the absence of any proposed extension of bus services to serve the proposed allocation. The policy requirements for MM71 state that only pedestrian connectivity is required to integrate the development with Ockley Park. No consideration is given to the 'in combination' requirement for public transport to serve a substantial number of residents in this area. At present there is a bus every hour between 7am and 6pm which stops on Ockley Lane; it does not enter the development and there are no evening public transport options. We are pleased to see that the highway authority has asked for bus service improvements as a policy requirement and fully support that amendment.

The site lies approximately 2km from Hassocks Station by foot (well exceeding the 800m cited by the new National Planning Policy Framework as an acceptable walking distance) and as a result most residents will start their train journey by car. This represents a problem since the station car park is already occupied to capacity at peak times. Overflow parking on nearby streets creates highway issues in the village and space for additional station car parking has not been identified. Although a number of proposed site allocations include the requirement for a contribution towards improvements at Hassocks Station, no plan for any extension of car parking currently exists (or could exist) so far as we know.

c) Infrastructure

No community infrastructure is required by the policy proposed for MM71. All new residents will have to drive south into Hassocks village or north into Burgess Hill to access local shops, services and recreational facilities. Although the Ockley Park development has land allocated for a community building (which is safeguarded until 2035) there are insufficient funds available to construct this and no operator has been identified. If further development is to be permitted, we consider an additional S106 contribution towards the provision of the community building to be a necessary and justifiable policy requirement.

The Parish Council is also extremely concerned about the capacity of Southern Water and South East Water to deliver the sewerage infrastructure and water supply needed to service this and other developments in Mid Sussex.

Yours sincerely



Frances Gaudencio
Chair, Hassocks Parish Council