

# Mid-Sussex District Local Plan 2021-2039 Examination

## Hearing Statement submitted by the High Weald National Landscape Unit



High Weald  
National  
Landscape

### Matter 7: Site Allocations specifically site DPSC2 (Land at Crabbet Park)

---

1.0 This statement is submitted by the High Weald National Landscape Unit in response to the Inspector's Matters Issues and Questions in relation to Matter 7, in particular regarding the impacts of proposed allocation site DPSC2 (Land at Crabbet Park) on the setting of the designated High Weald National Landscape.

#### **Issue: Whether the plan adequately lays the framework for the sustainable development of each site.**

2.0 We consider the policy in its current form to be unsound for the following reason:

The spatial extent of DPSC2 as described in the site map on page 168 and the indicative plan on page 167 of the draft Local Plan, and the site specific 'Policy Requirements' set out on page 169, are insufficient to ensure a development which would not adversely impact on the setting of the HWNL, such that the policy and allocation in its present form would conflict with paragraph 189 of the NPPF.

Paragraph 189 of the NPPF (formerly 182) sets out that development within the setting of National Landscapes should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated area. [*my underlining for emphasis*]

2.1 Our reasons for this are summarised below (full detail is contained in our Regulation 19 Consultation reps letter to MSDC of 15/3/24 (appended to this Hearing Statement for ease of reference).

2.2 The proposed site is adjacent to the HWNL boundary, (which extends up to the line of Turners Hill Road, marking the southern boundary of the site), and development on this site will inevitably affect the setting of the HWNL. The south-eastern portion of the proposed site allocation shares a number of characteristics of the High Weald AONB including a historic (sunken) routeway, mosaic fieldscape and ancient woodland, all features highlighted in the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029.

2.3 We consider that MSDC Schedule of Proposed Modifications (July 2024) has not included adequate changes to policy DPSC2 to address the concerns set out in our Reg 19 reps.

2.3.1 We are pleased to note that proposed mod M88 seeks to amend the wording of criterion 8 of DPSC2 policy requirements to read:

*"Have appropriate regard to the setting of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), including utilising a landscape-led approach which lies to the south of the site."* – (however as a minor point of clarity this sentence might be better re-ordered: "Have appropriate regard to the setting of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which lies to the south of the site, including utilising a landscape-led approach.")

- 2.3.2 We are also pleased to note that mod M91 proposes amending the land use map to show the designated Ancient Woodland parcel (Hotel Wood, to the west of Old Hollow)– our previous reps had highlighted that should not be labelled ‘developable land’ on the indicative plan on page 167.
- 2.3.3. We are also pleased to note that M89 proposes amending the wording of criterion 9 to read: *“Avoid any direct or indirect impacts associated with ancient woodland...”*
- 2.4 However, we consider that more specific wording is necessary in the Policy Requirements, along with alterations to the allocation site map and indicative plan, to explain how development should be located and designed in order to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the setting of the HWNL, to ensure the policy provides sufficient clarity and detail on the protection the natural beauty of the HWNL, to be consistent with para 189 of the NPPF. We set out the modifications we consider necessary below:

### **Historic Routeways**

- 2.5 To ensure that development of the site does not adversely affect historic routeways, an important site feature in the setting of the HWNL, we consider that:
- 2.5.1 The Policy Requirements should include a specific reference to the historic landscape and ecological importance of Old Hollow, with regard to the setting of the HWNL, and to the designated ancient woodland on the western side of the southern part of the lane.**
- 2.5.2 The Policy Requirements should explicitly set out that no access should be created off the southern portion of Old Hollow, in the sunken routeway.**
- 2.5.3 It is noted that the ‘Crabbet Park Vision Document, while not forming part of the Local Plan, does include indicative diagrams that show proposed access crossing the southern section of Old Hollow, hence it is important that the Local Plan policy addresses this, to give clear policy direction to inform development.

### **Fieldsapes**

- 2.6 To ensure that development of site does not adversely affect fieldscape features in the setting of the HWNL, we consider that:
- 2.6.1 The five fields south of the yellow shaded school areas on the policy map (i.e. three small fields to the south of Layhouse Wood, one field to the south of Compasses Wood, and one field bound by Compasses Wood to the west and Layhouse Wood to the east, all designated Ancient Woodlands) should not be shown on the indicative plan on page 167 as ‘developable land’ but instead should be shown to be maintained as green open space; i.e. retained within the site allocation as green infrastructure to support the wider development site, and relabelled in the indicative plan as ‘open space’.**
- 2.6.2 The graphics on the indicative map on page 167 of the draft Local Plan indicates that these fields are presently proposed as ‘developable land’, while the site map on page 168 includes these fields within the ‘Proposed Built-Up Area Boundary’. We consider that filling in these fields with development would adversely affect the setting of the HWNL, by changing the character of the setting from a predominantly undeveloped landscape of highly legible small mosaic fields enclosed by a strong network of native and treed hedgerows (including some being bound by designated Ancient Woodland), to a character of built development, such that development would not be ‘sensitively located’ as required by NPPF para 189.

## **Ancient Woodland**

- 2.7 To ensure that development of the site does not adversely affect ancient woodland in the setting of the HWNL, we consider that:
- 2.7.1 **The existing Ancient Woodland (Layhouse Wood) in the very south-eastern corner of the site should be omitted from the proposed site allocation area in the site map on p168.**
- 2.7.2 There appears to be no reason or justification to include this area of Ancient Woodland within the allocation, since it sits at the very periphery of the proposed site, close to the boundary with the HWNL. It would not be suitable to provide any infrastructure role (green recreational space etc) for the development, since these would lead to indirect impacts to the Ancient Woodland contrary to Natural England's standing advice. We therefore do not consider it appropriate to include areas of Ancient Woodland unnecessarily within development site allocations.
- 2.7.3 The proposed site allocation contains and is bound by a number of pieces of designated Ancient Woodland, which have statutory protection. The HWNL to the south of the proposed site allocation also contains a number of designated areas of Ancient Woodland in close proximity to the boundary, which will have a functional relationship with those within the proposed site.

## **Access**

- 2.8 The proposed site allocation appears to be silent on the matter of the location of access into the site; for the reasons set out above, this will be important in assessing the impacts on the setting of the adjacent HWNL, and without this forming part of the policy, we cannot be sure that the allocation would comply with NPPF 189 regarding the setting of National Landscapes.

## **Conclusion**

- 2.9 We respectfully request the Inspector considers the amendments set out in paragraphs 2.5.1, 2.5.2, 2.6.1, and 2.7.1 above to the Policy Requirements, site map and indicative plan to DPSC2, in order to ensure the policy and the Plan is consistent with national policy (para 189 of the NPPF) and sound.