

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WEDNESDAY 22nd July

Liberal Democrats fight against housing in Burgess Hill-Hassocks gap

Local Liberal Democrats oppose inclusion of developments south of Folders Lane in Mid Sussex District Council's Site Allocations document

Liberal Democrats from across Mid Sussex have strongly opposed proposals for more than 300 houses in the green gap between Burgess Hill and Hassocks.

At a Mid Sussex District Council meeting on Wednesday 22nd July, Liberal Democrat councillors proposed removing two sites south of Folders Lane from the Council's 'Site Allocations' document that identifies potential sites for future development.

They argued that the sites would greatly increase traffic on narrow country roads between Burgess Hill and Hassocks; and that it would impact an already heavily congested route into the town centre, with no clear mitigation plan.

Additionally, Liberal Democrats objected to the erosion of the strategic gap between Burgess Hill and Hassocks, as well as the impact on biodiversity, with 11 species on the red list impacted by this proposed development. They argued that the two sites could be removed from the Site Allocations document and still leave sufficient proposed developments to meet housing need.

Despite these arguments, the Liberal Democrat amendment was rejected by the Conservatives, and the Site Allocations document was voted through to the next stage with the two sites included. Local Lib Dems committed to continuing to campaign for appropriate housing sites in Mid Sussex which are fair to residents while continuing to provide necessary homes.

Cllr Alison Bennett, Liberal Democrat Group Leader at Mid Sussex District Council, said: "We are frustrated and angry that Conservative-led Mid Sussex District Council has pressed ahead with these sites despite their obvious flaws, and in the face of strong local opposition.

"We recognise the need to deliver a housing land supply, but this is not the way to do it. We have attempted to make reasonable suggestions to deliver cross-party support. Unfortunately, the Conservatives have not listened to reason on traffic or the environment, and are proposing significantly more housing than is actually needed."

Cllr Robert Eggleston, of Burgess Hill, said: "It is clear this is a bad decision made by Tory councillors who don't live in Burgess Hill, proposing housing for Burgess Hill to the great detriment of local residents. Mid Sussex could move forward without these sites and still meet the requirements laid down by the planning inspector, and yet Tory councillors refused to listen to reason.

"I would invite any of them to come and spend a morning and an evening on Folders Lane in normal times, and see for themselves the grave traffic issues, pollution and disruption residents are already suffering, and tell them that more housing in this location is the right thing for Burgess Hill."

Cllr Benedict Dempsey, of Hassocks, added: “We understand that the Council needs to meet the demand for housing. But that must be set against the permanent and irreversible effect that these sites would have on Hassocks and Burgess Hill.

“With 500 houses north of Hassocks already approved, these developments would further erode the gap between the two settlements and bring us closer to the coalescence of Hassocks and Burgess Hill. They would also place an intolerable pressure on local roads.”

ENDS

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

Cllr Alison Bennett, Mid Sussex District Councillor for Hurstpierpoint and Downs:

Email - alisonbennettLD@gmail.com

Cllr Robert Eggleston, Mid Sussex District Councillor for Burgess Hill St Johns

Email - ppc@midsussexlibdems.org.uk

Cllr Benedict Dempsey, Mid Sussex District Councillor for Hassocks:

Email – benedict.dempsey@midsussexlibdems.org.uk

NOTES TO EDITOR:

1. The Liberal Democrat amendment read ***(the additional text of the amendment is in red)***:

Amendment to Agenda Item 11

Proposer: Cllr Robert Eggleston

Seconder: Cllr Benedict Dempsey

Recommendations

3. That Council:

(i) Approves ***save for the removal of SA12 and SA13*** the submission draft Site Allocations DPD, and supporting documentation, for eight weeks public consultation starting on 3rd August 2020;

(ii) Agrees that, following conclusion of the public consultation, the submission draft Site Allocations DPD, and supporting documentation, is submitted to the Secretary of State for examination;

(iii) Authorises the Divisional Leader for Planning and Economy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning, to make any necessary minor typographical and factual changes to the submission draft Site Allocations DPD prior to submission; and

(iv) Authorises the Divisional Leader for Planning and Economy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning, to suggest any necessary modifications to the submission draft Site Allocations DPD during the examination process to help secure its soundness (pending further public consultation as required).