

10 November 2017

Dear Mr Bore,

I write as Chair of Hassocks and Hurst Liberal Democrats to register our opposition to the Main Modifications to the Mid Sussex District Plan, specifically the allocation of 500 houses to the north of Clayton Mills (MM11 ref DP9b).

We consider the process through which the Council has prepared the Plan to have been wholly inadequate, and in contravention of stated planning policy. We further consider the contents of the Plan itself to be unsound, ill-thought-out and lacking the necessary infrastructure provision to support a development on this scale. I outline the details of our opposition below.

Yours sincerely

Dr Colin Wilsdon
Chair Hassocks and Hurst Liberal Democrats

Organisation: Hassocks and Hurst Liberal Democrats

Main Modification MM11 ref DP9b Strategic Allocation to the North of Clayton Mills

A: We consider that the Council has not fulfilled its obligations to consult and publish its proposals. <http://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/3417/sciplanningdecisionsadopted.pdf>:

1. Under Stage 1 the Council are obliged to: collect evidence through various sources; notify and work with groups, organisations and residents; consider issues and alternatives; and prepare content of draft document and provide feedback where possible. Their efforts on this have been insufficient. In particular they have not carried out a full assessment of the site in relation to other sites or of other alternatives such as increasing the level of acceptability for windfall developments around existing settlements.
2. The Council did not ensure that the proposed modifications were displayed in public libraries. In particular papers were not displayed in Hurstpierpoint Library. The Council was slow to publicise it via a press release. The response form was obtuse and we received several complaints from members of the public that they were confused and didn't know how to fill it in.
3. The updated transport assessment was not made available until October 26th, cutting the time available for comment on that element of the proposals to under three weeks, contravening the minimum 6 week requirement.

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B: We consider that the modification to designate land to the north of Clayton Mills as a new strategic site with capacity for 500 houses is **unsound** for several reasons.

1. The large increase in the number of houses over what has previously been recommended in the nascent Hassocks Neighbourhood Plan will create a shock to the infrastructure of Hassocks and there is no evidence that preparation has been made for this in the proposals. In particular it is generally agreed that there will be a need for a new primary school but the proposals do not give any commitment to providing a school, only to setting aside land.
2. The transport analysis produced by Gleesons was only made available at a very late stage. It suggests that traffic travelling south will use Lodge Lane to access New Road and the A273. No consideration has been given to the modifications that may be needed to the junction of Lodge Lane and New Road.
3. The Council assessment states that “ Bus provision and frequency at this site is good”. There is only one regular bus service (no. 33) which is mainly an hourly bus service, terminating in the late afternoon. This is inadequate to encourage sustainable travel in the morning peak and unavailable for most workers in the evening peak.
4. It is suggested in Gleesons Transport Study that South Haywards Heath, Burgess Hill, Ditchling and Hurstpierpoint are accessible by cycle from the site but mainly on the carriageway. Access to the north involves cycling up Ockley Lane which is a fast narrow link road between Hassocks and Burgess Hill with a challenging hill close to the site. Many cyclists would not use it. There are no proposals for an off-road route north to Burgess Hill. This is an example of the rushed character of the Designation and further undermines any suggestion that the site is sustainable from a transport perspective.
6. The site significantly closes the gap between Hassocks and Burgess Hill and will make the two communities more vulnerable to coalescence in the future. Coalescence is not an adopted policy of MSDC at the moment. The coalescence of a downland village with a neighbouring town in the proximity of the National Park is a major development which needs to be considered on its merits. The Designation preempts and weakens the possibility of such a consideration.
7. The supporting documentation underplays the location of the site in relation to the South Downs National Park. It states that the site is remote from any AONB/National Park. In fact the National Park boundary runs less than 300m to the east of the site.
8. As viewed from the north the landscape setting of Hassocks, fronting the South Downs, will be seriously affected.

Hassocks and Hurst Liberal Democrats
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