

There's a definite feeling of déjà vu as the draft District Plan will shortly be out for ('Regulation 19') consultation. The good news is that this 6-week review period will start on 12th January 2024 and will finish on 23rd February, after Christmas, unlike last year's 'Regulation18' consultation.

Unfortunately, the latest draft was only available to the public from 15th November for discussion at an MSDC Scrutiny Meeting on 22nd November. The papers released for that meeting ran to 782 pages so there was a lot to read.

This article is being written the day after the meeting after minor changes to the Plan were agreed. The final version should be available 7 days before the Full Council meeting on 13th December, when it should receive approval to go out for Public Consultation in January, as stated above.

Background

To recap from last year, the existing District Plan for the period from 2014 to 2031 must be reviewed every 5 years to ensure that it is up to date and to take account of changes that have already happened and projections for the future, including population growth and changes to the economy.

The latest version of the Plan for the period from 2021 to 2039 has taken note of comments from last year's public 'Regulation 18' consultation and made a significant number of amendments.

Additionally a lot of the wording has been strengthened with "should" and "could" being replaced by "must" and "it is a requirement". Although these appear relatively minor, in reality they add significantly more power to the policies.

The housing requirement has been reduced to 7,459 (previously 8,169), but then an over supply of 996 dwellings is added to meet housing needs should the number of houses on identified sites reduce, or building on some sites does not take place. Ironically, this means the total housing supply in the Plan is 8,455 across the District, which is higher than before.

The latest strategy emphasises the use of settlements that are presently less sustainable for large numbers of houses but have opportunities for growth. This requires development on a scale that will provide infrastructure and services to meet the needs of a new larger community to include new schools, neighbourhood centres and employment opportunities.

According to the latest draft of The Plan prepared for Mid Sussex District Council's Scrutiny Committee Meeting on 22nd November 2023, it states:

"Based around the 20-minute neighbourhood principles, the Plan seeks to deliver complete, compact and well-connected communities which provide the facilities and services to support the majority of the day to day needs of the community as a whole, accessed by a safe, accessible and well-connected movement network for walking, wheeling and cycling. The Plan will also seek to support the continued trend of home working and the many associated benefits it can bring to our communities in terms of wellbeing and life/ work balance, supporting local businesses and services, reducing the need to travel by car."

Proposals

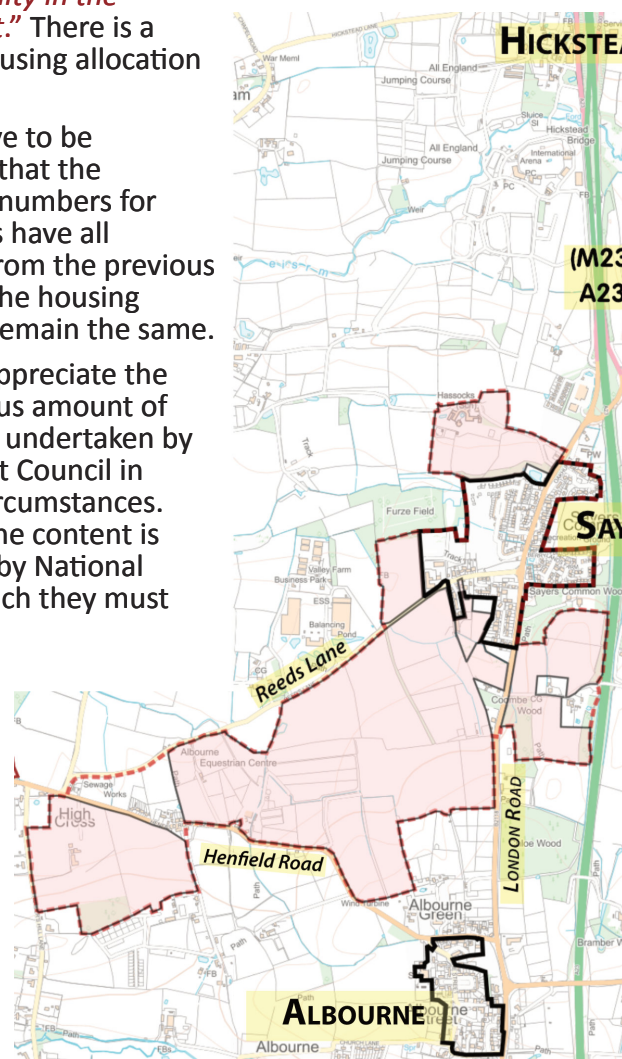
So the question is – where is the settlement to achieve this aim?

The Plan now defines 'Significant Sites' being of 'over 1,000 dwellings providing on site services and facilities'. It will come as no surprise that it is the Parish of Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common with the lion's share with 2 'Significant Sites'.

In addition, in Sayers Common are *"Housing Sites: located in proximity to a Significant Site and therefore benefitting and contributing to improved sustainability in the settlement."* There is a further housing allocation in Hurst.

It will prove to be unhelpful that the reference numbers for these sites have all changed from the previous draft but the housing numbers remain the same.

We fully appreciate the tremendous amount of hard work undertaken by the District Council in difficult circumstances. Much of the content is governed by National Policy, which they must adhere to.



Regulation 19 Consultation

While it is disappointing that most/all the comments made by people in here last year still apply, The latest version of the Plan going out to consultation must meet the requirements set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) and Planning Practice Guidance as follows:

- The submission draft District Plan has been written in accordance with legislation and regulations.
- The submission draft District Plan has been informed by the results of the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal. This shows which options have been considered for its strategy and policies and why the options chosen are preferred over those rejected.
- The submission draft District Plan has been informed by background evidence. The background evidence will be made available to view on the Council’s website.

This is your opportunity to make further comments following the guidelines below and we will provide more information on our website towards the end of January/beginning of February, with a link on Facebook.

After this consultation, the Council may make minor changes and corrections, then the Plan will be submitted to the Secretary of State for examination in Spring 2024. All the documents and comments made will be considered by an independent Planning Inspectorate so further changes are possible. The Inspector may decide that some matters are of sufficient importance that they will be considered at the Examination public hearing sessions.

Should the independent Planning Inspector decide that “main modifications” are required in order for the Plan to be found ‘sound’, these will be subject to a further consultation.

If the Inspector concludes that the Plan is sound (or can be made so if main modifications are accepted) the new District Plan is due to be adopted in 2024.

Details of the progress of the Plan can be found following this link: <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/planning-building/mid-sussex-district-plan/district-plan-review>



(See next page for a *Guide to Making Comments*)

Significant Sites

- **DPSC3] Land to the South of Reeds Lane, Sayers Common.**
Extra care housing provision, primary secondary school, “playspace”, library, leisure facilities, healthcare provision, community facilities, open space.
- **[DPSC1] Land west of Burgess Hill and North of Hurstpierpoint.** Originally 1,400 now reduced to include land for education provision and community infrastructure.

1,850 dwellings

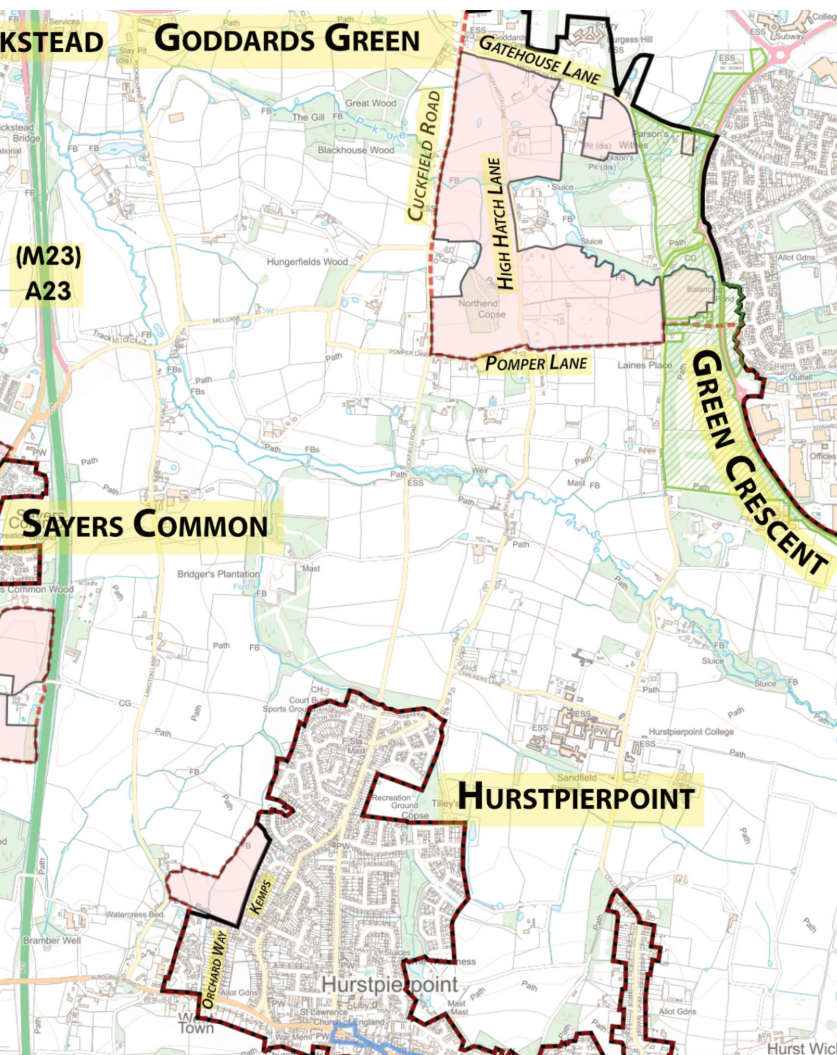
1,350 dwellings

Sites in proximity of - Significant Sayers Common Site

- [DPSC4] Land at Chesapeake and Meadow View, Reeds Lane – **33 dwellings**
- [DPSC5] Land at Coombe Farm, London Road – **210 dwellings**
- [DPSC6] Land to west of Kings Business Centre, Reeds Lane – **100 dwellings**
- [DPSC7] Land south of LVS Hassocks, London Road – **200 dwellings**

Site in Hurst

- [DPA12] Land west of Kemps- **90 dwellings**



Guide to making Comments

You can give details of why you consider the Local Plan is not legally compliant, or is unsound, or fails to comply with the duty to co-operate. Between now and the period of the consultation we'll review the latest version to identify any areas where we think this applies.

This will not be an easy task, but at the Scrutiny Meeting on 22nd November there were some interesting questions raised which we'll consider further at the Public Consultation phase:

- The first related to the transport modelling done by West Sussex County Council. The specific question related to Turners Hill but equally applies to Hurstpierpoint. At present the High Street in Hurstpierpoint is **not considered to have traffic problems which would be made worse by these new developments.**

Therefore the new developments are not identified as having a 'severe' impact. However, a thorough technical review of transport impacts will not be undertaken until the relevant planning applications are submitted, by which stage the principle of development will already be established. Additionally, the current transport modelling for the A273/B2116 Hassocks (Stonepound Crossroads) states that it will only be impacted in the AM peak period and only on 1 of the 4 arms.

- The second related to the funding for the sustainable community projects which underpin the selection of Sayers Common as a significant site for development. These projects will be made a requirement of planning permission being granted but many will be out of the control of MSDC for detailed requirement, funding and timing, hence as yet technically unexamined. These projects will be part of a 'Masterplan', but no further information is available yet. As I said in last year's Newsletter article:

"Despite promising new schools and additional healthcare facilities the timing of these will be crucial to our existing services in Hurstpierpoint."

It is important to remember and follow the guidelines for comments to be valid. These are set under Regulation 19 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, which makes this a very restrictive process. However, the Regulations do ensure that as part of the process, a summary of all representations previously made will be submitted, together with how these have been taken into account.

You can also set out any modifications you think are necessary to make the Plan legally compliant and sound with your reasons. It would be helpful if you are able to suggest revised wording of any policy or appropriate text.