



ARDINGLY PARISH COUNCIL

RESPONSE

TO

SITE ALLOCATIONS DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT

REGULATION 19

28th September 2020



Ardingly Parish Council
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Mid Sussex District Council
Oaklands Road
Haywards Heath
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28th September 2020

Dear Sir or Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Site Allocations Development Plan Document Regulation 19 Consultation.

Ardingly Parish Council has reviewed the details of the Site Allocation 25, The Land west of the Selsfield Road, Ardingly (SA25) and its impact on the soundness of the Site Allocation Development Plan Document (DPD) and has found that the inclusion of SA25 in its current form in the DPD makes it unsound with regards to the tests of soundness.

In this response we have detailed our reasons why we believe each test of soundness has not been met due to different criteria. However, we would like to highlight one key point which is that Ardingly Parish Council believe that Mid-Sussex District Council (MSDC) has incorrectly, and without justification or explanation decided that SA25 is not a Major development in the AONB in the normal sense of the word (MAJOR).

The proposed SA25 is an increase of 15% in dwellings and 18% in area compared to the current built-up area of the village (ref. MSDC SA DPD Major Development in the High Weald AONB Topic Paper, P 44), Ardingly Parish Council believe this demonstrates that this is a MAJOR development.

Ardingly Parish Council believe that this alone demonstrates that the inclusion of SA25 in its current form makes the DPD not sound and that a further reduction of dwellings is required to meet the test of not MAJOR.

As the representative of the Parish of Ardingly and as this proposed development has the potential to cause a significant impact on our small rural village, we would appreciate the opportunity to make our representation at the oral part of the examination.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Derek Stutchbury (Chairman)
On behalf of Ardingly Parish Council

Positively prepared – NOT SOUND

1. The significant over allocation of dwellings, 38% above the objectively assessed need, to address the residual housing requirement of the district plan indicates that MSDC has not followed an objective strategy in line with the District Plan. The District Plan sets out in Chapter 1 para 1.4 that “... a particular feature of the Plan is the desire of the District Council to involve Town and Parish Councils in its preparation and delivery. It is vital that there is local influence over where and what development happens, and the infrastructure that is provided over the next 17 years.”

Ardingly Parish Council held a Parish survey to understand the views of the village. The result of this survey is that 89% of respondents believe the current size of the development is too large, with 41% wanting no housing on this site and 63% wanting less than 30 dwellings.

DP 12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside also states that, “The primary objective of the District Plan with respect to the countryside is to secure its protection by minimising the amount of land taken for development and preventing development that does not need to be there.”

Ardingly Parish has contributed 53 houses in the plan period to October 2019. The inclusion of SA25 on AONB land outside of the built-up area, with a further 70 houses goes far beyond the adopted Ardingly Parish Neighbourhood plan, which set out a local need for approximately 30 houses which was delivered through a previous site allocation (Standgrove field) and windfall. The Neighbourhood plan also sets out in Policy ARD 2: A Spatial Plan for the Parish: “The Neighbourhood Plan directs future housing, economic and community-related development within the parish to within the revised built-up area boundary...”.

The above demonstrates that the DPD has not been positively prepared in accordance with the strategy of the Mid Sussex District Plan.

Justified – NOT SOUND

1. There is no local need for the housing – Ardingly Neighbourhood plan identified a need of “approximately 30 houses” in the plan period; Ardingly has delivered 53 houses up to October 2019. Policy ARD 3: Housing Supply & Site Allocation: The Neighbourhood Plan provides for the development of at least 37 homes in the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2031 through a combination of a site allocation (Standgrove field) and of windfall sites.

The Ardingly Neighbourhood plan directs development to within the built-up area and any build in the AONB is required to demonstrate how they conserve the AONB, Policy ARD 2: A Spatial Plan for the Parish.

2. As per NPPF - 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment para 172; There is no justification for MSDC to allocate a “Major” development on AONB land when there is no local need.

MSDC has defined SA25 as not Major without justification or explanation (reference: MSDC SA DPD Major Development in the High Weald AONB Topic Paper page 48). Ardingly Parish Council dispute this classification based on the size of this development as a proportion of the current settlement size, the legal opinions as set out by Maurici (2011 & 2014) and Fisher (2017) and especially to the regard to the normal meaning of the word Major.

The proposed SA25 is an increase of 15% in dwellings and 18% in area compared to the current built-up area of the village, Ardingly Parish Council believe this demonstrates that

this is a major development in the normal sense of the word. There are example precedents which support this; Tunbridge Wells Borough Council as a decision maker has put a threshold of 5% increase to define major and a site at Newton Poppleford, Devon, a settlement of similar size to Ardingly, was designated a major development which was a proposed increase of 5.7% on the current settlement size.

3. There is no justified need for such a large over-supply of housing to deliver the residual requirement of the objectively assessed need (OAN) of 16,390 dwellings within the plan period 2014-2031. The OAN already includes an additional 20% buffer to safeguard against under-delivery and an allocation of 1,498 to address the unmet need in the Northern West Sussex Housing Market Area.

As of 1st April 2020, there is a residual housing requirement of 1,280 which the DPD Site Allocations seek to address. This plans to deliver 1,764 dwellings in the plan period. An over-supply of 484 (38%) dwellings. Therefore, there is no justification for developing a site outside of the Ardingly Parish built up area that lies totally within the AONB and is open green space used regularly by local residents.

The lack of local requirement or justification for a major development in the AONB demonstrates that the inclusion of SA25 in its current state makes the DPD not sound.

Effective – NOT SOUND

1. SA25 is Agricultural land that has been laid to grass since the South of England Agricultural Society was donated the land. From our paper-based investigations we believe that the classification of this land for agriculture would likely be Graded 3a or better (ref: LandIS and ALC classification criteria). NPPF - 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment Para 170 and DP 12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside both require the nature and quality of the land to be considered.

The risk that SA25 will not pass through planning due to the Agricultural land classification and the requirement for sustainable development, as per the MSDC District Plan demonstrates that the inclusion of SA25 in the DPD makes it not sound.

Consistent with national Policy – NOT SOUND

1. NPPF - 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment para 170 requires planning policies and decisions to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.

There is no local economic benefit that outweighs the development of open space and versatile agricultural land.

NPPF - 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment para 172 requires Planning permission to be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest.

The public interest for inclusion of a major development cannot be demonstrated as indicated by the survey conducted by Ardingly Parish Council where 89% of respondents were against a development of this size on this site. (reference; SA25 APC survey results.pdf)

2. NPPF - 9. Promoting sustainable transport Para 103 requires significant development to be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes.

The location of SA25 is on a rural B-road and north of Ardingly High Street which has limited services (a village shop, baker, pub and takeaway) and there are limited opportunities for employment within the Parish there is therefore a need for residents to travel for essential services and work. There is an infrequent bus service and no opportunity to develop safe cycling routes due to the nature of the rural roads around the village, therefore the only genuine choice of transport is by personal motor vehicle.

The above points demonstrate that the inclusion of SA25 in the Site Allocation Development Plan Document is not consistent with national policy and there is no local justification of why a departure from national policy is required. Therefore, the inclusion of SA25 in its current form makes the DPD not sound.