

Planning Policy Advice

Application Ref:	DM/26/0073
Application Type:	Full planning application
Address:	Land off West Hoathly Road, East Grinstead
Description:	The erection of 44 new homes with access from West Hoathly Road, vehicle and cycle parking, landscaping, drainage, and associated infrastructure and highway works.
Date:	26 March 2026
Policy Officer:	Jennifer Hollingum
DM Officer:	Joseph Swift

Development Plan

The Development Plan comprises the adopted Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 (2018) which is currently under review, and the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) (2022). The site falls within the boundary of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan which was made in November 2016.

The saved policies of the Mid Sussex Local Plan (2004) and the Small Scale Housing Allocations DPD (2008) are not relevant to this development proposal.

Below are the Development Plan policies considered key to the consideration of the development proposal.

Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 (2018)

- Policy DP4: Housing
- Policy DP6: Settlement Hierarchy
- Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside
- Policy DP15: New Homes in the Countryside
- Policy DP16: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Policy DP17: Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC
- Policy DP20: Securing Infrastructure
- Policy DP21: Transport
- Policy DP22: Rights of Way and Other Recreational Routes
- Policy DP26: Character and Design
- Policy DP27: Dwelling Space Standards
- Policy DP28: Accessibility
- Policy DP29: Noise, Light and Air Pollution
- Policy DP30: Housing Mix
- Policy DP31: Affordable Housing
- Policy DP34: Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets
- Policy DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- Policy DP38: Biodiversity
- Policy DP39: Sustainable Design and Construction
- Policy DP41: Flood Risk and Drainage

- Policy DP42: Water Infrastructure and the Water Environment

East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan (2016)

The East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan was made in November 2016. Since then, the Mid Sussex District Plan (2018) and Site Allocations DPD (2022) have been adopted. If there is conflict between non-strategic policies in the District Plan and the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan, the District Plan takes precedence.

- Policy EG1: Protection of the High Weald AONB
- Policy EG2: Areas of Development Constraint
- Policy EG3: Promoting Good Design
- Policy EG4: Designated and Non-Designated Heritage Assets
- Policy EG5: Housing
- Policy EG7: Housing Mix and Density
- Policy EG11: Mitigating Highway Impact
- Policy EG12: Car Parking
- Policy EG13: Modern Technology
- Policy EG16: Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC

Emerging District Plan

The Mid Sussex District Plan has been reviewed to ensure it remains effective and consistent with national policy. The review process commenced in 2021 and the draft Mid Sussex District Plan (2021-2039) was submitted for Examination in July 2024.

Hearing sessions were held in February and March 2026. The Inspector has provided the Council with comments and proposed modifications on development management policies and there are also a number of post-Hearing actions for the Council to complete.

The site is allocated for development in the emerging District Plan as DPA4: Land off West Hoathly Road, East Grinstead for up to 45 dwellings.

At this stage, policies within the draft District Plan have minimal weight.

Site selection process

All potential housing and employment sites are included within the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA). The SHELAA provides the palette of sites that are assessed for their suitability for allocation in the Development Plan. A site selection methodology has been developed and tested at Examination (of the adopted Site Allocations DPD). The site selection methodology has been used to assess the SHELAA sites, and identify those sites with potential for development, via allocation in a Development Plan Document.

There are 3 steps to the site assessment process, which are:

Stage 2(a) – Relationship to existing settlements – Sites that are disconnected from existing settlements are rejected and not subject to further assessment.

Stage 2(b) – Showstopper constraints – Where environmental constraints and deliverability considerations result in very negative impact against the site assessment criteria. Sites with showstopper constraints are rejected and not subject to further assessment.

Stage 2(c) – Overall Assessment – Sites that remain in the pool are subject to full assessment. Sites may be rejected at this stage if there are a combination of negative

impacts. Sites may also be rejected at this stage if the loss of the site's current use is contrary to national policy.

For the purposes of plan making, sites that remained in the pool after Stage 2(c) were subject to further testing including Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulations Assessment and transport modelling. This is Stage 3 of the site selection process. Those sites remaining in the pool after this stage were proposed for allocation in the Submitted District Plan.

The site has been submitted to the Council and is included in the SHELAA as site #198. This site has been assessed through the site selection process for 45 dwellings. In summary, the site progressed to Stage 3 – Further Testing. The conclusion for this site is (July 2024):

The Sustainability Appraisal concludes that, overall, the site represents a sustainable option for allocation. The transport modelling undertaken to date for the District Plan Review does not indicate that there will be any showstoppers, associated with this site. The HRA does not identify any likely significant effect on the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC, subject to appropriate mitigation. In terms of air quality, there are currently no anticipated significant effects on the Stonepound Crossroads AQMA, or adverse impacts on the Ashdown Forest.

In light of the above, it is considered that the site represents a suitable option for allocation. Therefore this site is allocated in the District Plan 2021 – 2039 Proposed Submission (DPA4).

Site location

The site is allocated for development in the emerging development plan (the District Plan that is currently at Examination) as DPA4: Land off West Hoathly Road, East Grinstead for up to 45 dwellings.

The site is outside of the built-up areas as shown on the adopted Policies Maps and therefore Policy DP6: Settlement Hierarchy and Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside are relevant. The site is not contiguous with the existing built-up area. The adopted District Plan defines contiguous as 'sharing a common border, touching'.

However, as part of the draft District Plan process, it is proposed to extend the built-up area boundary to encompass this site. As such, should the proposed allocation DPA4 remain within the draft District Plan during the Examination, on adoption of the District Plan, the site will be within the built-up area for East Grinstead.

The Council has undertaken a Settlement Sustainability Review, which enabled a classification of the district's settlements, taking into account service provision and accessibility. Policy DP6 of the adopted District Plan sets out this hierarchy. The site is adjacent to East Grinstead, a Category 1 settlement, which is categorised as a settlement with a comprehensive range of employment, retail, health, education leisure services and facilities. These settlements will also benefit from good public transport provision and will act as a main service centre for the smaller settlements.

East Grinstead is to the north of the site and Sunnyside Recreation Ground is adjacent to the site on its north-eastern boundary. Open countryside (the High Weald National Landscape) lies to the east, south and west of the site. There is a dispersed settlement pattern to the west of the site.

The site is within the High Weald National Landscape.

High Weald National Landscape

The High Weald National Landscape is a Protected Landscape. The statutory designation of the High Weald National Landscape remains an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). As set out in section 82 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, the primary purpose of the AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area.

Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023) places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities, including a local planning authority such as Mid Sussex District Council, that in 'exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, they must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB'. This includes land both within the landscape designation and within its setting.

Section 84(4) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 confirms the powers of local planning authorities to 'take all such action as appears to them expedient for the accomplishment of the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty'.

Local planning authorities need to demonstrate that this statutory duty to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape has been complied with in any decision or action that impacts, or could potentially impact, the High Weald National Landscape.

Paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that:

Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

Adopted District Plan Policy DP16 and the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan Policy EG1 also set out that development within the High Weald AONB will only be permitted where it conserves and enhances natural beauty and has regard to the High Weald AONB Management Plan.

The High Weald AONB Management Plan is the policy for looking after the High Weald National Landscape in order to achieve the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the High Weald AONB. The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029 has been adopted by Mid Sussex District Council and it is a material consideration in the planning process including decisions on planning applications.

There are also supporting documents to the High Weald AONB Management Plan which are also a material consideration in the planning process. These supporting documents include:

- High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025)

The High Weald Colour Study (2017) is also relevant.

Within the Management Plan, the High Weald AONB Statement of Significance sets out a number of components that comprise the natural beauty of the High Weald, and the Management Plan sets out specific objectives and actions for each component. The whole of the AONB is designated for its outstanding natural beauty, and all the AONB is important; any areas perceived as 'degraded' landscape characters should be seen as opportunities for the enhancement of natural beauty, contributing positively to the objectives of the Management Plan.

The development proposal should pay particular attention to matters such as design and layout of the scheme, appropriate boundary treatments and soft landscaping, and the avoidance of a car-dominated scheme. Such design considerations should endure and be retained by future occupiers.

Housing land supply position

Whilst Mid Sussex District Council has performed excellently in respect of the Housing Delivery Test, a new standard method formula was published in December 2024 alongside the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which gives Mid Sussex a significantly higher housing requirement than the current District Plan. As a result and having regard for the need for an appropriate buffer, the Council is unable to demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites as per the requirements of paragraph 78 of the NPPF.

Infrastructure

The Planning Policy team would expect the standard infrastructure contributions to be made but will leave it to other consultees to provide the detail.

Good pedestrian and cycling connectivity is important to encourage active travel and to access local services and facilities, and to avoid the development being too heavily car dependent.

Draft Policy DP4 includes requirements to provide a link to Sunnyside Recreation Ground; provide suitable access from West Hoathly Road; and provide an appropriate pedestrian crossing from the site to the pavement along West Hoathly Road opposite the site. These features are shown on the submitted site layout as part of the application documents (PL-01 / P07) although the Planning Policy team will leave it to the Highways Authority to comment on detailed highways matters.

Other relevant matters

As the site is located on the edge of a settlement and within the High Weald National Landscape, a landscape-led and high quality design will be important. The Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD is also relevant. The Planning Policy team will leave it to other consultees such as the Council's Urban Designer to comment on detailed design matters.

The Old Mill in Dunnings Road is a Grade II listed building located to the north of the site. The Planning Policy team will leave it to other consultees such as the Council's Conservation Officer to comment on heritage matters.

There is ancient woodland to the east of the site. An appropriate buffer will need to be provided in accordance with national policy and guidance.

Mandatory biodiversity net gain will apply to the development proposal. A biodiversity net gain of at least 10% will need to be delivered. The Council encourages higher levels of biodiversity net gain as well as on-site biodiversity enhancements such as swift bricks, bird

boxes, bat boxes, bee bricks, hedgehog highways and native wildflower planting with nectar- and pollen-rich flowers.

In accordance with Policy DP17, financial contributions towards both SANG and SAMM mitigation are required as the site is within the 7km zone of influence for the Ashdown Forest SPA. A Habitats Regulations Assessment will need to be prepared and comments sought from Natural England.