



POYNINGS PARISH COUNCIL

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Regulation 18 Consultation on the MSDC Draft District Plan for 2021-2039

This is the response of Poynings Parish Council, the outline of which was unanimously agreed by a meeting of the councillors on 14th December 2022.

Although the Parish of Poynings isn't within the boundaries of the Sayers Common/Albourne part of the District plan, the residents of Poynings have to regularly travel through, or to, the affected areas. Because of this they have first-hand knowledge of the area, the transport difficulties, and countryside. The views in this report are not just the views of the Councillors but also the views of many residents of Poynings.

For clarity, this consultation report is split into eight sections:

1. Existing District Plan 2014-2031
2. Existing Sayers Common Development
3. Economy and tourism
4. Housing
5. Transport
6. Policies
7. Countryside
8. Environment

1. Existing District Plan 2014-2031

This plan has already been approved by the Planning inspector along with the additional housing that was identified in the DPD (Development Plan Documents). The recent announcement from the Department of Levelling up, Housing and Communities, that "targets set should not be mandatory and both constraints and consent of local communities will have greater consideration", needs to be taken at face value. The comments of the residents of Albourne and Sayers Common, along with the surrounding affected communities, must take precedence over dubious algorithms manipulated by the developers who seek to gain financially from building houses when they are not wanted, or required.

2. Existing Sayers Common Development

Sayers Common in the last few years has had 3 major developments which have already overloaded the local infrastructure. There has been noticeable increased flooding which is unlikely to have been caused by global warming. The community has already been affected by the regular increased flooding which have undoubtedly been caused by over development. The B2188 now floods whenever there is heavy rain and Reeds Lane becomes completely blocked, the drainage system now cannot cope. Also, the footpaths and woods are impassable. The land in this area is impermeable heavy clay so soakaways/balancing tanks (as suggested) will not work as they will rapidly fill and overflow.

The recent developments in Sayers Common have caused sewage problems in heavy rain and as the sewage works in Burgess Hill is already struggling with the increased load, it can only get worse. Studies have shown that the area is under severe water stress, water extraction

at Hardam have caused Horsham DC to pause development, and the west side of Mid Sussex is affected by this. No more development should be even considered until this is resolved. The already poor transport infrastructure has been made worse, and the increase in traffic has been noticeable, not only in Sayers Common where the developments have occurred but further afield in the surrounding communities.

3. Economy and tourism

The MSDC policy is to support the rural economy and tourism.

The rural economy is basically supported by farming. How can the destruction of over 130 acres of farmland support the rural economy? This proposal contradicts MSDC policy by building on the very land that is needed for the economy.

It is not clear how building over 2,000 houses in an area of scenic countryside will support tourism when it is the countryside people come to see, not housing estates.

4. Housing

The figures used to calculate the housing needs in the Draft District plan are based on the land area of MSDC. In reality, 60% of this is National Park or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This means that 100% of the possible housing requirements are being squeezed into 40% of the available area. This is not a realistic way of calculating the needs of the District with the inevitable outcome of building on farming land which is not acceptable with the need for more locally grown produce.

There is a large emphasis on "affordable housing", as the Southeast, and the area around Brighton, being one of the most expensive places to buy property, this is unlikely to be achieved (if even attempted). With the ongoing trend to working from home, it would make more sense to build houses where property is truly affordable, as people no longer have to live near their office. But maybe the developers won't make the same profit?

5. Transport

MSDC policy requires that new developments take into account the effect it will have on sustainable travel. A conservative estimate is that every new house will have 2 cars. As previously mentioned, the existing development has already caused an unacceptable increase in traffic. The nearest train stations and Hassocks (nearest) and Burgess Hill. There is no reliable public transport and both stations are too far away to walk or cycle. The most direct route is through Hurstpierpoint, which most people take, which is already gridlocked even on quiet days. Even if you can make it to the Stations there is inadequate parking so drivers will spend their time driving round the residential areas to park, with the inevitable increase in air pollution. The same problem will occur to the west in Cowfold and Partridge Green.

The proposed "solution" is to include another road (with more loss of farmland) alongside Reeds Lane. This will be of no use as the roads at either end cannot cope. This is assuming WSCC agree to the road/s, while the MSDC may "promise" new infrastructure, all it can do is allocate the land. The council understand it is up to WSCC to provide any funding for infrastructural development like schools, surgeries etc. So MSDC cannot promise anything. The plan states that Network Rail have spare capacity, however, this was based on figures obtained during the pandemic and the Balcombe Tunnel and Viaduct had reached capacity before the pandemic and populations levels were lower then. Proper studies should be carried to ensure that the rail service could cope, assuming people can get to the station.

6. Policies

Some of this has been covered but will touch in it again.

a. MSDC has stated that they will increase resilience to the effects of climate change.

The proposal does not take into account the impacts of flooding where events are getting more extreme and require more plans for enhanced management. Soakaways and attenuation ponds are unlikely to be effective on heavy clay.

b. MSDC wishes to move towards net zero.

If this is truly the case then they should be looking at sites that can access the rail network sustainably, as this is the best low carbon public transport.

c. MSDC states that that they will maintain the separate identity of settlement.

Sayers Common and Albourne are two separate settlements, and this should be made clear in the District plan. The proposal will have different impacts on them so should be assessed separately. A rather weak effort has been made in the plan with a very narrow strip of land separating them. This will not make any impression as all, and they will be, to all intents and purposes, one settlement. This will result in a serious loss of community identity, which is against MSDC policy.

7. Countryside

There seems to be a contradiction with the MSDC aim to protect the countryside and encourage access to it, and the draft District plan. Notably.

Building thousands of houses in the countryside does not protect it.

Removing many footpaths does not encourage access to it.

Building next to a footpath on a hill which already has flooding problems cannot encourage access to it.

Building houses next to/near other footpaths in an area that floods badly already will make most of them impassable and cannot encourage access to it.

8. Environment

This development, in estimated population, is larger than Steyning and about the same size as Storrington. The effect of concreting over agricultural land, that is known to flood, with 2,000 houses and the additional 4,000 cars can only increase the effects of climate change. As mentioned in 6b this does not fit with MSDC policy on a global scale.

On a local scale, the area at present is relatively quiet with dark skies and clean air. All of this will disappear if this development goes ahead and no one will want to go there, contrary to the claim that the development will attract visitors.

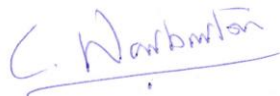
It is stated that this not will be visible from the Devils Dyke, which is in the South Downs National Park. As the Devils Dyke can be seen from Sayers Common this is not true.

If, as is claimed, there is a need for houses, why aren't the houses that have already been built not sold out.

Claims are made that there is not a primary school or shop, and these will be built to give a greater sense of community. There is in fact a Primary School and Shop in the proposed area.

The Parish Council does not support this plan.

Kind regards



Colin Warburton
Clerk to the Council