



# EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL

Council Offices, East Court, College Lane, East Grinstead, West Sussex, RH19 3LT

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**Town Clerk:** Mrs J W Holden IRRV (Hons) CMgr MCMI



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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Your Ref:

My Ref:

When calling please ask for: Mrs J Holden

13<sup>th</sup> January 2015

Claire Tester  
Head of Economic Development and Planning  
Mid Sussex DC  
Oaklands  
Haywards Heath  
RH15 1SS

Dear Claire

Please find enclosed the official response from East Grinstead Town Council concerning the Draft District Plan.

May I comment that the Council are pleased to have been invited to comment on the plan and we very much welcome the more inclusive position that the District have adopted in talking to the many stakeholders in this most recent draft.

We are encouraged by the recent strides in closer liaison that have been established between the District and the Town Council since September 2014 with regards discussion of our emerging neighbourhood plan, and very much hope that this has been the first step to a more collaborative approach concerning strategy for planning within the whole District.

We are currently redrafting our Neighbourhood Plan within a strategy approach agreed with MSDC and aim to consult with our public again this Spring, before a pre submission to MSDC in the Summer.

We feel that the only position that can be taken is working together for the planned and appropriate development of all towns and villages in the District which must come with appropriate infrastructure and mitigation to ensure that development is sustainable. To this extent we are pleased that the District Council has identified the first SANGS to provide dedicated communal green space for recreation as an alternative to the Ashdown Forest. We look forward to being part of the guiding and developing group for this first SANG in Ashplats Wood / East Court Estate.

1/2 cont...

We shall watch the progress of the draft plan with interest and trust that our comments in the fuller response are helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julie Holden', written in a cursive style.

Julie Holden

Town Clerk

# District Plan 2014 - 2031 Consultation Draft Consultation Response Form



The role of the District Plan is to say broadly what, where, when and how development will take place in Mid Sussex over the next 17 years. The overall strategy of the Plan is to support sustainable communities which promote the local economy, and provide the opportunity for residents to work within their communities and access other necessary services and facilities close to home.

Whilst the overall strategy of the Plan has not changed from the 2013 District Plan, we want to give residents and other interested parties an opportunity to comment on the updated wording of the text and policies, some of which have changed significantly since our last public engagement. These changes have been as a result of responses received, discussions with the professional and statutory bodies including the Planning Inspectorate and Department for Communities and Local Government, cooperation with other local authorities and changes in guidance and national policy.

The draft District Plan does not include a housing number, although it does include policies which allocate land at Burgess Hill for development. The housing number will be set once all of the technical work on need and capacity has been undertaken and discussions with our neighbouring authorities have concluded. There will be an opportunity to make comments on the housing numbers when the Plan is published in May 2015.



Information will only be used by Mid Sussex District Council and its employees in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Mid Sussex District Council will not supply information to any other organisation or individual except to the extent permitted by the Data Protection Act and which is required or permitted by law in carrying out any of its proper functions.

The information gathered from this form will only be used for the purposes described and any personal details given will not be used for any other purpose.

**We would like to hear your views on our District Plan 2014 – 2031 Consultation Draft. You can view the Document and background information and complete this form online at [www.midsussex.gov.uk/districtplan](http://www.midsussex.gov.uk/districtplan)**

## Respondent

Title	<b>Mr</b>	Initial	<b>J</b>	Surname	<b>Black</b>		
Organisation (if applicable)				<b>Kember Loudon Williams LLP</b>			
On behalf of (if applicable)				<b>East Grinstead Town Council</b>			
House no. / name		<b>Ridgers Barn</b>		Street	<b>Bunny Lane</b>		
Town/Village		<b>Tunbridge Wells</b>			Postcode	<b>TN3 9HA</b>	
Email	<b>Julian.Black@klw.co.uk</b>						
Please tick if you do not wish to be notified when a report summarising the issues raised and how these have been considered has been published (by email only)							

Do you have any comments to make on the Consultation Draft District Plan? Please set these out in the box below and continue on additional sheets if necessary.

*Kember Loudon Williams LLP (KLW) has been appointed by East Grinstead Town Council (EGTC) to advise on strategic planning matters that have implications for its emerging Neighbourhood Plan (EGNP), particularly having regard to future strategic growth of the town and the wider role that East Grinstead plays in the Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) Planning Strategy.*

*Having now had the opportunity to review the current consultation draft please accept these comments as the formal response of East Grinstead Town Council.*

#### Overview

*EGTC is concerned about the absence of the housing section of the plan and, more significantly, that there will not be an opportunity for the Town Council and other interested parties to have a say in or to influence the strategic housing growth proposals for the District ahead of the publication of the 'pre-submission' version of the plan i.e. the version of the plan that the District Council wishes to see adopted. This is a significant omission that has implications for growth and spatial planning across the District, but is particularly relevant to East Grinstead which is one of only three major tier 1 settlements in the District.*

*In this respect we would draw the Council's attention to paragraph 155 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which is explicit that early and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and businesses is essential in the preparation of Local Plans. The same paragraph goes on to emphasize the importance of community engagement to ensure that Local Plans reflect a collective vision and a set of agreed priorities for the sustainable development of the area.*

*We consider that by not fully engaging with local communities on the core issue of housing at an informal stage, MSDC may be denying residents the opportunity to contribute to discussions on the overall scale and distribution of housing growth, and this would appear contrary to both the localism agenda and core plan making objectives.*

*We also consider that wider generic policies contained within the plan must be drafted to facilitate the delivery of the overall housing growth requirements. It is therefore difficult to see how housing mix and affordable housing policies can be effective if they have been produced ahead of knowing what the overall housing need and target is. By necessity therefore the missing housing section will have to be retrospectively considered to suit the plan*

#### The Role of Neighbourhood Plans

*Section 3.16 of the consultation plans states that the District Council's preference is that the location and nature of 'additional development' (the surplus beyond the existing completions and strategic allocations) will be identified through Neighbourhood Plans to reflect the Government's localism agenda.*

*In general terms EGTC is supportive of this principle and welcomes the potential for additional control to be passed to local communities. However, this process must form part of a coordinated housing strategy for the District. We are concerned that the scale and scope of growth needed in the District goes far beyond what can reasonably be delivered by Neighbourhood Plans, without at the very least some guidance and testing of the level of housing that can be delivered within environmental (the proximity to the Ashdown Forest European Protected Site and large areas of AONB) and infrastructure constraints. Both of which have come to the fore in several recent appeals.*

*In this respect we would once again draw the Council's attention back to paragraph 16 of the NPPF, which clearly sets out that neighbourhood plans should "develop plans that support the strategic development set out in Local Plans, not replace them.*

*It is also EGTC's view that the absence of a coordinated strategic approach to housing is contrary to paragraph 154 of the NPPF, which clearly states that Local Plans should address the spatial implications of economic, social and environmental change and set out the opportunities for development and clear policies on what will or will not be permitted and where.*

*Likewise National Planning Policy Guidance is explicit that the Local Plan should communicate what is intended to happen in the area over the life of the plan, where and when this will occur and how it will be delivered. Relying on Neighbourhood plans to deliver an unspecified quantity of development is therefore contrary to national planning policy guidance for preparing strategic plans. As drafted there is simply no strategic guidance or meaningful spatial strategy for housing delivery.*

*This approach also raises questions about the deliverability of the Local Plan. There are a number of technical, legal and other reasons why some of the parished areas may not be able to (or wish to) take up the opportunity to take forward a Neighbourhood Plan. Furthermore, as drafted the plan contains no contingency to deliver the resulting deficit and therefore the District Council would encounter similar supply problems as they currently do. The whole Neighbourhood planning process is also subject to the inherent uncertainties of public referendum so there are no guarantees that this is a sound delivery mechanism – particularly at the scale of a tier 1 settlement.*

#### *Weakness of reliance on Neighbourhood Plans*

*It is EGTC's view that the proposed approach of MSDC to delegate major growth to neighbourhood plans, without any direction on the scale of growth to be planned for, is also too great a burden on the local community in East Grinstead. By MSDC declining to 'test' the environmental and infrastructure constraints of the town and from that to establish an appropriate level of housing growth – particularly in the context of the AONB status of large areas and the close proximity to the Ashdown Forest European Protected Area - the task of preparing the 'proportionate' evidence base to underpin a neighbourhood plan is too costly for the local community in East Grinstead to bare.*

*The associated work and costs needed to thoroughly 'test' and 'justify' the physical and environmental capacity of a town the scale of East Grinstead is likely to be considerable and costly to produce and defend at Examination. Furthermore, such a body of technical work should be undertaken by MSDC as a central component of the preparation of its Local Plan and cannot be done in isolation to other settlements in the District. This is the higher order plan that must set clear parameters for the lower order plans and policies – this is absent in the case of East Grinstead.*

#### *Absence of Planned Strategy for East Grinstead*

*As a major settlement with approximately 28,500 residents, East Grinstead is a major town within the context of the MSDC planning area and contributes significantly to the Districtwide economy. However, the town is also subject to a number of particularly sensitive and far-reaching constraints, most notably the protected AONB landscape and being located within 7km of the Ashdown Forest European Protected site, which has had major ramifications for development in settlements that surround it. Likewise, there are long-standing and serious infrastructure problems within the town that need a co-ordinated strategic approach to remedy.*

*Despite these constraints there are no District Plan strategic level policies that seek to address these problems or, at the very least, seek to minimise worsening conditions for the community of East Grinstead.*

*Proceeding with this plan without such important information appears to not recognise or consider the very core issues that a Local Planning Strategy should be addressing.*

#### *Absence of Infrastructure Delivery Plan*

*In addition to the absence of a co-ordinated strategy for East Grinstead, there is no form of infrastructure delivery plan contained in the consultation draft. Clearly strategic growth will be needed in order to meet as great an amount of housing and employment need as can be accommodated in the district up to 2031. It will therefore be essential that adequate infrastructure be provided to deliver this.*

*This infrastructure must be identified as part of the plan making process, with mechanisms put in place to deliver needed where necessary. Again we consider that to insert the housing section at a later date, with no thorough assessment of the consequences for wider infrastructure problems, further supports the feeling that the plan must urgently reconsider this matter.*

#### *Summary*

*Taking all of the above into consideration it is EGTC's view that before proceeding to the pre-submission stage of the plan making process the Council must develop a considered settlement hierarchy and identify, and environmentally test, the housing need and capacity for each of the major settlements of the District, including specifically for East Grinstead. Furthermore, we consider that once this work is complete key stakeholders and residents of the district should be afforded the right to comment again at an informal stage.*

*Thereafter, with appropriate environmental testing in place and a fully assessed and justified headline figure for housing supported by a qualified spatial strategy, the Town Council will prepare a final Neighbourhood Plan. This document will realise the potential but within tested parameters, set at a strategic level by the District Council.*

**Do you have any comments to make on the Sustainability Appraisal? Please set these out in the box below and continue on additional sheets if necessary.**

*We have the following comments to make.*

#### *Sustainability Objectives and Indicators*

*We are concerned about the absence of sustainability indicators that recognise the social importance of improving infrastructure and movement around key settlements. Workable infrastructure is an essential requirement for the district, particularly in relation to settlements such as East Grinstead that are already subject to major infrastructure constraints.*

#### *Strategic Approach to Neighbourhood Planning*

*We would also stress that the strategic decision to delegate housing delivery to Neighbourhood Plans is a core strategic decision and must be 'tested' in the context of the reasonable alternative i.e. MSDC setting out a settlement hierarchy and the level of growth*

*capable of being accommodated in each major town. We have no doubt that a plan with district wide strategic objectives and a co-ordinated approach to planning development in the most accessible and least constrained settlements would certainly score better against the defined sustainability objectives for the area. In the absence of this information we feel that the sustainability appraisal is lacking in credibility and would not adequately underpin the emerging Local Plan.*

Do you have any comments to make on the Habitats Regulations Assessments? Please set these out in the box below and continue on additional sheets if necessary.

*Having reviewed the consultation draft of the HRA Assessment we believe the existing draft is not sufficiently detailed to underpin the Local Planning Strategy.*

*Whilst it 'tests' the existing environmental impacts of the generic policies of the draft plan, it does not consider or address the critical strategic issues, namely the scale of growth that the district can accommodate without adverse impact upon European Protected sites. Likewise, it does not acknowledge the cumulative impact of existing planning consents and any additional growth that may be acceptable for East Grinstead over the plan period. Both are serious omissions.*

*In order to underpin the Local Planning Strategy that these hugely important issues must be identified and fully tested.*

**Thank you for taking the time to consider these issues.**

Please return all forms to Planning Policy, Mid Sussex District Council, Oaklands, Oaklands Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 1SS by 16<sup>th</sup> January 2015. If you require any advice on the completion of this form, please contact the Planning Policy Division on 01444 477053 or by email at [LDFConsultation@midsussex.gov.uk](mailto:LDFConsultation@midsussex.gov.uk).

## Monitoring questions for District Plan Consultation

We want to make sure that everyone is treated fairly and equally and that no-one gets left out of consultation that is why we are asking you these questions. The completion of these questions is not compulsory and we will not share this information with anyone else. It will be used only to better inform future consultations.

### 1 - What is your main interest in the Mid Sussex District Plan?

Business Interest  Representing an interest group  Personal interest  My job is to use the District Plan  Student

Other (please specify) .....

### 2 - How did you find out about your chance to comment on the District Plan Consultation Draft?

'Key contact'<sup>(i)</sup>  LDF Alert<sup>(i)</sup>  Newspaper  Word of mouth   
Parish Council  District Councillor  Mid Sussex Matters  Other website   
Council website  Other publication

Other (please specify) .....

Please specify (i.e. which newspaper, website, etc.) .....

### 3 - In what format have you viewed the District Plan Consultation Draft?

Paper copy  Website

### 3a - If you used the website, did you encounter any problems accessing information?

Yes  No  If yes, please specify .....

### 4 - Did the information provided help you to understand...

	Yes	No
How to comment?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How comments will be considered?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The process of forming the District Plan?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What to do if you have any queries?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 5 - Was the District Plan Consultation Draft...

	Yes	No
Well laid out?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Easy to read?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maps easy to read?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<sup>(i)</sup> If you are not already signed up to our Local Development Framework email alerts service, or not on our Key Contacts list, would you like to add your details to these lists? (Please tick relevant box). More details can be found at [www.midsussex.gov.uk/ldfconsultation](http://www.midsussex.gov.uk/ldfconsultation)

LDF Alerts (Individuals and Organisations)  Key Contacts List (Organisations Only)

## About you

If you are responding as an individual, please complete the "about you" questions. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please complete the "about your organisation" section.

**Age:**  under 18  25-34  45-54  60-64  75+  
 18-24  35-44  55-59  65-74

## Ethnic group

Please tick the box that best describes your ethnic group (2011 census definitions):

- |                                                                           |                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> White- White British                             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> White- White Irish                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White- Gypsy or Irish Traveller                  | <input type="checkbox"/> White- White Other*                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed- White and Black Caribbean                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed- White and Black African                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed- White and Asian                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed- Other*                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Asian British- Indian                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Asian British- Pakistani                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Asian British- Bangladeshi                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Asian British- Chinese                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Asian British- Other*                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Black/African/Caribbean/Black British- African |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black/African/Caribbean/Black British- Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> Black/African/Caribbean/Black British- Other*  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other ethnic group- Arab                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Other ethnic group- Other*                     |

\*If other please specify

## Do you have a disability?

- Yes  No

If you wish, please tell us the nature of your disability:

## What is your postcode?

## About your organisation (if relevant)

Please provide the name and contact details of your organisation:

