

From: planninginfo@midsussex.gov.uk
Sent: 16 June 2026 21:38
To: Caroline Grist
Subject: Mid Sussex DC - Online Register - Comments for Planning Application DM/26/1315

Comments summary

Dear Sir/Madam,

Planning Application comments have been made. A summary of the comments is provided below.

Comments were submitted at 16/06/2026 9:37 PM.

Application Summary

Address:	Land West Of Gatesmead Wickham Way Haywards Heath West Sussex
Proposal:	Proposed 49 new homes together with open space and associated infrastructure.
Case Officer:	Caroline Grist

[Click for further information](#)

Customer Details

Address:	1 Alder Way Haywards Heath
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Comments Details

Commenter Type:	Neighbour or general public
Stance:	Customer objects to the Planning Application

Reasons for comment:

Comments: Dear Planning Committee,

I write to formally object to the above planning application for the development of 49 dwellings on Wickham Fields.

I have lived at 1 Alder Way, immediately adjacent to the proposed development site, since 2019 with my husband and young son, who was born since we moved to the area. As a mother, Wickham Fields are not simply a pleasant amenity - they are an essential part of my child's daily life. My son plays on these fields regularly, explores the natural environment, and benefits enormously from having safe, open green space on our doorstep. The fields were an invaluable lifeline for our family during the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions of 2021, providing essential outdoor space for my son during his earliest years when formal play facilities were closed. The loss of this green space would directly and profoundly impact my child's wellbeing, safety and development.

My objection is based on the following material planning considerations, with particular emphasis on the impact this development would have on children and young families in the local area:

1. Biodiversity Loss

Wickham Fields represent an established area of semi-natural greenfield land that has been left largely undisturbed for many years. During this time, the site has developed ecological value as habitat for local wildlife, including birds, pollinators and small mammals that rely on the grassland, hedgerows and field margins present on the site.

Under the Environment Act 2021 and the Mid Sussex District Council's own Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements, all developments must deliver a minimum 10% measurable improvement in biodiversity value. This application must demonstrate - through a credible biodiversity assessment - that it can achieve this mandatory net gain, and I would urge the committee to scrutinise any such assessment rigorously. The mitigation hierarchy requires that efforts are made first to avoid and minimise impacts to on-site biodiversity through site selection and design, with offsetting used only as a last resort.

The wholesale development of an established greenfield site cannot credibly achieve genuine biodiversity net gain when compared to its current undeveloped state. The fields currently function as part of a wider ecological network, providing connectivity between habitats in the surrounding area. Fragmenting or destroying this habitat would result in irreversible biodiversity loss that no offsetting scheme can adequately compensate.

Beyond the legal requirements, Wickham Fields provide an irreplaceable opportunity for local children to connect with nature, observe wildlife and develop an understanding of the natural world. My son regularly watches birds, insects and other wildlife on the fields - experiences that cannot be replicated in a landscaped housing estate. I request that the committee requires a full, independent ecological impact assessment before any determination is made, and that the applicant demonstrates compliance with the mitigation hierarchy - namely, why this site cannot be avoided entirely in favour of previously developed land.

2. Loss of Recreational and Amenity Value

Wickham Fields have been used by the local community - and particularly by families with young children - for recreation, play and wellbeing for many years. As a green space immediately accessible to the residential areas of Gatesmead, Alder Way and the wider Lindfield community, the fields serve a vital function as safe, informal outdoor space where children can play freely away from traffic and other hazards.

The amenity value of this land is substantial and demonstrable:

The fields provide the only immediately accessible, safe outdoor play space for children in the Birchen Oak development and surrounding streets - there is no alternative within safe walking distance for a young child

During the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021, the fields were essential for children's physical activity and emotional wellbeing when playgrounds, nurseries and schools were closed - for many local children, including my son, this was their only safe outdoor space during lockdown. The space is used daily by families with young children, for whom the fields represent the only safe, traffic-free environment where children can run, play and explore without the constant danger of vehicles. For toddlers and pre-school children especially, this is irreplaceable. Research consistently shows that access to green space is critical for children's physical development, mental health and emotional regulation. Children who grow up with access to natural green space have better outcomes across a range of health and wellbeing measures - removing this resource from local children would cause lasting harm.

The "open space" referenced in this application cannot replace the existing value of the undeveloped fields for children and families. Pocket parks and landscaped verges within a housing estate do not provide the safe, open space that children need to play freely. They do not replicate the sense of freedom, adventure and connection with nature that the existing fields offer to local children. The committee should consider whether the residual open space proposed is genuinely suitable for children's play and recreation, or merely a token gesture designed to satisfy a planning requirement while offering nothing of real value to young families.

3. Traffic, Highways and Road Safety

Birchen Lane serves as the primary approach road to the Gatesmead and Alder Way development, which was completed in 2019. Since completion, the road has required major improvement works due to its deteriorating condition - works that have still not been

undertaken by the highways authority.

The addition of 49 dwellings will generate significant additional vehicle movements along this already failing infrastructure. As a mother of a young child who will soon be walking and cycling to local schools, I have serious concerns about what this means for children's safety: Volume: An estimated 80-100+ additional vehicle movements per day on a road network already operating beyond its designed capacity

Road condition: Birchen Lane already suffers from severe pothole damage and structural deterioration that creates hazards for all road users, including cyclists and pedestrians

School traffic: Local schools, including Lindfield Primary Academy, are situated on residential roads and quiet lanes that children walk and cycle along daily. Additional car journeys at school drop-off and pick-up times will create dangerous congestion at pinch points where children are most vulnerable. As a parent, the prospect of my child navigating roads with significantly increased traffic is deeply alarming

Pedestrian safety: There are no segregated pedestrian footways along significant sections of Birchen Lane. Children walking to school, to friends' homes or to local amenities are forced to share the road with vehicles. Increasing traffic volumes on roads with no pavement directly increases the risk of a child being struck by a vehicle - a risk that no parent should be asked to accept

Cumulative impact: This application must be assessed in the context of cumulative traffic impact from all recent and planned development in the area, not in isolation

No credible plan has been presented to demonstrate how the existing road network can safely accommodate this additional traffic when the council has demonstrably been unable to maintain the infrastructure serving the current level of use. To approve further development without first addressing existing deficiencies would be contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework requirement that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe. I submit that both thresholds are met in this case.

4. Breach of Local Plan Policies

I believe this application is contrary to several policies within the Mid Sussex District Plan and the Lindfield and Lindfield Rural Neighbourhood Plan, including but not limited to:

Policy DP37 (Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows): The development is likely to result in the loss of established hedgerows and mature trees on the site boundaries that contribute to the character of the area and provide ecological habitat

Policy DP38 (Biodiversity): The proposal fails to adequately demonstrate how it will protect and enhance biodiversity in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy, or how genuine 10% biodiversity net gain will be achieved on a greenfield site

Policy DP24 (Leisure and Cultural Facilities and Activities): The loss of informal recreational green space that serves the existing community is contrary to the policy objective of protecting and enhancing leisure and recreational facilities

Policy DP21 (Transport): The development will generate traffic that cannot be safely accommodated on the existing highway network without improvements that have not been secured or funded

Policy DP20 (Securing Infrastructure): The application fails to demonstrate how adequate infrastructure (education, healthcare, highways) will be provided to serve the additional population generated by the development

5. Inadequate Community Infrastructure

Haywards Heath already suffers from an acute shortage of community infrastructure, and this application fails to adequately address how 49 additional homes - likely to attract young families with children - will be supported by the local services that children depend upon:

Education: The population of Haywards Heath has increased by approximately 50% since 2001, yet no additional secondary schools have been opened to serve this growing community. Primary schools in the area are already at or near capacity, and parents are increasingly unable to secure places at their nearest school. As a mother whose child will be entering the school system in the coming years, I am gravely concerned that the addition of dozens more school-age children from this development will make an already unacceptable situation significantly worse. Every child deserves a place at a good local school - this development puts that at risk for existing families.

Healthcare: Local doctors' surgeries and hospital facilities are already operating beyond comfortable capacity. As a parent, timely access to GP appointments and paediatric services

is not a luxury - it is essential for my child's health and development. Adding potentially 100+ new residents, including many young children requiring regular health visitor, GP and dental appointments, without corresponding investment in healthcare infrastructure will further degrade the level of service available to all local families.

The applicant has not demonstrated that adequate infrastructure capacity exists - or will be delivered - to support the proposed development without detriment to existing residents. In summary, as a mother whose child's safety, health and happiness will be directly affected by this proposal, I urge the planning committee to refuse this application on the following material grounds:

Biodiversity loss that cannot be adequately mitigated or offset, contrary to the Environment Act 2021 and Policy DP38

Loss of the only safe, accessible outdoor play space for local children and families, contrary to Policy DP24

Unacceptable impact on highway safety, particularly for children walking and cycling to school, and severe residual cumulative impact on the road network, contrary to the NPPF and Policy DP21

Breach of multiple Local Plan policies as detailed above

Inadequate community infrastructure, particularly school places and healthcare capacity, to serve the additional families without detriment to local children and existing residents

The proposed development would cause demonstrable harm to local children and families that significantly and demonstrably outweighs its benefits when assessed against the policies of the Development Plan taken as a whole. I ask the committee to put the safety and wellbeing of the area's children at the forefront of their consideration.

Yours faithfully,

[Redacted Signature]

1 Alder Way, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 1AN

Kind regards