

Caroline Grist

From: planninginfo@midsussex.gov.uk
Sent: 16 June 2026 21:40
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 9:39 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 West Sussex
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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 and have used Wickham Fields consistently throughout that time for walking and exercise. The fields were an invaluable community resource during the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions of 2021, providing essential outdoor space for local residents during an extremely difficult period. My son, who was born since we moved to the area, now also uses the fields regularly. The loss of this green space would directly and significantly impact my family's quality of life and daily routine.

My objection is based on the following material planning considerations:

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. 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 for recreation, exercise 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 informal public open space.

The amenity value of this land is substantial and demonstrable:

- The fields provide the only immediately accessible green space for residents of the Birchen Oak development and surrounding streets
- During the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021, the fields were essential for physical and mental wellbeing when formal recreational facilities were closed and travel was restricted
- The space is used daily by walkers, runners and families with young children for whom the fields represent safe, traffic-free outdoor space
- Research consistently shows that access to green space is a proven protective factor for mental health for children, adults and elderly residents alike

The "open space" referenced in this application cannot replace the existing amenity value of the undeveloped fields in their current form. Pocket parks and landscaped verges within a housing estate do not replicate the openness, tranquillity and sense of connection with nature that the existing fields provide. The committee should consider whether the residual open space proposed is genuinely equivalent in recreational value or merely a token gesture to satisfy a planning requirement.

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. My specific concerns regarding highway safety include:

- 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. Additional car journeys at school drop-off and pick-up times will increase congestion at already dangerous pinch points and present heightened road safety concerns for children walking and cycling to school
- Pedestrian safety: There are no segregated pedestrian footways along significant sections of Birchen Lane, meaning that increased traffic volumes directly increase the risk to pedestrians, including children and elderly residents
- 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 - will be supported by local services:

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. The addition of dozens of school-age children from this development will further exacerbate an already unacceptable situation.

Healthcare: Local doctors' surgeries and hospital facilities are already operating beyond comfortable capacity. Adding potentially 100+ new residents without corresponding investment in healthcare infrastructure will further degrade the level of service available to existing residents. 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, I urge the planning committee to refuse this application on the following material grounds:

1. Biodiversity loss that cannot be adequately mitigated or offset, contrary to the Environment Act 2021 and Policy DP38
2. Loss of valued recreational amenity space that serves the existing community, contrary to Policy DP24
3. Unacceptable impact on highway safety and severe residual cumulative impact on the road network, contrary to the NPPF and Policy DP21
4. Breach of multiple Local Plan policies as detailed above
5. Inadequate community infrastructure to serve the additional population without detriment to existing residents

The proposed development would cause demonstrable harm that significantly and demonstrably outweighs its benefits when assessed against the policies of the Development Plan taken as a whole.

Yours faithfully,



Kind regards