



Mid Sussex District Council

Oaklands
Oaklands Road
Haywards Heath
West Sussex
RH16 1SS

01 October 2025

Dear Andrew Watt,

ADDENDUM TO REPRESENTATION LETTER SUBMITTED BY WORTH PARISH COUNCIL DATED 27TH MAY 2025 RELATING TO DM/24/2957: SEVER EXISTING LAND TO RETAIN EXISTING PUBLIC HOUSE USE AND AREA OF PUB GARDEN AND ERECT A CONVENIENCE STORE AND 4 NO. APARTMENTS WITH ASSOCIATED WORKS, INCLUDING ALTERATIONS TO THE EXISTING VEHICULAR ACCESS AND CAR PARK (AMENDED PLANS AND RETAIL JUSTIFICATION RECEIVED 1 MAY 2025) (UPDATED DRAINAGE, ECOLOGY AND LANDSCAPE INFORMATION RECEIVED 26 JUNE 2025) (OFF-SITE HIGHWAY WORKS PLAN RECEIVED 9 SEPTEMBER 2025)

I am writing on behalf of Worth Parish Council. This letter provides an addendum to the representation letter, and objection, submitted by Worth Parish Council dated 27th May 2025 relating to application DM/24/2957.

This letter discusses a further two reasons as to why Worth Parish Council **object** to the proposed development.

Retail Justification

The applicant has submitted a Retail Justification Statement (prepared by ROK Planning, dated 23 April 2025) which purports to “*provide further retail justification in support of the proposal*”, and which has been prepared following the submission of a number of public comments which have raised concern regarding the impact of the proposed convenience store on existing convenience shopping provision within Coptorne.

Section 3 of the ROK Retail Justification statement discusses the planning policy and guidance it considers is relevant to the retail element of the proposed development and at paragraphs 3.17 to 3.21 provides a policy summary, which concludes:

3.17 The Site is located within an area designated as a Category 2 settlement under policy DP6, being a ‘Larger Village’ acting as a ‘Local Service Centre’.

3.18 On that basis, taking into account the NPPF definition of town centres, the Site is ‘in-centre’. In other words, it is the preferred location for main town centre development (including retail).

3.19 Given the above, in accordance with both local and national policy, neither the retail sequential nor the retail impact tests are required to be undertaken the justify the proposed retail use.

3.20 In any case, the Site would fall below the local threshold set out under policy DP2 where a retail impact assessment would be required.

Because the amount of retail floorspace proposed by this application (372 sq.m gross) falls below the 500 sq.m threshold set by Policy DP2 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031, we concur with the conclusion reached by the applicant that there is no planning policy requirement for a specific retail impact assessment to

be undertaken for this application. However, that does not in itself remove or lessen the expressed concerns of residents about the potential impact of this proposal on existing stores in Copthorne and particularly the neighbouring KwikMart, including the Copthorne Post Office which is a designated Important Community Facility protected by Neighbourhood Plan Policy CNP4.

We do not agree with the applicant that there is no requirement for this proposal to be subject to the sequential test. We consider the proper application of national and local planning policy maintains that this proposal should be subject to a sequential test, and we note that (to date) no such test has been undertaken.

Sequential test justification.

The applicant's Retail Justification statement, with reference to Policy DP6, argues that because the site is located within a Category 2 settlement under Policy DP6, with the settlement acting as a "*Local Service Centre*", then it therefore qualifies as being 'in-centre' for the purposes of national planning policy, and therefore no sequential test is required.

Paragraph 91 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that "*Local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan. Main town centre uses should be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations; and only if suitable sites are not available (or expected to become available within a reasonable period) should out of centre sites be considered*".

Annex 2 of the NPPF ("Glossary") defines "town centre" as an "*Area defined on the local authority's policies map, including the primary shopping area and areas predominantly occupied by main town centre uses within or adjacent to the primary shopping area. References to town centres or centres apply to city centres, town centres, district centres and local centres but exclude small parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance. Unless they are identified as centres in the development plan, existing out-of-centre developments, comprising or including main town centre uses, do not constitute town centres*".

There is no centre and no primary shopping area defined for Copthorne by either the adopted policies map of the Mid-Sussex District Plan or the Copthorne Neighbourhood Plan. The application site therefore cannot be considered to be within a centre that satisfies the NPPF definition of a town centre. In NPPF terms the site is 'out-of-centre'.

The site location also falls outside of the centres referred by Policy DP2 and DP3, whilst the Copthorne Neighbourhood Plan does not define or identify any 'centre' within its area.

The term 'local service centre' relied on by the applicant to justify their argued case for not undertaking a sequential test, is taken from the settlement hierarchy accompanying Policy DP6, and is a description of the character and functions of the settlement as a whole as "*providing key services*" to the wider hinterland. The 'local service centre' terminology used by the District Plan is taken from the District Council's "*Settlement Sustainability Review, May 2015*" from which it is clear that the term is descriptive, designed to encompass a comprehensive range of facilities and services, and fundamentally is not aligned with the definition of 'centre' provided by national policy and the application of national retail policy.

It would also simply not make any sense for the development plan to apply retail policy requirements to proposals within the district's defined town, village and neighbourhood centres (as per Policies DP2 and DP3) but to effectively remove such considerations for retail proposals in all other settlements within the district.

The facts here are that the application proposal includes 372 sq.m new retail floorspace. The retail use constitutes a main town centre use. The application site is not within a centre, nor does it accord with the development plan. In such circumstances paragraph 91 of the NPPF, and Policy DP2 of the Mid Sussex District Plan require the application to be subject to a sequential test. Furthermore, paragraph 95 of the NPPF says "*where an application fails to satisfy the sequential test it should be refused*".

Highways

To the northeast, the scheme proposes off-site highways works include upgrading the existing access and extending the footway / reducing the lay-by outside nos.4 and 6a Copthorne Bank. The proposed drawings show that the kerb would be at a 45-degree angle. We agree with the comments from Surrey County Council dated 6th August 2025, that with a 45-degree angle, there would be poor access to and from the bus stop. We would also like to see the angle changed to 90-degrees to provide a larger bus boarding area to ensure that it is accessible for all users.

The scheme also seeks to reduce the space available for parking outside nos.4 and 6a Copthorne Bank. Parking within the village in areas nearby to key shops and services is already under pressure. The Proposed Highway Works (ADL_6033-05A) drawing states that space will be maintained for two cars to park, however we do not feel that there will be sufficient space for two vehicles to park, particularly if one of them is a larger vehicle, without encroaching the junction of Meadow Approach and Copthorne Bank. Given these two existing spaces are situated adjacent to the post office and the post box any reduction in the space available for parking is likely to reduce the accessibility of these services for those who may not be able to park further away from them. We therefore believe that the proposed development would reduce accessibility to services for local residents and would not protect '*the safety of road users and pedestrians*' contrary to Policy DP21.

Conclusion

This letter provides an addendum to the representation letter submitted by Worth Parish Council dated 27th May 2025 relating to application DM/24/2957.

The proposed development includes a main town centre use (retail) but is not located within an existing centre and does not accord with the development plan. In accordance with paragraph 91 of the NPPF, a retail sequential test should be submitted with the application.

The development seeks to undertake off-site highway works which includes a 45-degree angle kerb to the northeast. This is not ideal in terms of bus boarding and assisting accessibility to bus services. A 90-degree kerb angle would provide a larger bus boarding area that would better ensure bus services are accessible for all.

The off-site works also includes a reduction in parking space outside of nos.4 and 6a Copthorne Bank and we are doubtful that the resultant space will be sufficient for two vehicles to park safely. Again, this creates an accessibility concern for residents who may have additional mobility needs and their ease of access to the post office and post box. The proposed development would therefore fail to protect the safety of road users and pedestrians contrary to Policy DP21.

In addition to the issues discussed in our previous representation, the proposed development fails to accord with the NPPF or the Development Plan, and so we object to the proposals and strongly believe that permission should be refused.