

June 2026

Mid Sussex District Council
Oaklands Road
Haywards Heath
RH16 1SS

Re: Planning Application DM/26/1132 - Land Parcel to the North of Nos. 42–54 Hurst Road, Hassocks

We write as residents of Belmont Lane to register an objection to the above application. We do so with full respect for the applicants' stated purpose: providing a secure and permanent home for two local donkeys is a worthy aim, and we have no objection whatsoever to the keeping of donkeys on this land.

We would note at the outset that we had to discover this application ourselves through the planning portal, rather than being informed directly as neighbours with an immediate interest in the lane. The absence of any prior engagement with affected residents has made it difficult to fully understand the applicants' intentions, and our representation is necessarily based solely on the information presented in the application as submitted.

Our home was designed from the outset with the surrounding ecology and landscape in mind. It is from that perspective, as people genuinely invested in this corner of the countryside, that we raise the following concerns.

The principal planning policy objections, namely the classification of the shepherd huts, countryside policies DP12 and DP13, biodiversity net gain under DP38, and the retrospective nature of the access and huts, have been set out comprehensively in representations submitted by our immediate neighbours on Belmont Lane. We do not repeat those arguments here, but we associate ourselves with them fully. We wish instead to draw attention to three specific matters that arise from our direct knowledge of the site and lane.

1. Wildlife movement and the proposed fencing

The fields along Belmont Lane support free-roaming deer and other wildlife whose movement across this land forms part of a wider ecological corridor. The proposed 1.2-metre cleft chestnut fencing enclosing some 2,985 sq m would create a substantial barrier to that passage.

We note an apparent discrepancy between the fencing already installed on site and the drawings submitted, and ask that clarification on the final specification be sought

before the application is determined. A condition requiring wildlife-permeable lower rails or passage gaps would help preserve existing movement through the field.

2. The new access: tree roots and day-to-day servicing

We share our neighbours' concerns about the safety of the **new** vehicular access onto Belmont Lane. We add two points specific to this part of the lane.

First, the proposed hard-standing for tractor parking is situated immediately adjacent to mature trees whose root systems extend beneath the lane surface. Compaction and the laying of type-1 material in this zone risks causing irreversible harm to these trees. We ask that a tree root protection assessment be required before any further works are permitted in this area.

Second, the planning statement does not address how the land will be serviced. The keeping of donkeys will inevitably require regular visits from vets, farriers and feed suppliers, as well as the periodic removal of manure. These movements involve large vehicles on a lane already used daily by school children, pedestrians, dog walkers, horse riders, and residents' cars and vans. We ask that this be addressed before permission is granted.

3. Light pollution and the shepherd huts

The application site lies close to the southern boundary of the South Downs National Park. Ditchling Beacon, an officially designated Dark Sky Discovery Site within the South Downs International Dark Sky Reserve and one of only three such reserves in England, lies approximately two to three miles to the south. This part of West Sussex is recognised internationally for the quality of its dark skies, and that character extends to the fields and lanes around Belmont Lane.

The planning statement describes the shepherd huts as ancillary to animal care. However, the application contains no restriction on their use, and their current positioning on site suggests that residential, holiday or entertainment use cannot be excluded. Any habitual evening or overnight occupation of structures on this site risks light spill that would be harmful to the rural and dark-sky character of the area. We ask that, if any form of habitation within the huts is permitted, a condition restricting external lighting be attached.

Conclusion

In summary, we do not object to the principle of donkeys being kept on this land. Our concerns relate specifically to the scope of the associated infrastructure, the practicality and safety of the **new** access onto Belmont Lane, the potential impact on local wildlife, and the risk of the shepherd huts being used in ways inconsistent with the rural character of the area. We ask that the application be determined with these points

in mind and that, where any permission is granted, appropriate conditions be attached to safeguard the interests of the lane and its users.

We recognise the welfare urgency regarding the donkeys' relocation and do not wish to obstruct a timely decision. We therefore support determination of this application by the stated date of 9 July 2026, without extension of time.

We trust these matters will be weighed carefully and that a decision will be reached that is fair both to the applicants and to the wider community.