

MPS/GL

8th June 2026

**Clayton Wickham Farmhouse
Belmont Lane
Hurstpierpoint
West Sussex BN6 9EP**

By Email

Ms Anna Tidey
Mid Sussex District Council
Oaklands Road
Haywards Heath RH16 1SS

Dear Sirs,

Application No: DM/26/1132

Proposal: Proposed Tractor Parking Area, Donkey Enclosure, Donkey Stable, Three Shepherd Huts and a Wildlife Pond

Location: Land parcel to the North of Nos 42-54 Hurst Road, Hassocks, West Sussex

Letter of Objection

1. Introduction

- 1.1 We live at Clayton Wickham Farmhouse, Belmont Lane, BN6 9EP which is at the northern end of Belmont Lane. We have resided at this property since March 1976, i.e. just over 50 years.
- 1.2 This letter sets out the grounds of objection to the Planning Application above, made by the owner/occupier of Penlee, 52 Hurst Road, Hassocks BN6 9NL, [REDACTED]

2. Reasons for Objection

- 2.1 Precise grounds for objection are set out below:

A) Unsupported and unjustified development in the countryside

- 2.2 The site lies within a countryside location in planning policy terms, where new development is only supported in very limited circumstances. Furthermore, the site lies within a 'local gap' between Hassocks and Hurstpierpoint, where new development is further resisted to prevent the coalescence between the two villages.

- 2.3 District Plan Policy DP12 (Protection and Enhancement of Countryside) states that:

*The countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty
Development will be permitted in the countryside, defined as the area outside of built-up area boundaries on the Policies Map, provided it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District, and:*

- It is necessary for the purposes of agriculture,*
- It is supported by a specific policy reference either elsewhere in the Plan, or Development Plan Document or relevant Neighbourhood Plan*

- 2.4 Policy DP13 (Preventing Coalescence) states that *“development will be permitted if it does not result in the coalescence of settlements which harms the separate identity and amenity of settlements, and would not have an unacceptable urbanising effect on the area between settlements.”*
- 2.5 The application is separated into four different elements. The proposed tractor parking area, donkey enclosure and donkey stable fall under the purposes of agriculture. The proposed shepherd huts would fall under residential use as ancillary residential accommodation for a neighbouring dwelling and the wildlife pond would comprise a biodiversity improvement initiative.
- 2.6 While agricultural uses are generally accepted in countryside locations, any agricultural development must be carefully assessed and justified. In this case, the site does not form part of an established agricultural unit and there has been no historic agricultural use on the site. Regarding the proposed tractor area, it is not considered that a storage area for two tractors is reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture on this site. Indeed, it is unclear why a domestic sit-on lawnmower could not be used to mow the land, with this being stored within the extensive residential curtilage of Crossways.
- 2.7 There is no specific objection to the keeping of two donkeys on the site, but it should be noted that their upkeep will require the delivery of food and bedding materials to the stable. This will result in an increase in traffic entering and exiting the site to and from Belmont Lane, and on to Wickham Hill.
- 2.8 A principle area of objection relates to the placement of three shepherd huts on the site. Their use for residential purposes requires planning permission as a material change of use from agriculture to residential use. As the use of these huts would not be for agricultural users, there is no planning policy support for their use and therefore, this directly conflicts with District Plan Policy DP12. As there are no material planning considerations that justify a diversion from the Development Plan, this is sufficient to justify the refusal of this planning application.
- 2.9 On the Site Location Plan attached to the Application the combined properties of Penlee (52) and Crossways are edged in blue, indicating that they are in the same ownership. i.e. they are owned by the Applicant. There is therefore, no justification for the use of this field for residential purposes. Furthermore, there is plenty of space for all three shepherd huts to be positioned within the domestic curtilage of Penlee and Crossways and therefore, no justification or need for the shepherd huts to be positioned in the open countryside. The nature of the agricultural uses is far too small-scale to justify living accommodation on the land to support this use.
- 2.10 Therefore, the first ground for objection is that the positioning of the three shepherd huts on the land would not be for the purposes of agriculture and therefore, the proposal would directly conflict with both Policies DP12 and DP13. As there are no material considerations dictating otherwise, this must be a reason for refusing the planning application.

B) Impact upon the character and appearance of the area

- 2.11 The positioning of the three shepherd huts on the site would have an urbanising impact upon the character of the site and surrounding area. This would also fail to prevent the coalescence between Hassocks and Hurstpierpoint and therefore, the application would conflict with both District Plan Policies DP12 and DP13.
- 2.12 Therefore, the second ground for objection is that there would be a harmful impact upon the character and appearance of the open countryside.

C) Ecology and biodiversity net gain

- 2.13 The proposal comprises several forms of development within an open field. No ecological information has been submitted with the application and therefore there is no confirmation that protected ecological species would not be harmed by the proposed development.

Without a suitable assessment of the impact upon protected ecological species, the application is currently contrary to Policy DP38 (biodiversity).

- 2.14 The application is submitted on the basis that it would meet the “de minimis” exemption for biodiversity net gain, in that there would be a net loss of less than 25 square metres of non-priority habitat. However, the stable, associated hardstanding and the proposed tractor storage are all clearly in excess of 25 square metres. The footprint of the three shepherd huts would also result in a net loss of non-priority habitat and should be included in this figure, therefore, contrary to the submission the application does trigger biodiversity net gain and without this information, the application must be refused on this basis.

D) Highways Considerations

- 2.15 Belmont Lane is a narrow single track private road that is also a public footpath and bridle way.
- 2.16 The Lane carries pedestrians and horse riders as well as vehicles and it is not uncommon for us to encounter a dozen or more pedestrians when driving from our house to the main road.
- 2.17 As previously stated, we have lived here for just over 50 years and we can confirm that there has been no access onto the site from Belmont Lane in all that time.
- 2.18 The Applicant has created an access which contravenes planning control. While there are permitted development rights to create a new vehicular access onto an unclassified road this is only where the access is *“required in connection with development permitted by any class in this schedule.”*
- 2.19 As the land does not have an existing lawful planning use there are no permitted development rights and the access has therefore been created in contravention of planning regulations.
- 2.20 In addition, vehicular access is, in our view, dangerous. Visibility to the south being obscured by a large oak tree and vegetation and there is a serious risk of an accident taking place. The unnecessary safety risk is, in our opinion, a reason for refusal on its own.
- 2.21 Permission for a new access onto Belmont Lane in the circumstances would set a precedent for other properties on the Lane to reasonably expect to form their own accesses.
- 2.22 You will be aware that there is a substantial housing scheme proposed on the west side of Belmont Lane, which would also allow for a considerable increase in traffic onto the Lane and considerably increase the risk of accidents occurring at its junction with Hurst Road/Wickham Hill.
- 2.23 We believe that the Highways Authority, namely WSCC should be consulted in regard to the access to obtain their views.

E) Procedures

- 2.24 The description of the application is inaccurate and misleading. The vehicular access as discussed above has already been created contrary to planning regulations. The three shepherd huts are onsite already so that these elements of the application are retrospective and a further reason for refusal. Necessary information in connection with ecological appraisal and biodiversity has not been addressed and we respectfully request the

application continues to be determined with the target date of 9th July 2026 and that there are no grounds for granting an extension regarding this.

F) Neighbour and general public observations (Third Party observations)

We note from the MSDC website a representation letter from the owner of Crossways strongly supporting the application. We think it only right to point out that this representation was submitted by a family member closely related to the Applicant and is not therefore representative of an independent viewpoint.

In addition, we should again point out that, as we have already stated under paragraph 2.9 above, it would appear that as a result of the blue edging line marking the boundaries of both Penlee and Crossways it must be assumed that the Applicant owns or controls both properties.

He has, therefore, in effect written, or caused to be written, a Representation letter supporting his own Application.

This letter should, therefore be disregarded.

3. Conclusion

.We respectfully submit that the application should be refused on the following grounds:

- a) Unjustified and harmful development within the countryside which is not for the purpose of agricultural.
- b) Harmful impact upon the appearance and character of the countryside.
- c) Erosion of the Strategic Gap between the historic settlements of Hassocks and Hurstpierpoint.
- d) Insufficient information to demonstrate that there will be no harmful impact on protected ecological species.
- e) Insufficient information to demonstrate that the proposal would provide a biodiversity net gain of at least 10%.
- f) Unnecessary, harmful and dangerous impact on general safety of the highway.

Yours sincerely,

