



Mid Sussex District Council
Oaklands Road
Haywards Heath
West Sussex
RH16 1SS

Our ref: 14246
Date: 10 February 2026

For the attention of: Steven King

Application ref: DM/25/3129
Location: Land At Borde Hill Lane Haywards Heath West Sussex
Proposal/Description: Outline planning application for the erection of up to 125 dwellings, together with the provision of landscaping, open space, and associated development works, with access from Balcombe Road. All matters reserved except for access.

Thank you for consulting with Place Services on the above Outline planning application. This letter sets out our consultation response on the landscape impact of the application and how the proposal relates and responds to the landscape setting and context of the site.

1.0. Site Context

1.1. The Site is located to the north of Haywards Heath and to the east of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Borde Hill Registered Park and Garden. The Site comprises 3 fields to the north-east of Borde Hill Lane and Balcombe Road. A railway line is located to the east of the site. The wider landscape comprises other assorted rolling grassland fields, and the residential edge of Haywards Heath.

2.0. Planning Policy Context

Mid Sussex District Plan (Adopted 2018)

2.1. The following policies are considered relevant from a landscape perspective:

- Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside
- Policy DP16: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Policy DP26: Character and Design
- Policy DP34: Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets
- Policy DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- Policy DP38: Biodiversity

Submission Draft Mid Sussex District Plan (Regulation 19)

- 2.2. Within the Draft District Plan, the site is identified as 'DPA7: Land east of Borde Hill Lane, Haywards Heath' for 60no. dwellings. Policy requirements include [inter alia]:
- *“1. Contain development to central and eastern parts of site to reduce potential impacts on the setting of High Weald AONB (to be informed by an LVIA).*
 - *2. Follow a sequential approach by directing development away from areas of flood risk and mitigate impacts through integration of SUDS to deliver biodiversity/environmental improvements and flood resilience.*
 - *3. Provide suitable vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access from Borde Hill Lane via a fourth arm from the roundabout, south west of the site.*
 - *4. Roundabout to be enlarged and positioned to allow safe movement of road users and provision of new dropped kerbs and tactile paving on southern approach, in agreement with the Highway Authority.*
 - *7. Provide good acoustic design to address noise impacts associated with the railway.”*

Ansty, Staplefield and Brook Street Neighbourhood Plan (Made 2017)

- 2.3. Policy AS1 New Housing Development and Policy AS3 High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are considered relevant to this application.

Mid Sussex Capacity Assessment (2007/2014)

- 2.4. The Site is located within Area 46 Horsgate High Weald. The assessment judges that this area has moderate sensitivity and substantial value, forming an overall low/medium capacity.
- 2.5. A low/medium capacity indicates that *“development is likely to have an adverse effect on most of the character area and while smaller development may be possible in a very few locations within the character area, it will not be suitable for strategic scale development”*.

3.0. Review of LVIA

- 3.1. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been submitted to accompany the application, undertaken by fabrik in January 2026.
- 3.2. We are largely satisfied with the submitted methodology included within Appendix 1, and consider it complied with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3).

Landscape Character

- 3.3. Paragraph 5.47 of GLVIA3 states; *“If the area affected by the proposal is on the margin of or adjacent to such a designated area, thought may be given to the extent to which it demonstrates the characteristics and qualities that led to the designation of the area. Boundaries are very important in defining the extent of designated areas, but they often follow convenient physical features and as a result there may be land outside the boundary that meets the designation criteria and land inside that does not”*.
- 3.4. As per Policy DP16 High Weald AONB of the MSDP (2014), proposals must have regard to *“the identified landscape features or components of natural beauty and to their setting”*. The effects are not only limited to within the boundary itself, but also to the setting of the National Landscape. This is pertinent considering that the Site itself possesses many features which are characteristic of the High Weald National Landscape, including woodlands, interconnected with shaws and hedgerows, small irregular productive fields bound by hedgerows and woods, intimacy of scale, a sense of history and timelessness, rurality and long views (High Weald AONB Management Plan, 2023).
- 3.5. Table 7.1 of the LVIA assesses the Setting of the High Weald National Landscape and Borde Hill RPG as **high value** and **low susceptibility**, resulting in **medium sensitivity**. Based on the submitted LVIA methodology in Appendix 1, we judge that the site expresses many key characteristics of the adjacent landscape designation, and therefore we do not agree with the low susceptibility judgement.
- 3.6. Whilst there is limited direct intervisibility between the National Landscape and the site, it forms part of the transitional experience when moving from the settlement into the National Landscape. The site also contains a number of the valued characteristics associated with the National Landscape and therefore we judge the susceptibility judgement is too low. We therefore judge that replacement of the open views of characteristic countryside could constitute more than a **small magnitude of change** (Table 7.1) and therefore we judge that the overall **negligible significance of effect** is too low.
- 3.7. The Land-use (in Table 7.1) is assessed as **medium-high sensitivity** and **high magnitude effect**, resulting in a **moderate significance of effect**. Based on submitted Table A1.11 Significance Matrix in Appendix 1, the overall effect should have been **major adverse**.
- 3.8. The Site and Immediate Context is assessed as **medium sensitivity**, however we judge that the sensitivity would be increased by the presence of the adjacent National Landscape, the undeveloped characteristic undulating landform and irregular field pattern with strong boundaries, and limited influence from surrounding development from within

the site. The proposed development would have significant effects on most of these features. Therefore, we judge that the development effects would exceed **moderate adverse**.

- 3.9. Overall, we judge that the effects on a number of landscape receptors have been underassessed within the submitted LVIA.

Visual Effects

- 3.10. Viewpoint photography was undertaken in June 2025. We would have preferred winter photography to be presented to represent the worst-case scenario, however this constraint is acknowledged throughout the assessment.
- 3.11. Table 7.2 'Visual Impacts Table' (Page 54) states that Transient Users of Borde Hill Lane (Viewpoints 2-9) are judged to have a **medium sensitivity, medium magnitude of change** and an overall **moderate adverse** effect at Year 1, reduced to **minor adverse** at Year 15. Justification states "*the layout has been designed to retain a generous area of open space adjacent to the road, creating a visual buffer between built form and the lane*".
- 3.12. The LVIA acknowledges that this is one of the more sensitive receptors, owed to the views into the site and the location on the edge of the High Weald National Landscape. However, we judge that the proposed development alongside Borde Hill Lane will completely change the character of this countryside lane. The buffer provided between the lane and the built frontage is not sufficient to justify the **moderate adverse** effects, reducing to **minor adverse** effects.
- 3.13. Overall, we judge that the magnitude of change and overall effects associated with the development has been underassessed.

4.0. Review of Proposals

- 4.1. Area 46 Horsgate High Weald of the Mid Sussex Capacity Assessment describes this area as low/medium capacity for development. With the context of this application, we judge that the conclusions of the Capacity Assessment are applicable to this site, indicating that development would have an adverse effect on the landscape character.
- 4.2. In Section 5.1 of the LVIA, it states "*Development parcels are to be set away from the National Landscape and RPG edge to maintain the existing landscape setting in a manner consistent with the adjacent dwellings*". Page 49 of the LVIA also states "*New homes are set back from Borde Hill Lane behind proposed open space and green infrastructure, helping to safeguard a sense of openness along Borde Hill Lane*".

- 4.3. As per the Illustrative Masterplan (Dwg no. D2935-FAB-00-XX-DR-L-1000, Rev. P01), the frontages of dwellings follow the alignment of surrounding properties on Borde Hill Lane. The proposed frontage onto Borde Hill Lane is approximately set-back by 20m, which is not considered an appropriate mitigation given the sensitivity of this edge to the National Landscape. The proximity does not reflect the principles of maintaining the existing landscape setting and erodes the transition between the settlement and the sensitive National Landscape edge.
- 4.4. Justification also states that this setback retains a sense of openness along Borde Hill Lane (Table 7.2) with “*a parkland-style setting that complements the adjacent RPG*” (Para 9.1) and a “*retained open space*” (Table 7.2), which we do not agree with. The submitted layout does not represent a parkland-style setting with sufficient offset from the adjacent sensitive landscapes and does not retain the current open views across the undulating countryside landscape. An approximate 20m set back, which contains the hard surfaced road access to the dwellings, does not constitute an ‘open space’ which complements the RPG.
- 4.5. We judge that whilst the LVIA acknowledges the impacts of developing close to the National Landscape and RPG, this does not translate into the design proposals as presented. The proposed development provides limited separation, visible encroachment onto the edge of the National Landscape and RPG, and an inadequate buffer.
- 4.6. The western-most parcel of the site should therefore be wholly omitted from any proposed development. All development should be contained to the eastern edge of the site which abuts the existing settlement edge and is set away from the National Landscape. Replicating the parkland character of the adjacent Borde Hill RPG would be a more appropriate use of this parcel, allowing the open character of Borde Hill Lane to be retained, as a softer transition into the National Landscape.
- 4.7. Page 49 of the LVIA also states “*The highest slopes of the Site are proposed as open space, with dwellings set down the hillside, allowing for views across the valley, with the Grade II Listed Borde Hill Farmhouse likely visible above rooftops of proposed homes*”. The LVIA also makes reference to views across the valley of Grade II listed Sugworth Farmhouse which is prominent in views from the roundabout between Borde Hill Lane and Balcombe Road.
- 4.8. Whilst views may be available over the top of development, we judge that any development within the central parcel will have an adverse impact on the notable views across the valley from Haywards Heath towards the listed buildings on the other side of the valley. This is represented by Viewpoint 2 which provides views across the valley of the undulating countryside character which is representative of the neighbouring National Landscape. Whilst the listed buildings may be visually perceptible above development

rooflines, the proposals would still adversely affect the countryside setting in which they are viewed.

- 4.9. We have concerns regarding the use of 'likely' visible (Page 49, LVIA) and advise that evidence is provided on the anticipated views available of the Grade II Listed Borde Hill Farmhouse and Sugworth Farmhouse across the valley. Based on the Illustrative Masterplan, we question the ability to view these listed buildings over the top of proposed development.
- 4.10. Type 4 Visualisations should be submitted to demonstrate the views from the southern areas of the site (close to the roundabout) and how views of these features will be retained in the proposals.
- 4.11. Whilst not adopted, we note the Draft Allocation for 60 dwellings under DPA7. The proposed development significantly increases the number of proposed dwellings compared to the number indicated within this DPA7 and therefore we consider the current proposals to be overdevelopment of this sensitive site.
- 4.12. The policy requirements (DPA7) also states; "*Contain development to central and eastern parts of site to reduce potential impacts on the setting of High Weald AONB (to be informed by an LVIA)*". The proposed development extends into the western-most parcel which abuts the National Landscape, and therefore we judge that the proposed development has not been informed by the LVIA and the sensitive areas identified.
- 4.13. Para 4.1.3 of the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) states that "*The loss of tree 50, a moderate quality mature English oak (Quercus robur), is regrettable but unavoidable*". We concur that the loss of this mature feature on the edge of the site would be a disappointing loss from a landscape perspective.
- 4.14. 'Cross Sections along across road' (Dwg no. SDP-XX-XX-DR-D-311 Rev. P1) indicate that the access road from the roundabout requires the levels to be increased by approximately 5m on the site edge. We consider these to be significant level changes requiring a large amount of earth to facilitate the roadway. Earth would preferably be sourced from onsite.

5.0. Summary

- 5.1. We have concerns regarding the judgements provided within the LVIA, and judge that the effects have been underassessed for landscape character and visual effects.

- 5.2. The sensitivities identified within the LVIA have not been reflected in the development proposals, and therefore we judge that the parameters have not been informed by the LVIA.
- 5.3. The western most parcel should be omitted from the development proposals to retain the open character along Borde Hill Lane and also provide a setback from the National Landscape and the Registered Park and Garden.
- 5.4. Views across the valley from the south of the site are notable, with views available of two listed buildings which appear prominent. Retention of these views is an important consideration, and we would therefore advise that development parcels are amended to allow open views across the valley. Type 4 Visualisations are required to demonstrate retention of these views.

Please contact us if you have any queries in relation to this advice.

Place Services – Landscape Team

Email: landscape@essex.gov.uk



Place Services provide landscape advice on behalf of Mid Sussex District Council

Please note:

This letter is advisory and should only be considered as the opinion formed by specialist staff in relation to this particular matter.

We are unable to respond directly to applicants/agents or other interested parties. Any additional information, queries or comments on this advice that the applicant/agent or other interested parties may have, must be directed to the Planning Officer at the relevant LPA, who will seek further advice from us where appropriate.