

102 Penland Road,
Haywards Heath,
West Sussex
RH16 1PH

13th February 2026

Mr. S. King,
Planning Officer,
The Planning Department,
Mid Sussex District Council

RE: DM/25/3129 – Sugworth Farm off Borde Hill Lane

Dear Mr. King,

I would like to object to the application to build 125 houses on the land off Borde Hill Lane, known as Sugworth Farm.

In 2013 the Borde Hill Trust applied for planning permission on both Sugworth and Penland Farms, stating at the time that Borde Hill was in financial straits and desperately needed to raise money to support the running of the gardens. This claim was made by one of the trustees, Mr. Stephenson-Clarke, at a Town council meeting of 300+ residents at Warden Park School in 2013. Borde Hill then withdrew the land at Sugworth from the application promising they wouldn't develop the Sugworth farm land in the future and amended their application to 210 houses on just Penland Farm, across the road. 10 years earlier in 2003 a planning inspector had stated categorically that the land at Penland Farm should never be developed for a long list of reasons such as bordering the AONB (HWNL), strategic gap with Cuckfield, valuable farmland under cultivation etc. and at a meeting of the MSDC planning committee the application for Penland Farm was unanimously rejected. Borde Hill Trust however won on appeal because MSDC didn't have a district plan in place at the time. The land was then sold to Redrow for millions, no doubt. But where did the money go ? Seemingly not into the Trust as fast forward to 2024 we find Borde Hill has applied for and been awarded, a £2.25m grant by The National Lottery Heritage Fund for its 'Reimagining Borde Hill' project or **now "Reinventing Borde Hill" in which they claim "Reinventing Borde Hill will unlock 110 acres of listed landscape improving access to the sites nationally important heritage, while connecting local Communities with the restorative power of nature, inspiring future generations through outdoor learning."**

Therefore, this application for planning permission on the Sugworth fields is very curious. Firstly, because clearly Borde Hill do not need the money and secondly because the development would significantly detract from the setting of the so called "Reinvented Borde Hill" (Gardens and Estate) just across Borde Hill Lane. The view of the houses will be visible from the Hill of Borde Hill and of course at night lit up and they would have a new housing estate near the Borde Hill entrance. One can only conclude that the application to develop the land is just purely for financial gain on the part of Borde Hill and makes a mockery of their claims about nature. This is disappointing to say the least.

My specific objections to this application are as follows:-

1. This is an unnecessary development on a piece of open rolling landscape bordering the High Weald AONB (HWNL) and Ancient Woodland (Flat Wood) which if allowed would cause **significant and irreversible harm to the character of the surrounding area**. The proposed development site should have been included within the High Weald AONB (HWNL) when the boundaries were originally drawn up in 1983 and it is difficult to understand why it wasn't.
2. This application fails as it is contrary to Mid Sussex District Plan Policy DP12 ("Protection and Enhancement of Countryside") to protect the countryside's intrinsic character and beauty by restricting development outside of defined built-up area boundaries. It permits development only if it maintains or enhances landscape quality and is for agriculture, or supported by other specific planning policies.
3. We keep hearing that the UK is consistently ranked as one of the most nature-depleted countries in Europe with over 50% of our biodiversity now lost and in fact the UK has lost more of its natural biodiversity than any other country in the G7. One of the significant factors in this is the unrelenting level of house building on green field sites. Once a house is built it can't be unbuilt and that piece of landscape once lost is lost forever. We can't afford to lose any more especially an area close to the HWNL.
4. At night these fields next to the HWNL would be lit up with house and street lighting. Again causing significant and unacceptable harm to the setting and character of the area.
5. When considering the Mid Sussex plan Borde Hill said they would like to apply for 60 houses. Why spoil this piece of open landscape

for the sake of a mere 60 houses or 125 when the Mid Sussex plan looks to deliver over 16,000 houses up to 2031. There is no under provision of houses in Haywards Heath and Mid Sussex. This is a pointless and damaging development.

6. The site is not within a 15 minute walk of the town centre or even the railway station and would stick out into the open countryside beyond the main built-up area of the town.
7. More houses mean more cars. More cars wanting to drive down the Balcombe Road, Hanlye Lane and Penland Road **regularly** for short trips (schools, railway station, supermarket, petrol etc.). Why, because it is too far to walk anywhere from this site and residents wouldn't want to walk back up the steep hill even if they walked down it. There are no places at Harlands School and other schools including secondary schools are remote from this site. They might be okay when children reach 16 as the sixth form college is reasonable walking reasonable distance.

The Haywards Heath main shopping and restaurant centre (The Broadway) is a long very remote from this site. 125 houses is likely to be over 200 cars regularly using the local roads.

8. **Roundabout.** We saw the junction at Borde Hill Lane, Balcombe Rd., Hanlye Lane change from a rural junction to a large roundabout with all the mature oaks (with TPOs) and other trees at the entrance to the Balcombe Rd., cut down unnecessarily and now an even larger roundabout is proposed for the entrance to the new estate, creating a more urban feel and very out of character with the area. This will entail more significant lighting next to the HWNL.
9. **Planting and Landscaping.** The planting scheme at Penland's Green was not monitored by MSDC and there was no maintenance scheme in place resulting in a significant number of trees dying. Four years later they are still not replaced. So, any planting mitigation on this application site cannot be relied upon.
10. **Flooding.** Considerable flood work on this site would need to be undertaken as the fields are saturated. Borde Hill should plant the fields with trees and not build houses on them. **Borde Hill make a big thing about how and I quote "care passionately for the natural environment" in their literature for the "Reinventing" of their Grade II listed gardens, referred to above in this letter. It**

seems odd they would want to jeopardize the Borde Hill Garden setting.

- 11. Traffic congestion.** Following on from my earlier points, traffic from this site flowing on to the junction would cause congestion up and down the Balcombe road, Borde Hill lane and Hanlye Lane with tail backs particularly at Peak times. As we know there is a bottle neck at the bottom of the Balcombe Road by the railway bridge.

The point about traffic from a local estate is that because it originates nearby single location there will a lot of short journeys in and out rather than traffic coming into the town from outside. At school pick up times in particular there will be considerable additional traffic on to an already busy road network in this area. This will lead to increased rat running through Penland Road and adjoining roads. **In a report in 2016 MSDC rejected the site as being too remote from existing services and therefore not sustainable as a development location. That is still the case.**

CONCLUSION

In conclusion this is a pointless development not required in the total over provision of housing in the Mid Sussex plan and contrary to the stated aim of Mid Sussex council "Protection and Enhancement of Countryside" (DP12)

It is not required by Borde Hill who made millions from the sale of Penland Farm 10 years ago and the recent recipient of over £2m from the National Lottery and most of all would cause significant and irreversible harm to the landscape and setting, adjacent to the grade II listed Borde Hill gardens, Ancient woodland and the High Weald AONB (HWNL). **I would therefore encourage the MSDC planning committee to make the no brainer decision and reject this application outright.**