

To: Steven King, Mid Sussex District Council
Application: DM/25/3129 – Land East of Borde Hill Lane (Revised to 117 dwellings)
From: Save Sugworth Farm Action Group
6th May 2026

Summary Position

Our objection submitted in relation to 125 houses is maintained for 117 houses. The reduction from 125 to 117 dwellings is marginal and does not resolve the fundamental unsuitability of the site or scale of development. All previous objections remain valid and should be given full weight. Haywards Heath Town Council, Cuckfield Parish Council and Ansty and Staplefield Parish Council, and 100s of local residents object to this development. Fundamentally the site is not in the current district plan, and for good reason as set out below.

1. Scale

It represents inappropriate expansion of the settlement into open countryside in a site that isn't in the district plan. The scheme remains substantially overdeveloped relative assessed site capacity in the draft Mid Sussex District Plan (~60 dwellings), undermining the spatial strategy and assumptions around infrastructure and landscape capacity.

2. Landscape & High Weald National Landscape

Amendments are noted but do not remove significant landscape harm. Development would urbanise a sensitive rural riverine valley and erode the setting of the High Weald National Landscape. The site forms a critical rural buffer preventing coalescence between settlements, and its loss would materially diminish the distinct separation and rural character of the area.

3. Heritage Impact

As highlighted by the MSDC Conservation Officer, the site makes a strong and direct contribution to the setting and significance of Grade II listed Sugworth Farm and its associated historic farmstead. The fields are not incidental; they are historically and functionally linked to the farm and form part of the way the farmhouse setting is experienced and understood.

Development would:

- Disrupt the historic relationship between the farmhouse and its surrounding agricultural land
- Erode key views to and from the heritage assets across the valley landscape
- Diminish the rural context which underpins the asset's architectural, historical and aesthetic value

The proposed development would therefore cause harm to a designated heritage asset, and this harm has not been convincingly avoided or minimized in the updated submission by Fairfax. Under the NPPF, this harm must be given great weight and requires clear and convincing justification, which has not been demonstrated.

4. Highways & Access

Local roads are narrow, constrained, and already at or near capacity. Additional traffic is likely to result in “severe” cumulative impacts. The proposed junction/roundabout remains urbanising in nature and out of character with the surrounding rural road network.

5. Flood Risk & Drainage

Initial technical responses identified that parts of the development are located within existing surface water flow paths, indicating that a sequential approach to site layout has not been properly followed. Development in such areas should be avoided to manage risk.

Although the Lead for Local Flood Authority at WSCC has removed their objection subject to conditions, this does not resolve the underlying concerns:

- The scheme relies heavily on future detailed design and unproven mitigation measures
- Proposed interception of flow paths via highway gullies is inherently uncertain and may not perform effectively during significant rainfall events
- There is risk that exceedance flows could continue along natural routes, potentially increasing flood risk to properties within the site or elsewhere
- Long-term maintenance and management of drainage infrastructure remains uncertain

In effect, the current proposal defers resolution of critical flood risk issues to later stages, rather than demonstrating at outline stage that development is safe, appropriate, and robust over its lifetime.

6. Infrastructure Capacity (Education)

West Sussex County Council confirm in their response to the developer’s application in December 2025 that local schools do not have capacity to accommodate the additional demand generated by the development. Reliance on S106 contributions does not guarantee timely or deliverable provision of school places, indicating that the scale of development exceeds current infrastructure readiness.

7. Environmental & Site Constraints

Loss of trees, habitats, and rural character remains a concern. The site also presents additional constraints including potential archaeological remains and historic land uses that may require further investigation and mitigation, adding uncertainty that needs resolving.

Conclusion

The proposed development results in clear and cumulative harm across landscape, heritage, highways, flood risk, and infrastructure. The reduction to 117 dwellings is incremental and does not materially change the planning balance. The development remains fundamentally misaligned with its landscape, heritage, and infrastructure context. **Mid Sussex District Council should refuse the application.**