

SAVE SUGWORTH FARM ACTION GROUP

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – OBJECTION TO PLANNING APPLICATION DM/25/3129

The Save Sugworth Farm Action Group strongly objects to planning application DM/25/3129.

Our long-standing aim has been clear and consistent:
to keep this land out of the District Plan entirely, due to its exceptional landscape, heritage, ecological sensitivity, and known flood risks.

This application fundamentally conflicts with that position.

If, however, the site is ultimately included within the District Plan, it is critical to recognise that the original allocation of approximately 60 dwellings was proposed by planning officers for good and justified reasons, including:

- The special and highly sensitive landscape context
- The proximity to the High Weald AONB
- The presence of heritage assets
- Significant and evidenced flood risk
- Severe infrastructure and access constraints

Indeed, the Planning Inspector said at the meeting on 19th March 2026 said

"there needs to be VERY SERIOUS REGARD to that Landscape context and the features, the HERITAGE FEATURES of the area.... IS THAT CLEAR"

The current proposal for 125 dwellings more than doubles that figure and represents clear overdevelopment.

The District Plan refers to housing numbers only. At no stage has there been any public discussion or agreement regarding the need to expand the existing roundabout.

The proposed roundabout expansion is therefore a new and significant intervention, and a clear indicator that the scale of development is inappropriate.

Key concerns include:

- The roundabout was only recently constructed to meet “current and future needs”
- Its expansion after just a few years demonstrates that the proposed development exceeds the site’s capacity
- The works would have a direct and harmful impact on the setting of South Lodge and the rural character of the area
- The junction feeds into three narrow country roads (Borde Hill Lane, Hanlye Lane and Balcombe Road) which cannot be widened or upgraded due to physical and heritage constraints
- As a result, any increase in capacity at the junction simply transfers pressure onto roads that are fundamentally unsuitable

This clearly demonstrates that the proposal is not only overdevelopment, but infrastructure-led evidence of unsuitability.

The increase in housing numbers is not driven by sound planning principles, but instead appears to be the result of:

- Pressure to meet housing targets, and
- The commercial interests of developers

Planning policy requires that development responds to the constraints of the land — not that those constraints are overridden to maximise site yield.

For these reasons, we request that Planning Application DM/25/3129 is refused in full.

SAVE SUGWORTH FARM ACTION GROUP

OBJECTION TO PLANNING APPLICATION DM/25/3129

Land East of Borde Hill Lane (Sugworth Farm), Haywards Heath

1. OPENING STATEMENT

At the Mid Sussex District Council meeting on **19 March 2026**, the Planning Inspector made the following unequivocal statement:

“there needs to be VERY SERIOUS REGARD to that Landscape context and the features, the HERITAGE FEATURES of the area.... IS THAT CLEAR”

This statement sets a clear and authoritative test for decision-making.

This application fails that test.

The proposed development, especially with the proposed expansion of the roundabout does not demonstrate “very serious regard” to:

- The **landscape context**
- The **heritage features**
- The **environmental sensitivity** of this location

Instead, it represents **unsustainable, excessive and harmful development** that conflicts with planning policy and the fundamental characteristics of the site.

2. INTRODUCTION

This submission is made on behalf of the **Save Sugworth Farm Action Group**, representing local residents who strongly object to planning application **DM/25/3129** for up to 125 dwellings on land east of Borde Hill Lane.

3. FUNDAMENTAL “SHOWSTOPPER” OBJECTIONS

3.1 Excessive Development and Immediate Infrastructure Failure (Roundabout Evidence)

The proposal for **125 dwellings is more than double** the ~60 dwellings identified in the draft District Plan.

A critical and immediate indicator of overdevelopment is the **proposed expansion of the roundabout** at the junction of Borde Hill Lane, Hanlye Lane and Balcombe Road:

- The roundabout was only constructed in **2020** to meet “current and future needs”
- Expansion is now required after just **four years**
- This clearly demonstrates that the scale of development **exceeds the capacity of the site and surrounding infrastructure**

This leads to two unavoidable conclusions:

- Either the original infrastructure failed, or
- **This development is fundamentally too large and unsuitable for the site**

Crucially, the scheme:

- Improves only the junction

- Leaves surrounding roads unchanged — narrow, constrained, and unsafe

This represents a **fundamental and unresolvable infrastructure constraint**, and is a standalone reason for refusal.

3.2 Harm to the High Weald AONB and Landscape Character

The site lies immediately adjacent to the **High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)** and forms part of its setting.

- Development at this scale would cause **major adverse landscape impact**
- The site shares the visual and ecological characteristics of the AONB

Development would:

- Urbanise open countryside
 - Damage key views and landscape character
 - Erode tranquillity and rural setting
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3.3 Harm to Heritage Assets and Historic Landscape

The site forms part of a highly sensitive historic landscape, including:

- A Grade II* registered park and garden
- Multiple listed buildings
- Archaeological interest including a potential Roman road

The proposal would:

- Disrupt the historic setting
- Cause harm to heritage assets
- Introduce irreversible change to a historically significant landscape

This harm has not been justified.

3.4 Severe Flood Risk and Unsuitable Ground Conditions

There is clear and ongoing evidence of flooding issues:

- Penland Green development already has issues with flooding and drainage issues – and has caused worsening flooding in the surrounding area, and as far as Lindfield via Scarce Stream
- Existing drainage systems are already inadequate
- The site includes areas at risk of flooding
- Ground conditions are poorly suited to drainage
- Surface water runoff already affects surrounding roads and properties

The development would:

- Add extensive impermeable surfaces
- Increase runoff into an already failing system
- Increase flood risk both on-site and downstream

Proposed mitigation relies on engineered systems that developers promise but in the case of Penland Green, do not deliver.

This is contrary to national and local flood policy.

3.5 Major Biodiversity and Ecological Harm

The site supports a rich and sensitive ecological environment, including protected species.

Development would result in:

- Loss and fragmentation of habitats
- Damage to ecological corridors
- Reduction in biodiversity

The scale of harm would be significant and cannot be adequately mitigated.

4. HIGHWAY SAFETY AND ACCESS FAILURES

- Local roads are narrow, constrained country lanes
- They are not capable of accommodating significant additional traffic
- No meaningful improvements to these roads are proposed

The development would:

- Increase congestion
- Increase accident risk
- Create unsafe conditions for pedestrians

No adequate pedestrian infrastructure is provided.

5. FAILURE OF SUSTAINABILITY PRINCIPLES

The site is not a sustainable location for development:

- It is not within a walkable distance of key services
 - It would increase reliance on private vehicles
 - It conflicts with the objective of creating “20-minute neighbourhoods”
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6. INFRASTRUCTURE CAPACITY NOT DEMONSTRATED

There is no evidence that local infrastructure can accommodate the development, including:

- Schools
- Healthcare services
- Utilities
- Transport networks

Existing infrastructure is already under pressure.

7. CONFLICT WITH ENVIRONMENTAL AND PLANNING POLICY

The proposal conflicts with:

- Environmental priorities of the District Plan
- Climate change commitments
- Biodiversity protection policies
- AONB protection requirements

It would result in:

- Loss of green space
 - Increased environmental pressure
 - Long-term ecological harm
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8. COMMUNITY IMPACT AND LACK OF SUPPORT

- There is strong local opposition to the development
 - The site is not allocated for development in local plans
 - The area is already experiencing cumulative development pressure
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9. CONCLUSION

This application should be refused due to:

- Clear evidence of overdevelopment (roundabout expansion required)
- Major harm to AONB setting
- Harm to heritage assets
- Severe flood risk
- Biodiversity loss
- Unsafe and inadequate infrastructure
- Unsustainable location
- Lack of supporting infrastructure

Above all, it fails the clear direction given by the Planning Inspector on **19 March 2026**.

FORMAL REQUEST

Planning Application DM/25/3129 should be REFUSED in full.
