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Mid Sussex District Council
Oaklands Road
Haywards Heath
West Sussex
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Our ref: 16238
Date: 28 April 2026

By email only: Planning Department, planninginfo@midsussex.gov.uk

Thank you for requesting advice on this application from Place Services' ecological advice service. This service provides advice to planning officers to inform Mid Sussex District Council planning decisions with regard to potential ecological impacts from development.

Application: DM/26/0568
Location: Network Rail London To Brighton Railway - Copyhold Junction To Haywards Heath Station Clair Road Haywards Heath
Proposal: The installation of an 8.1m pole supporting four antennas, with one equipment cabinet on steel mesh grillage with a handrail and screw pile foundations

Thank you for consulting Place Services on the above application.

No ecological objection	☐
Recommend approval subject to attached conditions	☐
Further information required/Temporary holding objection: Adjacent Irreplaceable habitat (ancient and semi-natural woodland) and Local Wildlife Sites	☒
Recommend Refusal	☐
Subject to Natural England's formal comments on the conclusion of the LPA's Appropriate Assessment	☐

Summary

We have reviewed the documents supplied by the applicant, including the Cover Letter (04 March 2026). As no detailed ecological information has been provided, we have carried out

a desk study to determine the likely impacts upon designated sites, protected and Priority species / habitats.

We are not satisfied that there is sufficient ecological information available for determination of this application and recommend that additional information is provided prior to determination. The reasons for this are outlined below:

Adjacent Irreplaceable habitat and Local Wildlife Sites:

We note from [MAGIC maps](#) that the site lies immediately adjacent to Staves Wood, which is an ancient and semi-natural woodland and irreplaceable habitat. This woodland is also part of Wickham Woods Local Wildlife Site, which is a non-statutory designated site.

We note that the Covering Letter (Cellnex, March 2026) acknowledges that the proposal is within 6.5m of Staves Copse Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland, and thereby infringing on the 15m standard buffer zone outlined in [Government Standing Advice](#) for ancient woodland. However, the location for the proposed antenna is justified as suitable, as the site is located on area of pebbled Network Rail land. Furthermore, The Covering Letter (Cellnex, March 2026) indicates that informal advice has been sort with Natural England and no specific objections have been raised.

As a result, to allow the LPA to have certainty of likely impacts upon irreplaceable habitat and the Local Wildlife Site, we recommend that the applicant provides the following further information on how direct and indirect impacts will be avoided:

- Detailed clarification on how root protection areas of trees associated with the ancient woodland can be avoided.
- Clarification on whether any trees or vegetation will be required to be removed from the proposals (reducing the amount of semi-natural habitats next to ancient woodland).
- Clarification on how compaction of soil will be avoided.
- Where there is a risk of minor impacts, the identification of a suitable proportionate compensation strategy.

[Government Standing Advice](#) for ancient woodland says you should refuse planning permission if development will result in the loss or deterioration of ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees unless both of the following applies:

- there are wholly exceptional reasons
- there's a suitable compensation strategy in place

Therefore, as impacts are not clear, we request that the above further clarification on how impacts on irreplaceable habitat will be avoided must be provided prior to determination. Furthermore, it is recommended that this is informed by a suitable qualified ecologist and / or arboriculturist.

We look forward to working with the LPA and the applicant to receive the additional information required to support a lawful decision and overcome our holding objection.

Additional comments:

With regard to mandatory biodiversity net gains, it is highlighted that applications are required to deliver a mandatory 10% measurable biodiversity net gain, unless exempt under [paragraph 17 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990](#) and the [Biodiversity Gain Requirements \(Exemptions\) Regulations 2024](#). As a result, we are satisfied that this application is exempt from mandatory biodiversity net gains, as the development meets the permitted development exemption.

We also consider that the proposals are unlikely to result in impacts upon protected and Priority habitats / species. However, please note that we have no comments on Great Crested Newt as we have been instructed to leave comments on this European Protected Species to the [NatureSpace Partnership](#).

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

Yours sincerely,

Hamish Jackson ACIEEM BSc (Hons)
Senior Ecological Consultant
 Place Services at Essex County Council



Place Services provide ecological 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.