

OBJECTION TO PLANNING APPLICATION 2025/1376

For the attention of Steven King at Mid Sussex District Council by email

Location: Development Site East of Farthings, Copthorne Bank, Copthorne, Surrey RH10 3JF

1. INTRODUCTION

[REDACTED], having moved here for its strong sense of community, rural setting, and proximity to family. Over this period, the village has experienced significant expansion, most notably the Heathy Wood development (circa 500 dwellings), alongside other smaller schemes.

As one of the few properties directly adjoining the application site, we experience first-hand the character, ecology, and conditions of this land. This objection is therefore based not only on planning policy, but on lived, daily observation.

2. GREEN BELT & PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

The site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl and the merging of settlements.

This development would erode the open countryside between Copthorne and Smallfield, fundamentally altering the character of the area. No very special circumstances have been demonstrated that outweigh this harm.

Historic mapping shows that although the name of the area has changed, the field boundaries and tree lines have remained consistent for generations. Their long-term continuity suggests potential ancient woodland soils and ecological structures. Regardless of formal classification, these enduring boundaries demonstrate that the landscape has long served as a green buffer separating settlements and reinforcing Green Belt purposes.

3. ECOLOGY & IRREPLACEABLE HABITAT

The site forms part of Copthorne Meadows, designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI), comprising unimproved grassland—a priority habitat under the NERC Act 2006.

Planning Permission should be refused if "significant harm to biodiversity from a development cannot be avoided..." (NPPF193(a)". The Environment Act 2021 and Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 require a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain. The developer admits It is not possible to mitigate for the direct loss of this grassland habitat and mitigation, or compensation procedures cannot offset the loss of biodiversity. The developer is no more than stating the obvious as you cannot mitigate or replace unimproved meadows.

The applicant has acknowledged that this habitat cannot be recreated or meaningfully mitigated. This directly conflicts with national planning policy and Biodiversity Net Gain requirements.

4. IMPACT ON BADGERS – PERSONAL EVIDENCE

Badgers are not an occasional presence—they are an established and active part of the land immediately adjoining our home.

Since moving here in 2017, we have observed clear evidence of badger setts within the tree lines bordering the fields. These are not isolated signs; they form part of a consistent and visible pattern of activity.

On several occasions, badgers have approached within 1–2 metres of our boundary fence, including in the area proposed for the main access road. This proximity highlights how integral this land is to their daily movement.

Using a thermal scope at night, we regularly observe wildlife movement across the fields. There are clearly defined runs and foraging areas, demonstrating habitual use of the land rather than occasional passing through.

██████ rely on stable territories and established routes. The proposed development would introduce sustained noise, vibration, artificial lighting, increased human activity, and traffic. Even if setts are not directly destroyed, such disturbance would likely result in abandonment.

It is important to note that [REDACTED]. Mitigation measures such as artificial setts are widely recognised as unreliable.

Under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, it is an offence to disturb badgers or interfere with their setts. Given the proximity of activity to proposed works, the risk of harm is significant.

From lived experience, this land forms part of an active and functioning badger habitat. Its loss or disturbance would represent a direct and irreversible impact on a protected species.

5. FLOOD RISK & DRAINAGE

The developers' flood risk assessment is woefully inadequate, understated and complacent and lacks adequate flood risk mitigation. I can see the field turn to bogland after substantial rain. The area is known for its lack of drainage. The developer has admitted that "Soakaway drainage is unlikely to be suitable for this site." But no practical alternative solutions are offered. NPPF paragraph 181 requires that flood risk is not increased elsewhere and it is interesting here to note the objection by SCC - Flood Risk, Planning and Consulting Team. Burstow has suffered and still is suffering considerable flooding, resulting in road closures. The proposed development will only exacerbate this flooding problem, as there will be nowhere for the run

6. TRAFFIC & HIGHWAYS SAFETY

Local roads are already heavily congested, particularly when accessing the A264. It is often necessary to reroute through the village to exit safely.

It is interesting that the highways authority has requested additional time to undertake an impact assessment. From this end of the Borsers Arms road, you can rarely safely join the A264. The road is so busy that we often have to drive into the village, in order to leave. When there is additional traffic or closure on the A264 additional non residential traffic passes through the village. Not only does it cause congestion, but it poses a risk to pedestrians. With cars often parked along the Copthorne Bank, the road is often single lane anyway. In the event of an emergency, it would be hard for the services to get to where they need, when the roads are congested. With 260 houses, there would be estimated to be over 700 more people and circa 390 more cars. That is an unacceptable impact on highway traffic and safety for both Copthorne Bank and Borsers Arms road and all adjoining roads and junctions. All other village exits are via residential roads, bar the Barstow exit. However, anyone wanting to use the village

amenities, access the m23 etc would be driving into the village 1st. As mentioned above the roads around Burstow often flood, resulting in road closure. In that instance all traffic is directed into the village, in order to exit. All exits are via residential roads. An estimated 390 additional vehicles would have an unacceptable cumulative impact

7. PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Footpaths in the area are inconsistent, narrow, and in places non-existent. It is often necessary to walk in the road, particularly with a pram.

Footpaths near both proposed access points are narrow, inconsistent or absent. Walking from Lashmere to Olivers often requires stepping into the road, and the bus stop on Borers Arms Road regularly blocks the pavement entirely. Reaching the village requires multiple crossings of a busy road with poor visibility. Increased traffic will force more pedestrians into the carriageway, posing a serious risk to life. The Copthorne Bank access is on an unlit, fast road with a blind corner and no continuous footway.

Increased traffic would make these routes unsafe, particularly for children and vulnerable users.

8. SCHOOLS & CHILDREN

The applications suggestion that the schools are under subscribed is factually incorrect.

Local schools are oversubscribed, with many children already travelling outside the village for education, my own included. Local evidence, including comments from Laura Roberts, Headteacher of Maidenbower Infant School, confirms that schools are operating at capacity. Additional families would increase car journeys out of the village, worsening congestion.

Activities and clubs are at capacity and often have waiting lists which subsequently puts the strain and stress on families.

The village is big on community, the local girl guides and scouts form a key part of the local children's connection. Wait lists start from birth, with some children having to go out of the village for places. The local groups are integrated into the village, offering clubs, community, fundraising sales, the gang show (large scale production) and hall hire. If the proposed entrance on Borers arms goes ahead, it will impact the safety of children crossing over the attend their groups.

The Copthorne Pavillion falls within 'Surrey' and is already over capacity. It is not large enough to meet the local sporting needs. The hall is hired regularly, including by the local Parish council, for weekly Youth clubs. Children attending are often driven as that road can be lethal. Let alone if another entrance was installed opposite. Both important sites are supporting activities for the local children, who would then be opposite busy estate entrance.

9. Healthcare Capacity

Local healthcare provision is already operating beyond safe capacity. The village GP surgery has been closed to new patients for a considerable time, and even routine appointments are extremely difficult to obtain. Six-week advance appointments are often fully booked, and patients are instructed to call at 8am, where queues regularly exceed 50 callers or the line simply closes due to demand. Residents frequently queue outside both practices in the hope of being seen.

As a result, overflow is pushed onto Crawley Hospital's Urgent Treatment Centre and A&E at East Surrey Hospital, both of which are already under severe strain. During a recent visit with my two-year-old,

despite being referred by a GP, the wait to see a doctor was four hours. The waiting room was full, children were being redirected due to lack of ward capacity, and treatment had to be administered in corridors because all clinical rooms were occupied. Hallways were lined with patients on beds, and the A&E queue extended out of the door. It is not uncommon for emergency services to be temporarily closed to new arrivals due to demand.

This level of pressure is already unsafe. Adding hundreds of new residents would further overwhelm a system that is struggling to cope, with potentially life-threatening consequences in the event of a major incident, such as an accident on the M23 or an emergency at Gatwick. The proposal therefore fails to meet the requirement that development must be supported by adequate healthcare infrastructure.

GP surgeries are closed to new patients and appointments are extremely difficult to obtain. Overflow is directed to Crawley Hospital and East Surrey Hospital, both of which are already operating beyond safe capacity. This conflicts with national policy requiring infrastructure to support development. The GP surgeries are at capacity and often unable to provide timely appointments. Hospitals are under severe strain.

10. Infrastructure

This development would add further unsustainable pressure across the board. Money collected in tax, will go to Tandridge and yet all the drain of services will fall on the village, which falls outside of Tandridge. Even if the schools, roads and doctors surgeries could cope, which they cant, the financial strain of upkeep falls on MidSussex.

There is no sports space allocated and the local Copthorne Pavillion is already struggling to meet the needs of the village. The field falls within Surrey, meaning that strictly speaking Copthorne lacks its own allocated sports provision. No amount of SSR money can create more footprint, to support the sporting advancement.

11. Industrial Access and Safety

The proposed main access through an industrial estate is unsafe. There are no pedestrian pathways, and mixing residential and industrial traffic creates significant risks, particularly for children attending the dance school on site. The layout includes concealed areas that raise safeguarding concerns.

12. Conflict with Local Plan Evidence

The site is **not allocated** for development and was previously assessed as **unsuitable** in Tandridge's own evidence base (SEBA 2016, DOM13). No material change justifies reversing that conclusion.

13. CONCLUSION

The proposal results in:

- Inappropriate Green Belt development
- Irreversible loss of irreplaceable habitat
- Failure to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain
- Harm to protected species
- Increased flood risk
- Severe traffic and pedestrian safety impacts

- Unsustainable pressure on schools and healthcare
- Conflict with adopted and emerging planning policy

The permanent loss of this landscape and the risks to the community would be permanent and cannot be mitigated. I strongly object to this application and request that it be refused.

