

Highcroft, Truslers Hill Lane

BN6 9JN

25/11/2025

Planning Department

Mid Sussex District Council

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: OBJECTION to Planning Application DM/25/2661

Land at Coombe Farm, Sayers Common

I wish to register my strong objection to the above outline planning application for up to 210 dwellings at Coombe Farm, Sayers Common. My objection concerns:

1. Significant ecological and biodiversity harm, including impacts on ancient woodland and habitat connectivity
2. Conflict with the emerging Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)
3. Significant traffic and highways impacts
4. Coalescence between Sayers Common and Albourne
5. Landscape character and heritage setting harm
6. Lack of secured mitigation at outline stage, requiring robust S106 controls

1. Biodiversity, Ancient Woodland & Ecological Harm

Coombe Wood (ancient woodland) lies within and adjacent to the site. Ancient woodland is an irreplaceable habitat. The proposal's suggested 15m buffer is the bare minimum and insufficient to prevent:

- Lighting and noise intrusion
- Hydrological changes from SuDS
- Public access pressure
- Domestic predation
- Root damage and soil compaction

This directly conflicts with Mid Sussex District Plan policies (Trees, Woodland & Hedgerows and Biodiversity), which require ancient woodland protection and biodiversity enhancement.

It also conflicts with the NPPF which require planning permission to be refused for developments harming irreplaceable habitats (including ancient woodland) unless wholly exceptional.

Coombe Wood is acknowledged in the applicant's documents as being in poor condition, making it more vulnerable. Without a fixed site layout at outline stage, the Council cannot be satisfied that ancient woodland will be safeguarded.

The site forms part of a wider ecological network of hedgerows, woodland edges, grassland and movement corridors. The development severs these networks.

As an outline application, habitat creation, management regimes, monitoring, and funding are not fixed or enforceable. This fails to meet:

- measurable biodiversity enhancement
- NPPF - BNG must be meaningful and deliverable

2. Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) Conflict

The Sussex LNRS is at advanced draft stage and must be treated as a material consideration. Under the Environment Act 2021, MSDC must "have regard" to LNRS spatial priorities when making decisions.

The Coombe Farm site lies within an area likely to be designated for:

- Habitat connectivity improvements
- Woodland restoration
- Hedgerow and meadow enhancement

The proposal does not demonstrate alignment with the LNRS, contrary to the NPPF which requires planning to support nature recovery and LNRS priorities.

3. Traffic Impacts

A development of 210 homes will produce hundreds of vehicle movements per day, spilling onto unsuitable roads and rural lanes. Heavy traffic within the village would impact current residents quality of life. Increased and slower traffic around the village would encourage road users to divert onto already heavily burdened country lanes such as Twineham and Truslers Hill Lane.

These lanes are:

- Single-track in places
- Used heavily by walkers, cyclists, horse riders and farm traffic
- Lacking footways
- Constrained by hedgebanks and poor visibility

Additional residential and construction traffic would be unsafe and harmful.

According to the NPPF, development should be refused where the residual cumulative impacts on the road network are severe or where highway safety is compromised — both apply here.

4. Settlement Coalescence – Sayers Common & Albourne

Coombe Farm lies within the countryside gap separating Sayers Common from Albourne. The proposal narrows this gap and introduces urbanising features that will, over time, drive settlement merging. This directly conflicts with the District Plan with regard to

- Protection & Enhancement of Countryside
- Preventing Coalescence

Once the gap is compromised, its function cannot be restored.

5. Landscape & Heritage Harm

The rural clay-vale landscape here is identified as sensitive, with small fields, strong hedgerow structure and a tranquil rural character. The introduction of dense housing, lighting, urban noise and extensive hard surfacing would cause irreversible change.

The site contains and borders Grade II listed buildings (Coombe Farmhouse and Barn). At outline stage, building placement, massing and boundary treatments are not fixed. The Council therefore cannot conclude that their setting will be preserved.

6. Obligations Required if Approved

If MSDC is minded to approve, robust obligations are essential to secure mitigation and compliance with District Plan DP20 (Securing Infrastructure) and NPPF 57:

Ecology & LNRS

- BNG applied on site unless openly proven unachievable
- 30-year Ancient Woodland Management Plan
- 30-year BNG Management & Monitoring Plan
- Habitat creation aligned with LNRS priorities
- Funding for ecological monitoring

- Protection of woodland edges and restriction of public access

Countryside Gap

- Legal protection of the Sayers Common–Albourne gap
- Permanent open space designation on buffer fields

Highways

- Construction vehicle ban on inappropriate routes
- Verge protection and traffic calming on country lanes
- Safety improvements for non-motorised users

Green Infrastructure

- Long-term funding for orchard, allotments, open spaces and play areas
- Permanent maintenance of green corridors and PROWs

Drainage

- 30-year SuDS maintenance and monitoring fund
- Hydrological impact controls to protect ancient woodland

Without these obligations, the development would not mitigate its significant impacts.

Conclusion

Within NPPF development is deemed sustainable only where benefits outweigh harm. Here, the adverse impacts on biodiversity, landscape, heritage, countryside character, LNRS alignment and highway safety clearly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

For this and the reasons set out above, the proposal conflicts with multiple policies of the Mid Sussex District Plan, the Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Neighbourhood Plan, the NPPF, and the statutory direction set by the Environment Act 2021. I therefore respectfully request that Mid Sussex District Council REFUSE planning application DM/25/2661.

Regards,

