

To: Mid Sussex District Council – Planning Department

Re: Planning Application DM/26/2178 – Erection of 6no. dwellings with associated access, landscaping, parking and open space

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to formally object to planning application **DM/26/2178** for the erection of six dwellings on land between 149 and 161 College Lane, Hurstpierpoint.

I live at Grove Cottage, 122 College Lane, immediately within the area that would be directly affected by this proposal. My property is a Grade II listed building, and the historic character and rural setting of College Lane are important parts of the significance of the property and the surrounding heritage environment.

I am particularly concerned about this application when considered alongside the **development currently underway directly opposite our home**, as well as the numerous other planning applications and developments that have been proposed or are currently being considered in the immediate area.

The cumulative impact of development on this part of College Lane is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore. The lane already experiences serious problems with traffic, drainage, sewerage, water-main failures, road closures and highway safety. Adding a further six dwellings would place additional pressure on infrastructure that is already demonstrably struggling to cope.

I therefore strongly request that this application is **called in by our local Ward Councillor and determined by the Council's Planning Committee rather than under delegated powers**, given the significant cumulative impacts and the level of public interest in development along this section of College Lane.

I respectfully ask that planning permission is **refused**.

1. Loss of the Important Gap Between Hurstpierpoint and Hassocks

One of my principal objections is the further erosion of the important countryside gap between Hurstpierpoint and Hassocks.

This is not simply a matter of developing an isolated piece of vacant land. The site forms part of a wider landscape separating the two settlements and contributes to their distinct identities and the rural character of the area.

There is an important planning history relating to development pressure along this corridor. A previous proposal for 81 dwellings on land off College Lane (Application **13/01250/FUL**) was refused, with that refusal subsequently upheld through the appeal process. The importance of the gap and the openness of this area have therefore previously been recognised in the consideration of development along this corridor.

Although this application is for six dwellings rather than 81, the principle remains important. The cumulative effect of permitting a succession of smaller developments can ultimately result in the same gradual erosion of the countryside gap.

Once this land has been developed, its contribution to the openness and separation of the settlements will be permanently lost.

2. The Cumulative Impact of Development Along College Lane

This application must not be considered in isolation from what is already happening in the immediate vicinity.

There is **currently a development under construction directly opposite our property**, which itself followed significant local objection. In addition, there are numerous other planning applications and development proposals in the surrounding area.

Residents are therefore experiencing the cumulative effects of development rather than the theoretical effects of one individual application.

The combined impact includes:

- increased traffic and vehicle movements;
- additional pressure on an already constrained road;
- construction traffic and heavy vehicles;
- pressure on drainage and sewerage infrastructure;
- repeated road closures and utility works;
- increased pressure on parking;
- increased pedestrian and cyclist conflict with vehicles;
- loss of rural character;
- increased urbanisation of the lane;
- and further impact on the setting of historic and listed buildings.

It is important that these impacts are considered **cumulatively**, rather than each development being assessed independently as though the surrounding developments did not exist.

3. College Lane Is Already Under Significant Highway Pressure

College Lane is a narrow rural road which is simply not comparable to a modern residential road designed to accommodate substantial additional development.

There is no continuous footway along significant sections of the lane, visibility is restricted in places and vehicles frequently struggle to pass one another. The lane is already subject to congestion, obstruction and vehicles having to manoeuvre or reverse to allow other traffic through.

Our property is located close to a **blind bend**, which makes the additional movement of vehicles particularly concerning.

The existing situation is not merely inconvenient. There have already been incidents demonstrating the physical limitations of the road.

Our car was **written off following a collision while parked outside 136 College Lane on 31st September this year** and several other vehicles in the vicinity were also damaged. This is illustrative of the difficulties vehicles already face on the narrower sections of the lane.

Introducing additional residential access points and movements from another six dwellings would inevitably increase the number of vehicles using the lane and increase the potential for conflict.

The proposal also appears to provide parking for a substantial number of vehicles. The realistic effect of this development therefore needs to be assessed against the actual capacity and physical characteristics of College Lane, rather than simply whether the proposed development technically provides the required number of parking spaces.

4. Hurst College Creates Significant Additional Traffic Along College Lane

Another important factor is the proximity of **Hurst College**, a Grade I listed historic institution and a significant local traffic generator.

There are substantial numbers of vehicles travelling to and from the school, including staff, parents, pupils, visitors, deliveries and service vehicles.

At busy times, these movements coincide with existing residential traffic and commuter traffic along College Lane. The road can become extremely congested and often grid-locked.

The addition of further residential development will increase vehicle movements on a road that is already heavily used and constrained.

5. Repeated Road Closures and Failures of Existing Infrastructure

There are also serious concerns about the ability of the existing infrastructure to accommodate further development.

College Lane appears to be subject to repeated utility and highway works. The lane is frequently affected by works associated with **leaking or failing water mains and other infrastructure problems**, and it can feel as though sections of the lane are being closed or disrupted every few weeks.

These closures have a significant knock-on effect.

When College Lane is restricted or closed, traffic is displaced onto surrounding roads, resulting in serious congestion. Often, the lane and surrounding roads become effectively **grid-locked**.

This is highly relevant when considering whether additional development can reasonably be accommodated on the existing network.

The Council should not simply consider whether the road can theoretically accommodate six additional houses under normal conditions. It should consider how the network operates **in reality**, including during utility failures, roadworks, school traffic, construction activity, incidents and other abnormal but recurring circumstances. This was not properly considered last time.

6. Serious Drainage and Sewerage Concerns

There are also significant concerns regarding existing drainage and sewerage infrastructure in this area.

During periods of **heavy rainfall, sewerage infrastructure has experienced problems, with sewage/wastewater appearing to discharge or leak towards the farmland opposite our property**.

This is particularly concerning given the increasing amount of development taking place in the immediate area.

Additional dwellings inevitably increase demand on sewerage and drainage systems. Before further development is permitted, the Council should have robust evidence that the existing sewerage and surface-water infrastructure has sufficient capacity and that the proposal will not worsen existing problems.

This should include consideration of:

- existing sewer capacity;
- foul-water infrastructure;
- surface-water drainage;
- rainfall events and exceedance flows;
- groundwater and local drainage conditions;
- the cumulative effect of nearby developments;
- and the potential consequences of infrastructure failure.

It would be inappropriate to treat drainage as simply a matter to be resolved through standard conditions if there is already evidence of infrastructure problems in the immediate locality.

7. Construction Traffic and the Existing Development Opposite

The development currently taking place **directly opposite our home** has already demonstrated the impact that construction activity has on this narrow lane.

Construction vehicles, deliveries, contractors' vehicles, machinery and associated activity have created additional pressure on an already constrained road.

Adding another development would prolong and compound these impacts.

The Council should consider the **combined construction impacts** if multiple developments are undertaken in this area at similar times.

This is particularly important given the narrowness of the lane, the blind bend and the absence of a continuous pedestrian footway.

8. Highway Safety for Pedestrians, Cyclists and Other Road Users

College Lane is used by pedestrians, cyclists, dog walkers, residents, school traffic and other road users.

The absence of a continuous footway means that pedestrians are often required to share the carriageway with vehicles.

This is particularly concerning around bends and other locations where forward visibility is restricted.

Adding six further homes will inevitably generate additional vehicle movements, deliveries, refuse collection, visitors and service vehicles.

The proposal should therefore be assessed not merely on whether individual vehicle movements can technically enter and leave the site, but on whether the **cumulative increase in traffic can be accommodated safely by the existing rural highway**.

9. Impact on Listed Buildings and the Historic Environment

My property, **Grove Cottage, 122 College Lane**, is a **Grade II listed building**.

The heritage significance of a listed building is not confined to the physical fabric of the building itself. Its **setting** is also relevant to the assessment of development.

The rural and historic character of College Lane contributes significantly to the setting in which these buildings are experienced.

There is also the important historic environment associated with **Hurst College, which is Grade I listed**.

The gradual introduction of further residential development, accesses, vehicles, hardstanding, lighting, boundary treatments and associated domestic activity risks changing the character of this historically sensitive part of College Lane.

The cumulative effect of development should therefore be carefully considered rather than assessing the visual or heritage impact of this application in isolation.

10. Loss of Rural Character and Increasing Urbanisation of College Lane

The character of College Lane is changing rapidly.

What has historically been a narrow, rural lane is increasingly being subjected to residential development, additional vehicle movements, construction activity, infrastructure works and associated urbanising features.

The concern is not simply that six houses will be visible.

It is that **another piece of the rural character of the lane will be permanently lost**, contributing to the gradual transformation of the whole corridor.

This is particularly important given the location of the application within an area that has historically provided separation between Hurstpierpoint and Hassocks.

11. Sustainability and Car Dependency

The location also raises questions about sustainable transport.

The surrounding highway network is rural and constrained, and there is no comprehensive pedestrian infrastructure along College Lane.

Residents of the proposed dwellings are therefore likely to be heavily reliant on private cars for commuting, school journeys, shopping and other everyday activities.

The development should be assessed against the actual accessibility of the site, including safe walking and cycling routes, rather than simply its geographical proximity to the village.

Additional housing should not automatically be considered sustainable merely because it is located within or close to an existing settlement.

12. The Need for a Proper Cumulative Infrastructure Assessment

Taken individually, six houses may appear relatively modest.

However, that is not the reality of the situation facing residents of College Lane.

We are already experiencing:

- significant traffic congestion;
- a narrow road with restricted passing opportunities;
- a blind bend in the immediate vicinity of our home;
- vehicle collisions and damage;
- heavy traffic associated with Hurst College;
- repeated water-main failures and utility works;
- frequent road closures;
- severe congestion when the lane is restricted;
- existing drainage and sewerage problems;
- a development currently under construction opposite our property;
- numerous other planning applications and development pressures;
- and increasing urbanisation of an historically rural and sensitive environment.

These issues demonstrate that the capacity of the area should be considered **cumulatively and realistically**.

I respectfully request that the Council obtains and considers appropriate evidence from the relevant highway, drainage, sewerage and utility authorities before determining this application.

In particular, I ask that the Council satisfies itself that:

1. the existing highway network has sufficient capacity to accommodate the additional traffic;
2. highway safety at the blind bend and along the narrower sections of College Lane will not be compromised;
3. school-related traffic associated with Hurst College has been properly taken into account;
4. the cumulative impact of nearby approved, current and proposed developments has been assessed;
5. existing sewerage infrastructure has sufficient capacity;
6. existing surface-water drainage problems will not be exacerbated;
7. the impact of heavy rainfall and infrastructure failure has been properly considered;
8. construction traffic can be accommodated safely;
9. the impact on the setting of Grade II and Grade I listed buildings has been properly assessed; and
10. the further erosion of the countryside gap and rural character between Hurstpierpoint and Hassocks has been adequately considered.

Conclusion

I strongly object to planning application **DM/26/2178**.

The proposal should not be considered as six isolated houses on an otherwise unconstrained site. It forms part of a much wider pattern of development which is already placing considerable pressure on **College Lane, local infrastructure, drainage, sewerage, the highway network and the historic and rural character of this area**.

The repeated infrastructure failures, road closures, congestion and highway safety issues demonstrate that the problems are already being experienced by residents rather than being hypothetical future concerns.

Further development should not be permitted until there is clear evidence that the existing infrastructure and highway network can safely and sustainably accommodate it, taking into account the **cumulative impact of development already underway and the numerous other proposals in the area**.

I also ask the Council to give proper weight to the impact on the **Hurstpierpoint–Hassocks countryside gap**, the setting of listed buildings, the rural character of College Lane and the safety of existing residents, pedestrians, cyclists and other road users.

Given the cumulative nature and significance of these issues, I strongly request that the application is **called in and determined by the Planning Committee rather than under delegated powers**.

For all of the above reasons, I respectfully request that **planning permission for DM/26/2178 is refused**.

Yours faithfully,



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