
OBJECTION TO PLANNING APPLICATION
DM/25/3129
Land east of Borde Hill Lane/North of
Balcombe Road, Haywards Heath

1. This document sets out my objections to the proposed residential development on the land at Sugworth Farm.

2. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I use local roads daily, both as a motorist and as a pedestrian, primarily to reach Haywards Heath station and local shops and amenities. I am therefore directly and personally affected by the proposed development.

3. My reasons for objecting are as follows.

A. TRANSPORT AND ROADS

4. The existing road infrastructure in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development is in a very poor, dilapidated and overloaded state.

5. Balcombe Road, Hanlye Lane and Borde Hill Lane are all narrow country lanes which were not designed for the nature and extent of road traffic which now uses them. Borde Hill Lane, as the principal northward route out of Haywards Heath to the M23 and Crawley, bears a very significant overload of traffic, including large HGVs. As a result the road surface is frequently in a very poor and dangerous condition. This winter extensive, large and dangerous potholes have appeared throughout all three roads. The owners of Borde Hill Gardens plan significant development to their visitor and tourist activities by way of construction of a new entrance and expansion of their summer festival operations. That alone will greatly increase the traffic burden on the local roads in the area. Plainly, both the construction phase of the proposed development and the use by residents of local roads once the development is

complete will add further to the pressure on the local road system. It is abundantly clear to anyone who lives locally that the local roads simply would not be able to cope without very significant and expensive improvement and expansion.

Road Safety

6. It is within my own knowledge that there have been numerous road traffic accidents and collisions along the local roads in recent years. Three examples illustrate the point:
 - a. Several instances of vehicles leaving the road at a sharp bend on Hanlye Lane, approaching Haywards Heath. This has led to recent works to improve the warning signage on the Lane.
 - b. Several accidents or collisions just to the north of the proposed site, where Borde Hill Lane meets Copyhold Lane. This is an extremely dangerous junction due to the combination of a steep hill, blind junction, poor signage, very poor road surface, narrow carriageway and frequently excessive speed by motorists.
 - c. Borde Hill Lane, immediately outside my house (Willow Tree Cottage). Again, narrow carriageway, excessive speed approaching the roundabout, poor visibility, poor road surface has led to vehicles crashing into the ditch and a collision in September 2023.
7. Pedestrian safety is already very poor and I see no indication that the proposed development will do anything to address it. I can say from personal experience that anyone walking from the site of the proposed development down the hill into Haywards Heath takes great risk with life and limb. It is necessary to cross the road three times because there is no continuous pedestrian footpath. There are no signed crossing points. Visibility is poor and traffic speeds often excessive. Without significant improvement in pedestrian facilities the inclination of those living on the new development will be to drive into town, further increasing the problems outlined above.
8. Moreover, cyclists face similar safety problems. Quite simply, it is very dangerous to cycle on any of the local roads for the same reasons outlined above.

B. DEVELOPMENT OF NEW AND EXPANDED ROUNDABOUT

9. The existing roundabout at the junction of Hanlye Lane, Borde Hill Lane and Balcombe Road was constructed as part of the development of the Penland Green site in 2020. As it happened, because construction of the roundabout took place during the COVID lockdown period, the effect on the town was minimised.
10. The current proposal suggests that the developer wishes to significantly expand the existing roundabout.
11. Construction of a new roundabout, particularly alongside the proposed new development, would have extremely serious adverse effects, including the following:
 - a. Extensive periods of closure of two principal routes out of Haywards Heath to the north and the west.
 - b. Consequent major traffic congestion in an already heavily congested town centre. Those who regularly use the town centre in the morning and evening peak will know that the area around the railway station, Mill Green Road, Perrymount Road and Sydney Road is already very seriously congested. Any temporary closure or disruption on Balcombe Road very seriously aggravates that congestion. Closure of Balcombe Road to traffic will greatly worsen existing problems of congestion and pollution.
 - c. There are no realistic alternative routes during such a prolonged period of closure. Copyhold Lane is entirely unsuitable as an alternative route. It is a narrow country lane with several choke points. It is wholly unsuitable as a diversionary route.

C. FLOOD RISK

12. Existing drainage infrastructure is entirely inadequate to deal with flooding and drainage. The problems locally have been exacerbated since the construction of the Penland Green development and the consequent loss of woodland and vegetation. The consequence is that in times of heavy rain there is significant surface water which flows onto the proposed development site and down Borde Hill Lane. As a local

resident I have had to take measures to address the risk of flooding into our property. Such is the inadequacy of local drainage that residents have had to construct and maintain drainage culverts to divert excess water onto the Sugworth Farm site. Illustrative are these recent images taken by me of the area around the gatehouse adjacent to the existing roundabout:



13. The proposed development will obviously result in large scale loss of natural vegetation with consequent deleterious effects on drainage. The mitigation measures proposed by the Applicant are wholly inadequate to address the risk. They do not account for the effects of climate change and greater rainfall. They are inherently less resilient than the natural drainage provided by the existing vegetation and natural landscape. Moreover, they will require ongoing and long term maintenance. The evidence of the existing very poorly maintained drainage system provides no confidence whatsoever that the proposed artificial drainage measures will be adequately maintained: existing drains are continuously blocked with little evidence of any attempts to clear them despite frequent flooding and increasing heavy rain events.

D. EFFECT ON VISUAL CHARACTERISTICS AND AMENITY

14. The Sugworth site is adjacent to an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The site of the proposed development has many of the characteristics of the AONB, as illustrated in the images below:





15. The immediate area of the proposed development contains a number of listed buildings and the Borde Hill Park and gardens:

- a. Sugworth Farm House (Grade II listed);
- b. Borde Hill Place (Grade II listed);
- c. South Lodge to Borde Hill Grade II listed);
- d. Borde Hill park and garden: Grade II*. Description from Historic England:
“To the ... east, the site's parkland and woodland merge into the adjacent undulating, wooded farmland.”

16. A Roman road (marked on Ordnance Survey maps) runs through the site.

17. Ancient woodland (known as Flat Wood) lies a few metres north of the site. It is recorded within the site on MSDC's Ancient Woodland Inventory ([A revision of the Ancient Woodland Inventory for Mid Sussex District](#))

18. Although the Sugworth Farm site is not itself within the AONB, it is clear from the images reproduced above that it shares many of the characteristics of an AONB; that the separation from the AONB is arbitrary (in the form of the road); and that many of the biodiversity and wildlife characteristics which led to the High Weald area acquiring AONB status must be shared by the Sugworth Farm land.

19. Importantly, the Sugworth Farm site is within the High Weald National Character Area.

20. The Sugworth Farm site gives semi-rural character to this edge of Haywards Heath. It is submitted that development of the site would contravene the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), in that it would amount to harmful development that would not maintain or enhance the quality of rural character [NPPF section 15 and paragraph 170].

21. The proposed site is a habitat for a wide variety of wildlife: deer, red kite, barn owls, dormice (legally protected species). Granting permission would lead to continued destruction and fragmentation of habitats such as this, representing a threat to biodiversity, soil protection and nature recovery, particularly in the context of climate change.

E. PRESSURE ON LOCAL AMENITIES

22. The proposed development would significantly increase pressure on already very stretched local amenities: doctors surgeries, dental provision, schools, public transport, hospitals. There is no indication of any plan to expand provision of such local amenities to ameliorate the effect of the proposed development.

23. For all of the above reasons, I object to this application and ask the appropriate planning officer(s) to take my objections into account when considering the application.



