

	Mayfield Fox Hill, Haywards Heath RH16 4QY RH16 4QY United Kingdom 
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July 2023

Mid Sussex planning department

Re: Application DM/25/1630, Land at Hurst Farm, Hurstwood Lane Haywards Heath West Sussex

Dear members of the planning department.

I write you this letter in response to the planning application DM/25/1630 proposing 375 dwellings on the land around Hurst Farm, Hurstwood Lane.

I was appalled to see the important allocation of housing to the Hurstwood Lane area in the planning application DM/25/1630. This development site was already considered in the 2009 Mid Sussex District Council Core Strategy Pre-Submission report (DMH Stallard LLP Ref: 65984-2) and discarded as the poorest choice. I cite from the report, (Section 3, Sites opposed):

“Land at Hurst Farm, Hurstwood Lane – Location (t)

3.5 This site performs poorly in terms of proximity to the town centre, sustainable transport, landscape impacts and lack of local services and facilities. The land was found to be unsuitable for development in the 2006 Atkins Study. Furthermore existing Local Plan policy HH20 allocates land for informal open space, having been purchased by Mid Sussex District Council specifically to protect it from future development and to provide open space for residents. There is considerable opportunity for the District to enhance the leisure and recreational benefits of Hurst Farm for residents of Haywards Heath, that will be lost with this suggested approach.”

The above arguments are still valid and even more so with the problems facing Haywards Heath after a period of important expansion. Let me therefore further elaborate on the three main reasons why the massive exploitation that the proposal DM/25/1630 is suggesting for the area is unsuitable:

1. Haywards Heath is a commuter town without any particular qualities (unlike the associated villages Cuckfield and Lindfield). An advantage however has been that contrary to Burgess Hill there has been some limitation of the urban sprawl that results from inconsiderate developments. This means that even from the town centre it has been possible to reach unexploited countryside by foot, without too much effort. With the latest set of developments these possibilities are shrinking to the detriment of the whole population of the town. Due to the developments west and south of Fox Hill the land around Hurst Farm is the only remaining southern exit to unexploited nature. It is accessible through the country park of ancient woodland already at the level of the roundabout next to the St. Francis Park development. The new development south of the ring road will ruin this and make the whole southern boundary of the town undefined. This typically leads to the kind of urban sprawl that competent urbanists are keen to avoid. It will also destroy the character of the country park of ancient woodland as an entry point to unexploited nature where the park and associated field (the latter which is to be exploited) serves as hunting or breeding ground for a large group of characteristic species of the British country side (foxes, rabbits, buzzards, owls, roe deers, green woodpeckers etc.) The development will therefore not only destroy the southern exit for pedestrians and hikers, but also

eliminate the character of “green corridor” for nature into town offered by the ancient woodland area and the field.

2. Haywards Heath has grown considerably the last years due to similar developments and there is now important pressure on all services such as dentists, surgeries, schools. This is particularly true in the Fox Hill and Hurstwood Lane area that are relatively far from the centre and where there are no services whatsoever. The addition of 375 dwellings will add to these pressures in an unsustainable way. As far as I understand there are also issues with water pressure and supply in the area. In my opinion, before approving further major developments, the Council would need time to improve services to an acceptable level.
3. With the many recent developments there has been a strong increase in the traffic in the Fox Hill area. This has led to important congestions both at the junction between Hurstwood lane and the B2112, between the B2112 and the relief road and between Hurstwood lane and the relief road. Imagining another 350+ vehicles joining these traffic jams is an absolute nightmare for the area. It will increase congestion on the road to Brighton through Ditchling, as well as on the axis Fox Hill-Lindfield, with knock on effects for the relief-road and the town centre. This problem cannot be solved by adding some traffic lights between Hurstwood lane and the relief road, or closing the access to Hurstwood lane from the B2112. Already now the access from Hurstwood lane to the relief road is regularly congested, causing traffic jams on the relief road, which are all the more dangerous due to the 50 mph speed limit. Only a massive reduction in the flux of car traffic by reducing the speed limit (and enforcing it strictly), prioritising public transport, bicycles and pedestrians, can bring down pollution and, not least, noise pollution to acceptable levels. Note that these problems are already exemplified by the developments south of the Fox and Hound pub. Here only rudimentary public transport is proposed and the few buses that are in service are regularly late or cancelled. Therefore, the traffic on the B2112 has increased substantially from an already high level. As the town grows, traffic through the outer areas, such as the road through Fox Hill, must be reined in to allow people to use alternative transport, walking or biking. Existing transport infrastructure, such as the B2112 must be restructured giving much more importance to pedestrians and bicycle users. This requires a global approach with actions not restricted to this project but important changes of both circulation on the B2112, the relief road and the connecting road network to the town centre. Too often the planning procedure considers the area for exploitation in a myopic manner and all pedestrian or bicycle paths lead nowhere, since there is no connecting network. All these factors make this massive development on the site furthest possible from the station, at the southern border of town, inconsiderate and not commendable.

As I hope I have shown above there are strong arguments to reject the planning proposal on objective grounds due to the destruction of natural environment and recreational zones, the lack of supporting public services and the strong increase of traffic. To this can be added the permanent destruction of environmental quality for the people currently living in the area and the important disruption during the actual construction work for existing homeowners. I kindly ask you to reconsider any development south of the relief road so that this natural boundary can define the town limit and serve its purpose in an efficient way.

My opinion, and that of many fellow citizens, is that the Neighbourhood plan consultation taking place some years ago now, was merely a fig leaf to push for maximal exploitation of the boundary areas of Haywards Heath, when the commendable approach would have been densification and urbanisation of the town centre as can be seen in the newly built apartment blocks close to the station. Such an approach could make Haywards Heath into an interesting small town with a life of its own, instead of the urban sprawl of ill-advised, developments such as that proposed in DM/25/1630 and many other new developments.

Sincerely,

