

Sarah Valentine

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 04 May 2026 08:57
To: planninginfo
Subject: Planning application number DM/25/3129.

[REDACTED]

Dear Sir, Madam,

application number DM/25/3129.

[REDACTED]

1. The scale is still wrong. 117 houses is still nearly double the 60 that the council's own draft plan suggested as a maximum for this site. The developer has provided no convincing justification for why so many more houses are needed here, or why the site can handle this number without causing serious harm to the surrounding landscape and infrastructure.

2. Landscape harm to the High Weald National Landscape is unresolved. The amendments are noted but do not remove the significant landscape harm. Development would urbanise a sensitive rural valley and erode the setting of the High Weald National Landscape. The site forms a critical rural buffer preventing the coalescence of Haywards Heath, Cuckfield and Lindfield. Its development would materially diminish the distinct separation and rural character of this area. An independent landscape report previously found that even 60 houses would cause major harm. 117 is nearly double that. The drive from Balcombe via the viaduct and into Haywards Heath is a special feature of the town and should be protected.

3. Heritage harm has not been avoided or minimised. The MSDC Conservation Officer has confirmed that the site makes a strong and direct contribution to the setting and significance of Grade II listed Sugworth Farmhouse and its associated historic farmstead. The fields are not incidental to the listed building - they are historically and functionally linked to the farm and form part of how the asset is experienced and understood.

The proposed development would disrupt the historic relationship between the farmhouse and its surrounding agricultural land, erode key views to and from the heritage asset across the valley landscape, and diminish the rural context which underpins the building's architectural, historical and aesthetic value.

Under the National Planning Policy Framework, harm to designated heritage assets must be given great weight and requires clear and convincing justification. The developer has not provided that justification. The harm has not been convincingly avoided or minimised.

4. Flooding risk has been deferred, not resolved. This is a critical point. Parts of the development site sit within existing surface water flow paths, which means the sequential approach to site layout has not been properly followed - development in such areas should be avoided in the first instance, not built on and mitigated afterwards.

Although the Lead Local Flood Authority has removed its formal objection subject to conditions, this does not resolve the underlying concerns:

- The scheme relies heavily on future detailed design and unproven mitigation measures that do not yet exist.
- Proposed interception of flow paths via highway gullies is inherently uncertain and may not perform effectively during significant rainfall events.
- There is a real risk that exceedance flows could continue along natural routes, increasing flood risk to properties within the site or elsewhere.
- Long-term maintenance and management of drainage infrastructure remains uncertain and unresolved.

In effect, the application defers resolution of critical flood risk issues to later stages rather than demonstrating at outline stage that the development is safe, appropriate and robust over its lifetime.

This matters enormously in the local context. The development of Penland Green has already made flooding significantly worse for gardens in Orchard Way and surrounding roads. The stream running through the Sugworth Farm site rises to at least 1.2 metres under heavy rainfall, causing bank flooding. During heavy rain, water running off Borde Hill parkland via the South Lodge entrance already floods onto Borde Hill Lane because the drain installed with the current roundabout cannot cope. Building 117 houses with all their roads, driveways and roofs will send far more water into a system that is already failing.

5. Water supply cannot cope. Southern England has experienced record dry periods and demand for water has increased significantly with all the development that has already taken place. There is no strategic plan to increase water supply capacity to serve this development - and even if one existed, it would take years to deliver. The application contains no evidence that water supply infrastructure can support 117 additional homes in this area.

6. Schools are full and cannot absorb more children. West Sussex County Council has confirmed that local schools do not have capacity to accommodate the additional demand this development would generate. Haywards Heath primary schools are already operating above 95% capacity. Reliance on S106 contributions does not guarantee that school places will be delivered in time. The local Harlands School is full - there are families living 200 metres away who cannot get their child a place and have to drive to Lindfield as a result.

7. Local roads cannot cope with more traffic. Local roads are narrow, constrained and already at or

near capacity. Additional traffic is likely to result in severe cumulative impacts under the NPPF. The proposed roundabout, despite being slightly smaller than originally proposed, remains urbanising in nature and out of character with the surrounding rural road network. Balcombe Road and Borde Hill Lane have seen a significant increase in heavy traffic in recent years with no upgrades. Penland Road is already being used as a rat run during school drop-off and pick-up. Years of construction traffic to a 117-home site on these roads would make things significantly worse.

8. Protected wildlife and ancient woodland remain at risk. Surveys have confirmed dormice (legally protected) and several bat species are living on this site. Residents regularly observe red kites, barn owls, kestrels, deer and orchids here. Ancient woodland known as Flat Wood lies just metres from the site boundary. A Roman road marked on Ordnance Survey maps runs through the site and has not been properly investigated. The loss of trees, habitats and rural character remains a serious concern that the amendments do not address.

9. This development has no support in local plans. The Sugworth Farm land is not designated for residential development in the Haywards Heath Neighbourhood Plan or the Ansty and Staplefield Parish Plan. The Planning Inspectorate concluded in May 2022 that no further housing allocation was required in Haywards Heath. This development does not have the support of the communities it would most affect.

