

Sarah Valentine

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 07 May 2026 20:41
To: planninginfo
Subject: Objection to Application DM/25/3129 - Land at Borde Hill Lane/Balcombe Road, Haywards Heath

[REDACTED]

Dear Sirs,

Objection to the Planning Application for Sugworth Farm (DM/25/3129) for 117 houses on land east of Borde Hill Lane/north of Balcombe Road, Haywards Heath

This objection is submitted by [REDACTED] I am directly affected by this proposal because I live in Orchard Close using Balcombe Road, Borde Hill Lane and Hanlye Lane most days.

I note the recent notification stating the number of proposed houses has dropped from 125 to 117. In addition, the roundabout at Balcombe Road is stated as being slightly reduced in size, however is the roundabout is still enormous. Visibility splay lines cut deep into the surrounding fields on every connecting road section - some extending 70 metres out. Two of the arms are even marked "indicative only" on the developers' own drawings, meaning they haven't fully resolved where those arms will go or whose land they will affect. This is still a massive piece of new road infrastructure pushing out into open countryside.

Notwithstanding these 'concessions' by the developer the following are my key concerns as to why the council should reconsider the planning Application for Sugworth Farm:

1. Flooding Concerns

- The site has clay soil that doesn't drain well
- As mentioned, parts of the site are already in a flood zone
- The stream running through the area (Scrase Stream/West Common Stream) has already caused flooding on Penland Road, Borde Hill Lane, Turners Mill, Burrell Road, and Mill Green Road

Adding 117 houses means more hard surfaces (roads, driveways, roofs) which means more rainwater running off into areas that already flood.

The plan to build drainage basins, earth banks behind gardens, and use roads as overflow paths when it rains heavily. This is complicated, needs constant maintenance, and might not work during extreme weather.

When we moved to Orchard Close at the beginning of 2015 part of the 'search' process provided us with details of a Surface Water Flood map modelling the potential risk of flooding occurring on average every 75 years, within 30m of the north end of Fairfield Way and Orchard Close, on the proposed site. Clearly subsequent Climate Change forecasting may well have increased this potential flood risk. The proposed addition of more hard surfaces will inevitably increase this risk. This is a cause for concern for all residents.

2. Impact on the Countryside and High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

The site sits next to the High Weald AONB - a nationally protected landscape. The AONB Management Plan 2024-2029 reminds the partnership which includes all 15 local authorities covering the area that conservation and enhancement of natural beauty is the primary purpose of AONB legislation.

An independent landscape report from 2022 said even 60 houses would cause major harm to the AONB and local countryside character. 125 houses would be significantly worse:

- It pushes urban development into the countryside
- Creates a harsh boundary between town and protected landscape

- Increases noise, light, and activity near a protected area meant to be tranquil

I drive along Borde Hill Lane regularly and value the rural character. As a regular visitor to Borde Hill gardens I am dismayed that Sugworth Farm, owned by Borde Hill Estate and an area of beautiful open countryside on the edge of AONB land is being considered for development in the Mid Sussex District Plan. As we know (from their website) *"The National Lottery Heritage Fund has kindly awarded Borde Hill Garden Charity a grant of £2.25m for our 'Reinventing Borde Hill' project which will improve access to their nationally important heritage, connect local communities with the restorative power of nature, and inspire future generations through outdoor learning"*. This should be a cause for concern and a clear conflict of interests. This development would urbanise the countryside and harm the setting of the High Weald and is contrary to Borde Hill's stated vision.

3. Protected Wildlife

Surveys found protected species living on the site:

- Dormice (legally protected)
- Several bat species (some are vulnerable)

The development will destroy their habitat - removing grassland, cutting through hedgerows, and removing bat feeding areas. The developers say they'll "mitigate" this later, but at this stage they need to prove the site can be developed without harming protected wildlife.

As a supporter of Sussex Wildlife Trust, someone who values local wildlife and who hugely enjoys having this green environment so close, I love listening to the owls which are active at night. I'm concerned that legally protected dormice and bats will also lose their habitat. The developers stating they will 'mitigate' this later is wholly inadequate at this stage of the planning process and does not give me with any reassurance.

4. Loss of Trees

The plan includes cutting down a mature English oak and removing parts of woodland to build the access road.

The developers say this is unavoidable, but they haven't properly looked at alternative access routes. Losing mature trees makes the landscape and wildlife impacts even worse.

As I have stated I am someone who values local wildlife and who hugely enjoys having this green environment nearby. Mature trees take decades to grow and are valuable for wildlife and character. Losing them shows the site is being over-developed.

5. Road Disruption and Narrow Roads

The plan includes completely remodelling the roundabout at Balcombe Road, Hanlye Lane, and Borde Hill Lane again.

What happened last time:

- Road closures lasting over 3 months
- Major disruption to residents, shops, businesses
- Routes to Crawley, Gatwick, and the A23/M23 cut off
- Copyhold Lane (narrow, with a weight-restricted bridge and flooding problems) used as a diversion - unsuitable for heavy traffic

It is worth reminding you that Borde Hill Lane (it's in the name - Lane) is a minor road requiring diversion routes around traffic management schemes. The construction will cause significant disruption and heavy construction vehicles will have a negative impact on the already deteriorating roads surrounding the area. Balcombe Road leading to Haywards Heath railway station is a narrow section of road with a high earth bank on the East side which is overgrown and a footpath on the West side which is narrow and also overgrown, making it unsuitable for heavy traffic.

During the last roundabout works, I and probably many others, experienced major disruption with long diversion routes, poorly signed along narrow roads. Going through this again, plus years of construction traffic, is unacceptable. The knock-on effect to Balcombe village and B2036 will be significant too.

My major concern is the additional traffic 125 new homes will produce, as well as the inevitable DPD/Amazon type delivery vans servicing those homes.

Balcombe Road South of Old Wickham Lane is presently unsafe for pedestrians but is a main route to Haywards Heath railway station. When I walk to the railway station, or to Sainsburys, I am careful to keep to the back of the footpath. This is because Balcombe Road is narrow. The high overgrown earth bank makes vehicles, especially heavy vehicles, barely able to squeeze past each other. On many occasions I have seen vehicles mounting the footpath to avoid collision. The road is currently not fit for purpose. An increase in the traffic flow caused by residents from the proposed new development will only exacerbate this.

Also remember that permission has recently been granted to build an Aldi Store next to Claire Hall. This will also increase the traffic problem along this section of road.

6. Water supply

The local water supply is already under serious strain. Southern England has seen record dry periods and demand for water has increased significantly with all the development that has already taken place in this area. There is no strategic plan in place to increase water supply capacity to serve further development - and even if one existed, it would take years to deliver. Adding 117 more homes to this area, without any evidence that water supply infrastructure can cope, is simply not acceptable

7. Too Many Houses

The council's own draft plan suggested up to 60 houses for this site. This application has been reduced to 117 houses – still almost double. The developer hasn't justified why so many more houses are needed or shown that the site can handle this many without causing problems.

The doubling of houses from the council's suggested 60 to 125 will dramatically increase the impact on our community, as I have explained.

I can already see how busy Balcombe Road, Hanlye Lane and Borde Hill Lane are now following the construction of up to 210+ new homes on Hanlye Lane completed a few years ago, built as part of the Redrow Homes Penlands Green estate at Penlands Farm. Apart from a new roundabout there has been no improvement the road network to accommodate the increase in traffic.

For all these reasons, I object to this application and ask the council to refuse it. If the council is minded to approve development on this site, it should be for far fewer houses (closer to the 60 originally suggested), with proper evidence that flooding, wildlife, heritage, and infrastructure concerns have been properly addressed.

Yours sincerely,


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