

Planning Policy Advice

Application Ref:	DM/26/1315
Application Type: (Pre-app/ application)	Application
Address:	Land West Of Gatesmead, Wickham Way, Haywards Heath, West Sussex
Description:	Proposed 49 new homes together with open space and associated infrastructure.
Date:	15 June 2026
Policy Officer:	Sarah Little
DM Officer:	Caroline Grist

Development Plan

The Development Plan comprises the adopted Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 (2018) which is currently under review, and the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) (2022). The site falls within the boundary of the Haywards Heath Neighbourhood Plan which was made in December 2016.

The saved policies of the Mid Sussex Local Plan (2004) and the Small Scale Housing Allocations DPD (2008) are not relevant to this development proposal.

Below are the Development Plan policies considered key to the consideration of the development proposal.

Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 (2018)

- Policy DP4: Housing
- Policy DP6: Settlement Hierarchy
- Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside
- Policy DP15: New Homes in the Countryside
- Policy DP20: Securing Infrastructure
- Policy DP21: Transport
- Policy DP22: Rights of Way and Other Recreational Routes
- Policy DP26: Character and Design
- Policy DP27: Dwelling Space Standards
- Policy DP28: Accessibility
- Policy DP29: Noise, Light and Air Pollution
- Policy DP30: Housing Mix
- Policy DP31: Affordable Housing
- DP34: Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets
- Policy DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- Policy DP38: Biodiversity
- Policy DP39: Sustainable Design and Construction
- Policy DP41: Flood Risk and Drainage
- Policy DP42: Water Infrastructure and the Water Environment

Haywards Heath Neighbourhood Plan (2016)

The Haywards Heath Neighbourhood Plan was made in December 2016. Since then, the Mid Sussex District Plan (2018) and Site Allocations DPD (2022) have been adopted. If there is conflict between non-strategic policies in the District Plan and the Haywards Heath Neighbourhood Plan, the District Plan takes precedence.

Below are the Haywards Heath Neighbourhood Plan policies considered key to the consideration of the development proposal.

- Policy E5
- Policy E6
- Policy E8
- Policy E9
- Policy E11
- Policy E13
- Policy T1
- Policy T2

Emerging District Plan

The Mid Sussex District Plan has been reviewed to ensure it remains effective and consistent with national policy. The review process commenced in 2021 and the draft Mid Sussex District Plan (2021-2039) was submitted for Examination in July 2024.

Hearing sessions were held in February and March 2026. The Inspector has provided the Council with his interim conclusions and action points for the Council to complete in a Post Hearing Letter (IDJB-12). In his Post Hearings letter, the Inspector has asked the Council to test a higher housing figure in the range of 1,200 to 1,300 dwellings per annum. In response to this, the Council has published its list of additional sites which will now be subject to in-combination testing (such as transport modelling and Sustainability Appraisal) before the Council finalizes any additional proposed allocations and consults on them.

All latest Examination news and documentation can be found on our website here:

<https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/planning-building/mid-sussex-district-plan/district-plan-review-examination/>

At this stage, policies within the draft District Plan have minimal weight.

Site selection process

All potential housing and employment sites are included within the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA). The SHELAA provides the palette of sites that are assessed for their suitability for allocation in the Development Plan. A site selection methodology has been developed and tested at Examination (of the adopted Site Allocations DPD). The site selection methodology has been used to assess the SHELAA sites, and identify those sites with potential for development, via allocation in a Development Plan Document.

There are 3 steps to the site assessment process, which are:

Stage 2(a) – Relationship to existing settlements – sites that are disconnected from existing settlements are rejected and not subject to further assessment.

Stage 2(b) – Showstopper constraints – where environmental constraints and deliverability considerations result in very negative impact against the site assessment criteria. Sites with showstopper constraints are rejected and not subject to further assessment.

Stage 2(c) – Overall Assessment – Sites that remain in the pool are subject to full assessment. Sites may be rejected at this stage if there are a combination of negative impacts. Sites may also be rejected at this stage if the loss of the site's current use is contrary to national policy.

For the purposes of plan making, sites that remained in the pool, after Stage 2(c) were subject to further testing including Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulations Assessment and transport modelling. This is Stage 3 of the site selection process. Those sites remaining in the pool after this stage were proposed for allocation in the Submitted District Plan.

The site has been submitted to the Council and is included in the SHELAA as site #988. This site has been assessed through the site selection process for 60 dwellings. In summary, the site was rejected at Stage 2(c) – Overall assessment against criteria. The reason for this is:

Great weight is given to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. Development of the site would cause less than sustainable harm: High impact to a grade II listed buildings. It is not considered that the benefits of development would outweigh harm or loss to the asset. The site is therefore considered unsuitable for development and has been excluded from further assessment.*

On the 15th May 2026 the Council published its list of additional sites for in-combination testing [SSP7]. The conclusion of the Post Hearings Site Selection Review - Initial Conclusions is that this site (SHELAA ID# 988) is suitable for further testing. This is for a revised yield of 49 dwellings. The justification for the conclusion is:

The site is close to the defined built-up area of Haywards Heath to the east, south and west.

The site is in close proximity to two Grade II and two Grade II listed buildings, south and southeast of the site, respectively. Information provided by the site promoter concludes that the site contributes to the setting of these listed buildings but identifies potential mitigation measures to reduce any potential impacts. In addition, the site is within an Archaeological Notification Area. There are several individual TPOs and a TPO Group designation along the site's southern boundary. A landscape buffer is proposed in the southern part of the site. Access is proposed from the northeast corner of the site, via Gatesmead. North of the access point is an area of ancient woodland. The associated 20m buffer overlaps with a small part of the site's northern boundary.*

The site seeks to provide 49 homes. A site of this scale has the potential to be delivered within the first five years from the Plan's adoption. It is considered that the site is suitable for further testing.

No weight, in the decision-making process, can be given to the inclusion of this site in the pool of sites for further testing. The outcome of this further work has not yet concluded and is subject to further consideration during the District Plan Examination.

Site location

The site is outside of the built-up areas as shown on the adopted Policies Maps and therefore Policy DP6: Settlement Hierarchy and Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside are relevant. The site is contiguous with the existing built-up area. The adopted District Plan defines contiguous as 'sharing a common border, touching'.

Housing land supply position

Whilst Mid Sussex District Council has performed excellently in respect of the Housing Delivery Test, a new standard method formula was published in December 2024 alongside the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which gives Mid Sussex a significantly higher housing requirement than the current District Plan. As a result and having regard for the need for an appropriate buffer, the Council is unable to demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites as per the requirements of paragraph 78 of the NPPF.

Other relevant matters

Sunte House is a Grade II* listed building located to the east of the site. Wickham Farm is a Grade II* listed building located to the south of the site. As part of the site selection process, the site was identified as having Less than Substantial Harm -High on heritage impacts. Paragraph 3.10 of the submitted Pre-application Planning Statement that a 61m no build buffer from the southern boundary is to be proposed alongside existing dense boundary treeline to the south to provide enhanced screening from the heritage assets. The Planning Policy team will leave it to other consultees such as the Council's Conservation Officer to comment on heritage matters and whether impacts would be sufficiently mitigated.

The site intersects with a small area of the 15m buffer area for ancient woodland to the northeast where new vehicular and pedestrian access is proposed. An appropriate buffer will need to be provided in accordance with national policy and guidance. The Planning Policy team will leave it to other consultees such as the Council's Tree Officer to comment on tree matters and whether impacts would be sufficiently mitigated.

Mandatory biodiversity net gain will apply to the development proposal. A biodiversity net gain of at least 10% will need to be delivered. The Council encourages higher levels of biodiversity net gain as well as on-site biodiversity enhancements such as swift bricks, bird boxes, bat boxes, bee bricks, hedgehog highways and native wildflower planting with nectar- and pollenrich flowers.