

**DM/25/3067|Erection of 80 new residential dwellings (Use Class C3), including affordable housing units, vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access (including new footpath links to the east and west of the site along Reeds Lane), landscaping and open space, parking, sustainable drainage and other related works. Land West Of Kings Business Centre Reeds Lane Sayers Common West Sussex**

**Introduction** – Page 1

**The Process for Decisions** **Basis of Planning Decisions** – Page 1 **Material Considerations of Policies** – Pages 1-2  
**Allocated (Preferred) Sites** – Page 2 **Statement of Common Ground** - Page 2 **Consideration of Evidence** – Pages 2-3

**The Lack of sustainability of the site** **Determining sustainability** - Page 3

**Lack of new employment opportunities in village** – Page 3 **Lack of new retail facilities in Village** – Pages 3-4

**Lack of Education Infrastructure** - Page 4 **Lack of other essential infrastructure** – Pages 4-5

**Affordable Housing** – Page 5 **Sustainability Conclusions** – Page 5

**Transport and Access** **Lack of Sustainable Transport** – Too much reliance on cars – Page 5

**Lack of comprehensive Public Bus Service** – Pages 5-6 **Unrealistic Reliance on an increase in Cycling** – Page 6

**Issues with Footpaths and PROW** – Pages 7-10 **Parking** - Pages 10-12 **Access** - Pages 12-13

**Flooding & Drainage** **Flooding and existing stream along western boundary of site** – Pages 13-16

**Insufficient Mitigation of onsite flooding issues** – Pages 16-18 **Foul Water and Sewage Disposal** - Page 18

**Biodiversity** – Pages 18-23

**Landscape & Unsustainable Housing Density** – Pages 23-26

**Lack of Community Involvement** – Page 26

**Conclusions** – Page 26

**Introduction**

The above site is outside of the current development plan. Based on the current proposal and documentation provided by the applicant it is not a suitable or sustainable site for development in Sayers Common.

The applicant has based their sustainability on the assumption that other possible speculative and theoretical developments will supply the necessary infrastructure needed to make it sustainable. It makes extensive references to the unmade Draft Sussex District Plan 2021-2039 which mentions such other developments in Sayers Common. The current disrupted status of the Draft Plan, though, does not give it weight as a material considerations at this point in time.

The applicant's application documentation does not provide sufficient and effective mitigations to deal with the issues that this site has with flooding, biodiversity, lack of sustainable infrastructure, access, transport, use of land and housing density.

**The Process for Decisions**

**Basis of Planning Decisions**

Outline Planning decisions should only be based on the existing legally made legislation, policies, and infrastructure that actually exists at the time of the decision, or for which legal permission has already been granted.

The decision must be based only on the merits of the specific planning application itself being put before the local authority. It should not be based on speculative or hypothetical future scenarios for other developments or infrastructure as these cannot be guaranteed or considered material considerations.

**Material Considerations of Policies**

The proposed Draft Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2039 has been halted at this time and has not been made. A new Planning Inspector has been appointed but no notification has been made public as yet as to what their plans for, or views of, the Plan and its examination will be. No date has been set yet for a new examination to take place. Therefore policies the Draft Plan contains cannot be taken into account at this time when assessing this application. This includes the proposed allocated site policies DPSC3-DPSC7 which form part of that Draft Plan.

MSDC has issued Planning Policy Position Statements to act as guidance to developers operating in Mid Sussex, local communities and members of the Planning Committees. They are voluntary and outside the statutory planning framework. The council advised in its report to the Scrutiny Committee for Place and Environment Committee dated 26 November 2025 that “*They do not replace the policies of the adopted development plan (comprising the adopted District Plan, Sites Allocation DPD and Neighbourhood Plans) and cannot be used to replicate the content of the Submission Draft District Plan.*”

As they are for guidance only, they are outweighed as a material considerations by the NPPF, the adopted MSDC District Plan 2014-2031 (MSDC DP) and other made legislation.

### **Allocated (Preferred) Sites**

MSDC in their Policy Statements now wish to refer to the proposed allocated sites in the MSDC Draft District Plan 2021-2039 as “*Council’s Preferred Sites*” However, such sites have not been subject to examination by the Planning Inspectorate and are policies taken from the halted Draft District Plan 2021-2039. They therefore have no official planning or legal status at this time.

The applicant makes the assumption that because the site was a proposed allocated site in the Draft District Plan then it must automatically be assumed to be a suitable sustainable site for development and meet outline and other planning requirements. They also make the assumption they can rely on other sites proposed in the Draft DP, particularly Land to the South of Reeds Lane, to provide the infrastructure that would make this site sustainable. However, none of these other sites have planning permission at this time and the no planning application has been submitted or made for the Land South of Reeds Lane. Neither this site or any other proposed allocated sites in the Draft plan, nor MSDC’s own Site Allocation Process, were examined by the Planning Inspector before the examination was halted. Its suitability as a sustainable development site has therefore not been officially made or confirmed and as a result it has no pre made status as such.

The MSDC Site Allocation process based its assumptions of suitable development sites on a far narrower set of criteria and evidence than that which is required for recommending outline planning permission. What that process considered necessary for awarding site suitability status was more generalised, required less supporting evidence and detail, and ultimately less robust. As a result, the planning issues which this site has were either not identified or not looked at in the necessary detail which is required by the NPPF and other legislation for outline planning permission. For example, the issue of surface water flooding was raised by residents providing evidence during the regulation examination process and pointed out that the site could not hold 100 houses without a large number being at risk of flooding. MSDC and the applicant ignored this throughout the DP process and kept maintaining that it could. The fact that the applicant in their application has now had to reduce the number of houses, because they have now conceded that the flooding on the site made the original number impossible, demonstrates the lack of robustness in the DP Plan making process.

MSDC decision to make it a preferred site therefore cannot be taken as robust decision and has not been based on the sufficient detailed evidence which is required for Outline Planning decisions.

### **Statement of Common Ground**

The application refers to a Statement of Common Ground (SOCG) between various companies considering development in Sayers Common. This SOCG was dependant on all of the parties gaining automatic planning permission as allocated sites in a made Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2039, but this has not happened at this time.

The SOCG is not binding as it clearly states in its paragraph 1.4 “*this SOCG is not binding on any party*”

This document is therefore speculative and hypothetical and is not legally made planning policy or a binding agreement. It therefore cannot be considered a material consideration which has weight in respect of this planning application.

There is also mention of a joint Indicative Framework Masterplan which was drawn up by companies as part of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2039, also dependant on all of them gaining automatic planning permission as allocated sites. Again, it is a speculative and hypothetical non-binding agreement and not legally made planning policy. It should also not be considered a material consideration which has weight in respect of this planning application.

### **Consideration of Evidence**

Mid Sussex District Council must assess this application for a housing estate development on this site only on what the applicant themselves are proposing and have detailed in their current application. The council cannot speculate on how any other speculative or hypothetical future developments could alter that situation at this time.

Any references in this application to other speculative developments which were allocated sites in the Draft Plan cannot therefore be taken into consideration as material considerations at this time. They cannot be given weight unless they have received planning permission prior to the decision being made on this application.

The mention and reliance for sustainability on these other speculative sites in the documentation supplied by the applicant, including their planning statement, is therefore misleading and incorrect. Only the parts of their documentation that do not refer to or rely on these should be taken into consideration in decision making on this application at this time.

## **The Lack of sustainability of the site**

### **Determining sustainability**

The NPPF is based on “*The presumption in favour of sustainable development.*” NPPF 83 also advises “*that To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.*”

It is noted that the applicant is relying on infrastructure that another developer elsewhere may or may not provide in the future to validate that their own site is sustainable. This other infrastructure is hypothetical and speculative so should not be considered to have weight in determining this application. Sustainability should only be based on what infrastructure the applicant themselves is individually proposing to provide in their application, and what is already in existence or has been granted permission for.

### **Lack of new employment opportunities in Village**

The applicant is not proposing to provide any land for the purposes of new employment opportunities, either retail, commercial, or social activity, within their site or in the village of Sayers Common.

The applicant advises that the site will *provide significant economic benefits during the construction period.*” These, however, are temporary and will cease by the time the site is finished. They will generally be contracted out to companies outside the village who have their own existing employees and so will not benefit the existing or new residents.

Existing employers in the village will not automatically increase their employment levels simply because new houses are built and their own existing jobs are already taken. Nearly all of the new residents will have to seek employment outside of the village. Because of this the development itself cannot be considered sustainable or add to the sustainability of the existing community and village with regards to employment opportunities. It would do the opposite and decrease the sustainability of the existing village with more people to compete for few job opportunities in the village and the increase the reliance on cars.

The development as it stands therefore does not meet MSDC DP 2014-2031 policy DP1 or DP6 nor NPPF policies 11a, 77b, 83 or 88

### **Lack of new retail facilities in Village**

The applicant advises that there will be increased expenditure in the local community by future occupants of the scheme. However, in order to spend money in the local community there needs to be opportunities to do so and the applicant is not providing any land or buildings for new retail or spending opportunities.

The only existing shop in Sayers Common is a small high quality Community Shop owned and run by the villagers themselves. It is situated in the front part of Sayers Common Village Hall. Originally built to serve about 230 properties in the village, it has had to expand its floorspace to accommodate the increase in stock needed for the further 175 houses built in the village since then. In addition, other planning applications are now being processed for another 237 houses. The shop, due to its small size, also cannot compete on prices with larger food suppliers.



***The small existing Community Shop in Sayers Common in the front part of the village hall***

The shop does not have the physical space to expand its stock further for the 237 households being considered and the 80 new households resulting from this development. This makes it highly questionable that it would be able to serve these new residents as well as existing ones to the same level as now, and how much benefit it would actually be to those residents.

Similar issues apply to the one pub in the village which, though well thought of and used, also lacks space to expand, since the building of houses on its car park.

The new residents of the site would have to look outside of the village to spend their money. This site would therefore not be sustainable and the sustainability of Sayers Common would decrease with more people trying to purchase the same goods with no corresponding increase in supply. It therefore does not meet NPPF policies 83 or 88a or MSDC DP14 or DP25.

### **Lack of Education Infrastructure**

West Sussex County Council have confirmed in their S106 document for the already existing planning application DM/25/2661 for 210 houses at Land at Coombe Farm that

*“The Director for Children and Young People’s Services advises that it appears that at present primary/secondary/further secondary schools within the catchment area of the proposal currently would not have spare capacity and would not be able to accommodate the children generated by the assumed potential residential development from this proposal.”*

This lack of capacity would therefore also apply to the 80 houses of this application. MSDC and WSCC solution to this issue appears to be requesting funds from new developments to pay for a new 525 place primary school and a 900 place secondary school. The funds from either of these 2 sites would in themselves be enough to fund the building of these new schools. The rest of the funding for such schools would have to come from other future speculative developments in the area which might come forward but for which there is no guarantee that they will.

At this time Outline planning permission has not yet been obtained for any such other future developments, nor has any land been obtained by WSCC for such schools. There is no signed agreement or certainty that any such schools could actually be built. The providing of any such schools could also take many years to build. There is the example of Bedelands Academy Secondary School in Burgess Hill (with a budget of £74 million) that was due to be delivered in 2027 but which has been postponed this year for at least two years without any building taken place. Therefore, any such new schools can only be considered speculative and hypothetical and not a material consideration. Only the situation at the present of a lack of spare capacity in oversubscribed schools can be taken into account.

No evidence has been provided of how places for the children of these 80 households would be found in the local oversubscribed existing schools system. Existing schools do not have the physical room to build new classrooms to accommodate them, without compromising existing standards or facilities, or to even increase class sizes. Also, if the proposed funding for the new schools were instead used to support existing ones it would not then be able to be used to build the new schools so compromising and delaying their delivery. Either way the situation with regards to education would remain unsustainable and does not meet NPPF policies 100 or 101 nor MSDC policies DP20 or DP25.

### **Lack of other essential infrastructure.**

The proposed new housing development is not proposing to supply any new essential infrastructure. It would put an unsustainable strain on all other essential infrastructure that the existing and new residents would rely on. The applicant advises in point 7.87 that *“It is considered that the impact of the proposal on infrastructure can be mitigated through contributions.”* However it is not clear that such mitigation would be appropriate or would have any effect on reducing the impact to existing or new residents.

In the NHS response to this application NHS Sussex predicts that *“new residents will register with Mid Sussex Health Centre. The new homes are in the catchment area of this NHS practices. The GP practice is at capacity and services this fairly large rural area. The contribution sought and evidenced is to support resident access to GP services – and is a contribution to infrastructure.”* They also advise *“that their aim is for new infrastructure in the area – and the premises project will be either to extend (full build cost) a current site, or provision of new premises. Additional population generated by this development will place an increased demand on existing primary healthcare services to the area.”*

However the amount of contribution requested, £130,390, from this site is not enough on its own to build new infrastructure. Both the Hurstpierpoint and Hassocks surgery sites of Mid Sussex Health care have reached their physical limits so opportunities for new infrastructure are very limited. NHS Sussex seem to favour the building of a new site surgery but the funds requested from other planning applications submitted so far within the village are also not enough to facilitate this, and none of them have offered land to build a surgery on. In addition NHS Sussex advise that they *“will consider the proportional*

use of these funds coupled with the other Haywards Heath and area developments so as to give best benefit to patient care.” This could mean that the funds could be used elsewhere in the district to provide more capacity and Sayers Common residents could then have to travel further to access a GP surgery. Not only would this increase the length of car journeys but it would put more stress onto the existing and new residents of Sayers Common.

Other infrastructure within and around the village, such as the village hall and local library, have also reached the physical limits of their sites so cannot expand further. It is only with the building of new infrastructure that sustainability for this site can be obtained but the applicant is not offering this nor have any other planning applications been submitted as yet to offer this.

This application therefore does not meet NPPF policies 7, 77b, 129 or MSDC policies DP14 and DP20.

### **Affordable Housing**

The fact that the proposed site is not sustainable means that it is not the correct place for such a large amount of such housing to be built particularly rented social housing. In order to be able to keep their costs as low as possible and to allow for maximum flexibility of access to work residents of such housing need to have access to both infrastructure and employment opportunities close to them and flexible transport options. This site does not allow them that.

It is noted that in the applicant’s previous development in Sayers Common, Land to the North of Lyndon Reeds Lane, under reference DM/24/2296, which is next door to this site, that they applied to change the tenure of affordable rent dwellings to all shared ownership instead because as they stated “*no viable offers were received for the affordable housing scheme as approved.*” Thus the only affordable housing that it was possible for them to provide was for house purchases not rental. The purchase of a house is not a viable option for those requiring rented social housing, which is a major housing requirement issue in the Mid Sussex District. The applicant has not mentioned that they have a social housing administration company on board to manage any rented social housing. It is therefore very sceptical, in the current housing environment, that such needed rented housing could be successfully delivered by this proposed site.

It therefore does not meet NPPF affordable housing policies and MSDC policies DP14, DP20 or DP31.

### **Sustainability Conclusions**

This proposed site for a housing estate is not sustainable and does not meet NPPF criteria for sustainable development. It cannot be considered a suitable sustainable location for a new development of a housing estate of 80 houses. It would be car reliant and need new essential infrastructure but the applicant not proposed to supply this. Reliance on what other developers may or may not provide is speculation and cannot be taken as supporting the sustainability of this site.

### **Transport and Access**

#### **Lack of Sustainable Transport – Too much reliance on cars**

This proposed new housing estate, because it is not in a sustainable development location, will be over reliant on residents having to use cars to travel instead of alternative options. The applicant’s over optimistic belief that there would be a decrease in car use due to alternatives such as buses, cycling and walking does not take into account the lack of infrastructure, the rural location and its topography and so is not viable.

#### **Lack of comprehensive Public Bus Service**

Public transport in Sayers Common is limited to two bus service that are each hourly during part of the day.

The 273 Metrobus service runs between Brighton and Crawley and its timetable is driven by those two places, and not the villages in between which it stops at. It was only because of the demand from the populations in those two places that the timetable was recently updated to change from a 2 hourly to a 1 hourly service and a new Sunday service.

The 100 Compass bus runs fewer services between Burgess Hill and Horsham. It has no Sunday service and requires a subsidy from WSCC in order to be able to operate. The building of another 80 houses in Sayers Common would not be enough of an incentive to those companies to increase the frequency of either of these services.

The current capped single journey fare price of £3.00 is at the moment only valid until March 2027. On their website Metrobus have published a list of what their fares would be without the cap. A single fare to Brighton would be £5.50 (£9.30 return) and a single fare to Crawley £4.80 (£9.10 return) which would mean a significant fare increase without a cap in place. A Travel Plan with incentives was provided for the recent 120 houses in the Sayers Meadow estate but there has not been any noticeable or evidenced increase in bus use by its residents as a result of this.

Private vehicles give flexibility of travel and comfort as the driver is in total control. With public transport the passenger is not in control and can only travel at the times, and to the stops, on the bus timetable. The last 100 bus from Burgess Hill leaves at 18:06pm. Its journey time to Horsham is 2 hours 33mins. Frequently, there is a need to take a second bus to reach a final destination such as the Princess Royal Hospital in Haywards Heath or the Royal Sussex hospital in Brighton. None of the different bus services are coordinated or connected.

The waiting time at the bus stop and the time to walk from the site to and from the bus stop, connecting travel and walk to the final destination also needs to be factored in as well when calculating a journey time, something which the applicant has not included in their optimistic timings. A 16 minute bus journey to Burgess Hill Station then becomes at least 35 minutes when these other factors are taken into account. With the return journey it would mean a return commute of at least an hour, not including the return train journey that would also be taken. This lack of flexibility restricts where and when a person can work, shop or go anywhere out of the village and how long then are able to stay there.

It is noted that the application is for 80 houses which is the maximum allowed for which only a Travel Plan Statement is required for an application. For sites of 81 or more houses a Travel Plan would instead be required which would need such items as a Travel Plan Coordinator, surveys, action plans, targets, monitoring, and incentives for residents including financial.

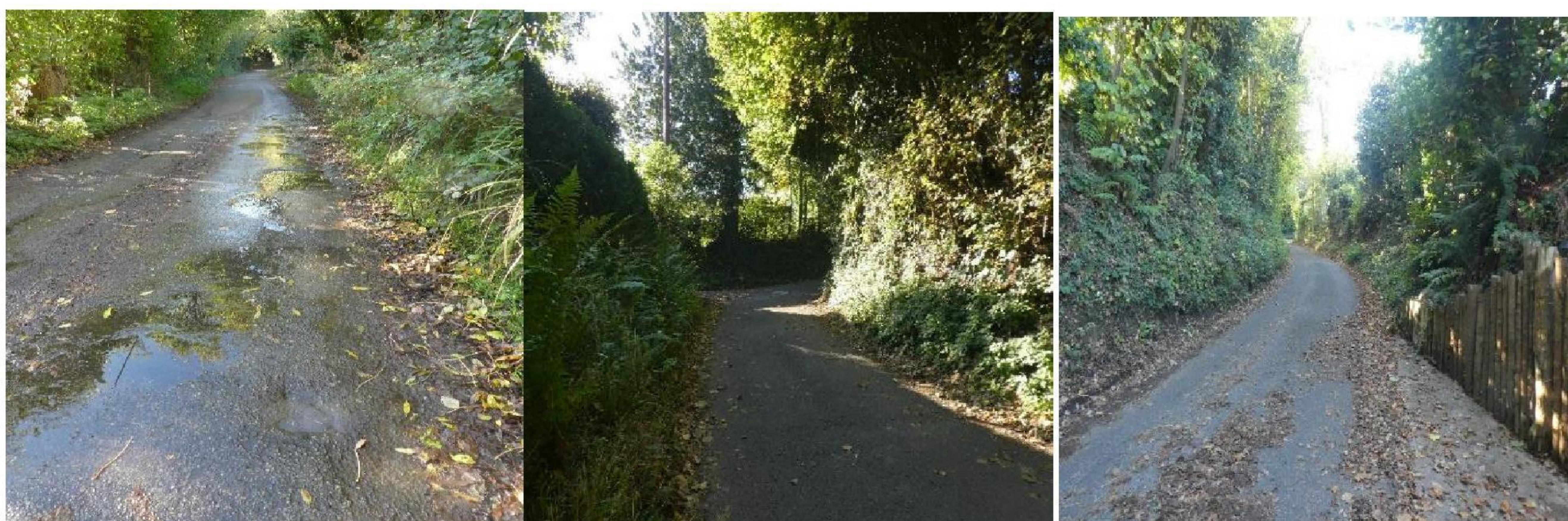
The applicant's expectations of a significant uptake of bus journeys by residents of the proposed new housing estate is therefore not realistic nor sustainable. It therefore does not meet NPPF policies 89 or 109d & e

#### **Unrealistic Reliance on an increase in Cycling**

Sayers Common is a rural village isolated from essential infrastructure and large centres of services. Very few of its residents use cycling as a method of reaching such places outside of the village, even with the introduction of electric bikes.

Although there used to be a cycle route through the village, route 20, this is no longer designated as part of the National Cycle Network as it could no longer meet the standards required. There are no dedicated cycle paths in the village and cyclists must cycle on the B2118 and other B or A roads and unclassified roadways shared with road vehicles. There are no direct cycle routes to Burgess Hill.

Reeds Lane for example is narrow, with blind bends, high hedges and limited safe places to pass. It lacks street lighting westwards of this site. To the east of the site on road car parking makes it particularly difficult for cyclists to negotiate it safely. There is a lack of pavements and road surfaces are poor particularly at their edges where most cyclists would need to ride. West Sussex's Street History for the road records numerous incidents of flooding, pot holes and broken road surfaces. This is repeated for all the rural roads around the site, with the addition of the steep hills to be negotiated towards Albourne and Hurstpierpoint. The very unregulated nature of these roads also encourages speeding and poor driving.



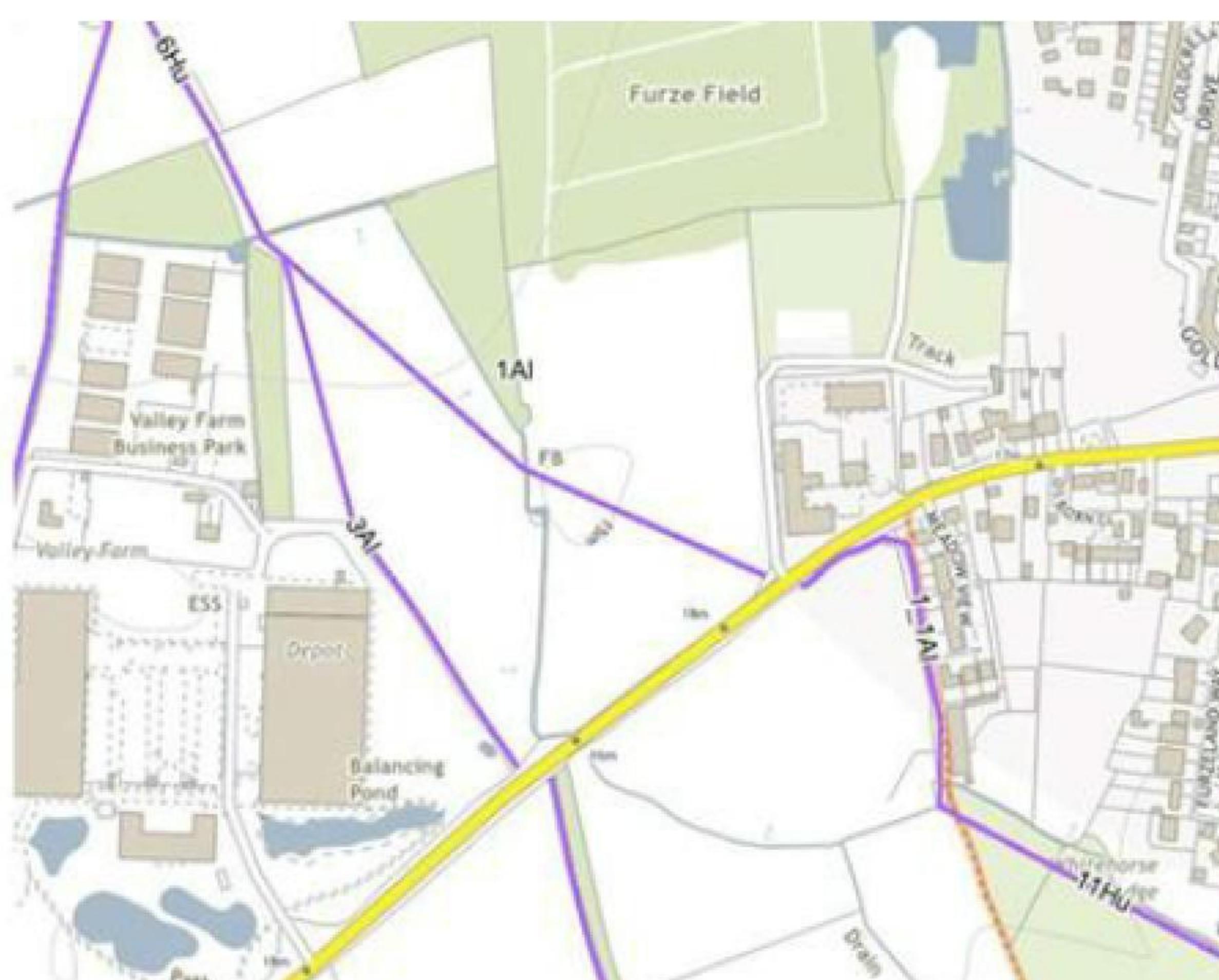
***Pictures of Langton Lane between Sayers Common and Hurstpierpoint showing the poor road surface, narrowness and unlit nature of the road, which cause issues to cyclists, and which is typical of the rural roads around the village***

Rural roads in the UK have a significantly higher accident rate, especially for fatalities and serious injuries, with collisions being up to four times more likely to be fatal per mile travelled compared to urban roads.

For these reasons cycling is not an option that very many use for even medium length journeys to Hurstpierpoint and Burgess Hill. Short journeys to Albourne and other existing villages are and would be made by car if they are more than a 20 minute return walk. The applicant has not provided evidence of any mitigations that would have any impact on this or proposed any workable solutions. It therefore does not meet MSDC DP12, DP21 or DP22 and NPPF 96 and 111d.

## Issues with Footpaths and PROW

NPPF Paragraph 117 advises that applications for development should: "a) give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas". It also advises that they should "c) create places that are safe, secure and attractive – which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles." The applicant in attempting to demonstrate that they are complying with this aim has proposed new footpaths and footways within the site. Unfortunately, these give rise to new issues which the applicant does not then address.



**Top left, plan of the footpaths around the site. Top centre and right photos 05/01/2025 of the flooded footbridge that footpath 1A1 uses to cross into the next field on the site's western boundary. Bottom photos 14/01/2023 Pictures show the flooding and waterlogging of footpath 1A1, from east to west.**

Footpath 1A1 currently crosses the site from the SE corner to about halfway down its western side. At the present moment it floods in heavy rain which leaves it waterlogged and difficult to use. It exits the site by the use of a stile and a footbridge which in addition suffer from flooding from the stream which runs along just outside the western boundary of the site.

Under the applicant's plans this footpath appears to now run through the new housing estate whose ground level has been raised to prevent flooding and for which new artificial drainage has been planned. However when it gets to the end of the built up area it will reach an embankment at the edge of the 1 in 100 year flood area. Then the ground level it runs on will slope drop down into this area where no further new drainage is planned by the applicant to mitigate the flooding on the footpath for the rest of it's route.



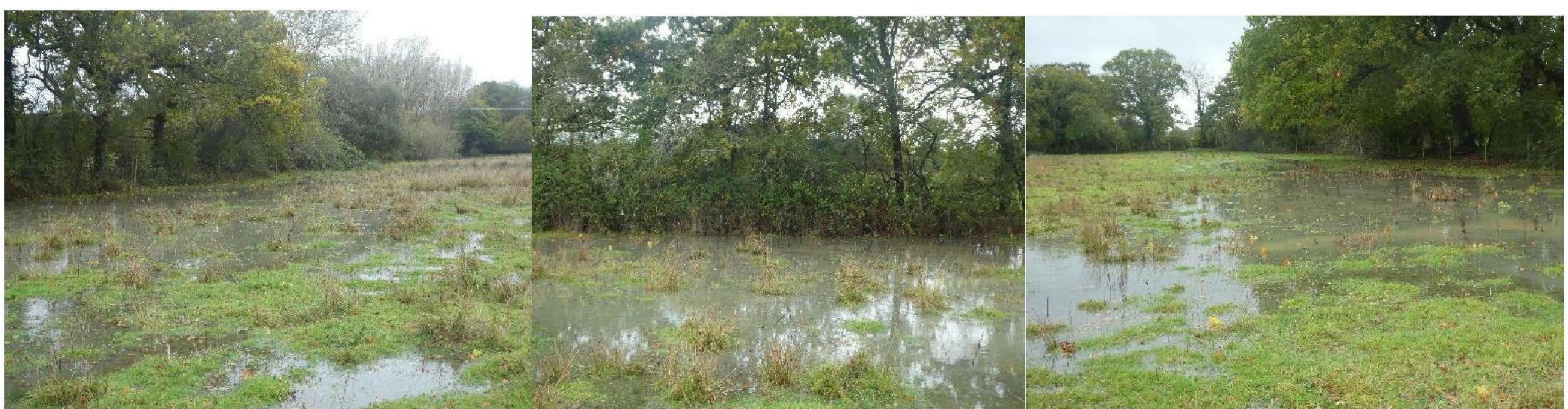
**Footpath 1A1 shown on the applicant's Site Drainage Strategy Plan**

Rainwater that presently falls on this part of the site is held in place in the grass and the first few centimetres of soil which acts as a sump. It does not flow away and is added to by floodwater from the stream and also water that comes off the roadway of Reeds Lane. By not providing any new drainage in this area the applicant has not shown that the flooding of the western part of footpath 1A1 can be mitigated.

This is a similar situation for the new footpath that the applicant is proposing to run along the western side of the site



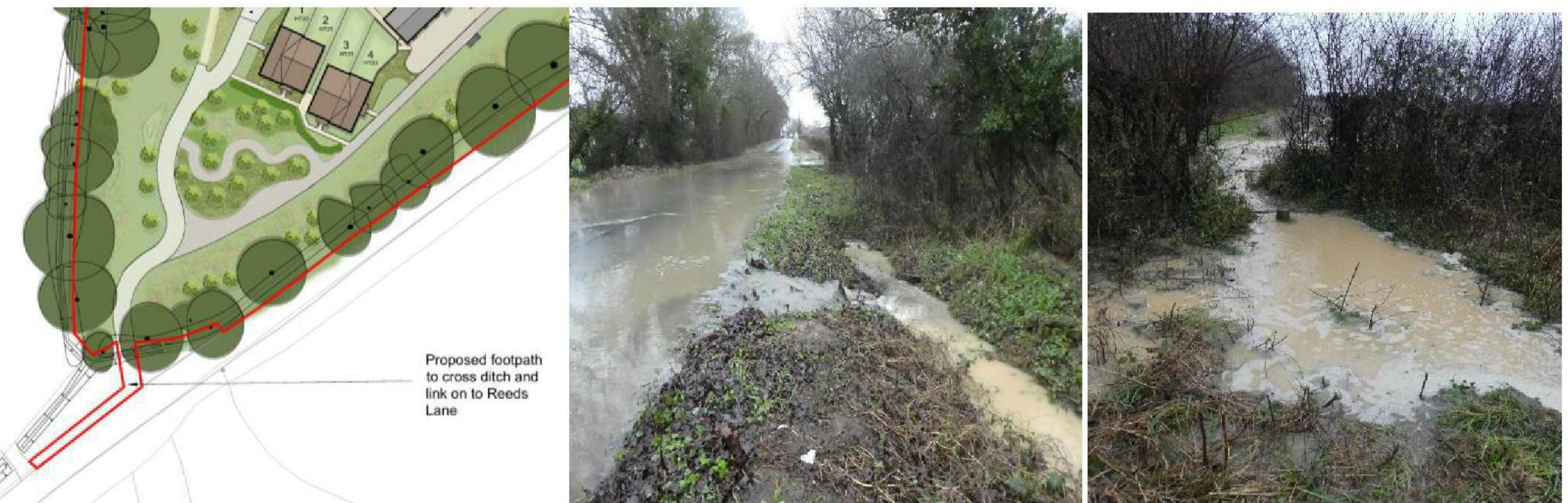
**New footpath to be laid along the western side of the site as shown on the applicant's Site Drainage Strategy Plan**



**Top FRAADS Appendix P Site Exceedance Routing Plan showing surface water being routed to form ponds in the area of the new footpaths. Bottom Photos of the water logged land forming ponds on the western side of the site 02/11/2023**  
**The route of the new footpath would go through this land.**

Again, no new drainage measures are proposed for this area to mitigate flooding but the applicant is proposing to route any exceedance surface water flow into this area to form ponds. As ponds already form in this area when there is heavy rain this would just make the situation worse. Raising the level of the path to make it a causeway would not reduce the water levels. It would actually increase the water level of the land on the eastern side of the path as there would be nowhere for it to drain to.

The applicant is also proposing to construct a path down the western side of the new houses, to meet the above footpath, and also link up with the new pedestrian and cycle entrance at the south west corner of the site. This new entrance would then cross this stream, (which eventually runs south to north along the western boundary site), to reach Reeds Lane. It would then turn west and run about 5 meters to be opposite the entrance to PROW 3AI on the south side of Reeds Lane. The applicant advises in their Transport Assessment that “Upon immediately connecting into the Site, the footway/cycleway will be 3.5m in width before narrowing to 2m in width along the northern extent of Reeds Lane to connect with PROW 3AI”



**Left extract from Site Masterplan showing the new proposed footpaths at the SW site corner. Photos 05/01/2025, centre, Reeds Lane flooded at the point that the new footpath will exit onto it. Right, the flooded entrance to the southern PROW 3AI at this point, with flood water pouring down through it onto Reeds Lane.**

What the applicant fails to mention in their transport assessment is that where this proposed new entrance exits onto Reeds Lane is exactly where that road frequently floods with water right across the road. Multiple instances of flooding at this point in Reeds Lane are recorded in the West Sussex Highways Site History for the road. It also lists all of the remedial work it has had to undertake to try and deal unsuccessfully with this issue. The flooding also extends to the entrance of PROW 3AI on the south side of Reeds Lane from which additional flood water flows off its fields into Reeds Lane.

The applicant does not include any detailed plans of how this new exit will be constructed and it is not included in the Stage 1 Road Safety Audit it has provided. WSCC had previously advised that such report should be provided for all off-site access and infrastructure works. The site sits on land which is lower than that of the roadway of Reeds Lane so a ramp would be needed for the new footway up from the site to reach the new bridge needed over the stream. The new footpath along Reeds Lane would have to be built high enough above the roadway to prevent it also being flooded. At the present time WSCC Highways have dug channels leading from Reeds Lane roadway, across this verge and into the stream to take the excess water as the culvert under the road does not have the capacity to carry all of the floodwater and so it flows over the road as well.



**Pictures taken 19/12/2025. Left, looking up to Reeds Lane from the site at the SW location of the new entrance, centre, the steam which lies between the site and Reeds Lane, right, channels cut by WSCC to divert the floodwater coming across the roadway from the south into the stream.**

There is also no street lighting at this point in Reeds Lane and the applicant has not mentioned in their street lighting plan how this access point would be lit to make it safe. They have also not advised who would pay for this lighting, the applicant or WSCC Highways.

The applicant has therefore not provided evidence to show that their proposed site entrance at the south west corner of the site would be buildable, workable or safe for pedestrians, cyclists or vehicle users.

The applicant's site plan shows that a lot of the site's streets around the houses lack walkways and are spaces shared by vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians. This includes the primary route through the new estate. It also shows a proposed pedestrian/cycle link between this site and the Woodlands housing estate next door. This new link, however is not a dedicated footpath or cycle path but just a gap in the wall of a residents parking area which then has to be crossed to reach the streets in the new estate. Both of these issues increase the risks to both pedestrians and cyclists from conflict with vehicles.



**Extract from Site Masterplan showing large numbers of roadways (including primary roads) shared by vehicles, cycles and pedestrians. It also shows that access to the Woodlands estate to the east of the site is also a shared roadway going through a car park to reach the estate.**

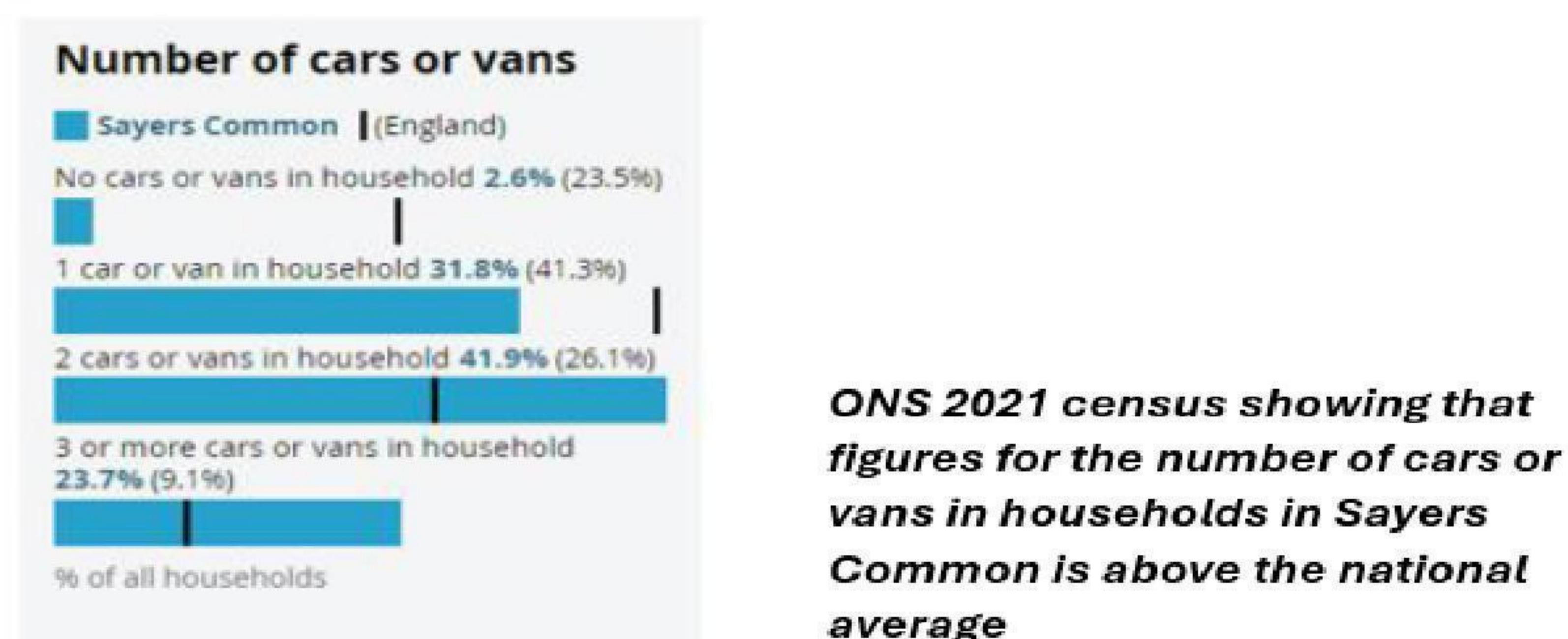
These proposals by the applicant for PROW and footpaths do not give the priority to pedestrian and cycle movements as required by paragraph 117 of the NPPF and so do not comply with it. Nor do they meet MSDC DP policies 21 or 22. The existing PROWs south and west of the site, which they link to, do not themselves connect with any essential infrastructure so will therefore not reduce the number of vehicle movements in the village.

### **Parking**

The applicant in their Transport Assessment point 4.18 advises that their WSCC guidance document proposes a total of 161 car parking spaces for the site. They then advise that the guidance also indicates that this level of parking can be subject to a 10% variation to account for sustainable travel if that is available. This they then state is “*being promoted at this development and therefore it is considered that a slight reduction in parking provision is appropriate and will help to encourage a move away from reliance on the private car to travel.*” They have therefore reduced their parking spaces to 151 for residents with 24 visitor spaces to take any overfill parking “*to encourage a move away from reliance on the private car to travel*”.

However, as has been shown above, the applicant’s proposed measures for cycling and walking will have very little impact on reducing the use of private cars because of the distance of the site from essential infrastructure. They are also not offering any improvements in bus services so again that would mean very little impact on the reliance on road vehicles. Their parking space numbers are therefore unrealistic and the parking space reduction is not appropriate for this site.

Sayers Common is a rural village with a limited public transport infrastructure and a lack of essential infrastructure. Nearly every household has at least two vehicles. There are a lot of households where self employment requires work vehicles to be parked at home. The ONS 2021 census figures show that the figures for the number of cars or vans in households in Sayers Common is above the national average.



When moving to rural Sayers Common from urban areas new residents find that where as they could cope before with one vehicle, because of access to extensive public transport, they now require at least two. Often each adult in a household requires their own vehicle leading to many households having 3 or more vehicles. Also, because of the rural nature of the local roads and the increased length of journeys, a larger car is needed so a lot of the vehicles in the village are large including SUVs. This frequently means that houses do not have enough off road parking spaces and so there is quite a lot of on road parking in Sayers Common, as can be presently seen in Reeds Lane, Berrylands and Sayers Meadow. Residents end up using

visitor parking spaces for the overflow which simply means that there is then no parking spaces for visitors and so they then naturally park on the roadways.

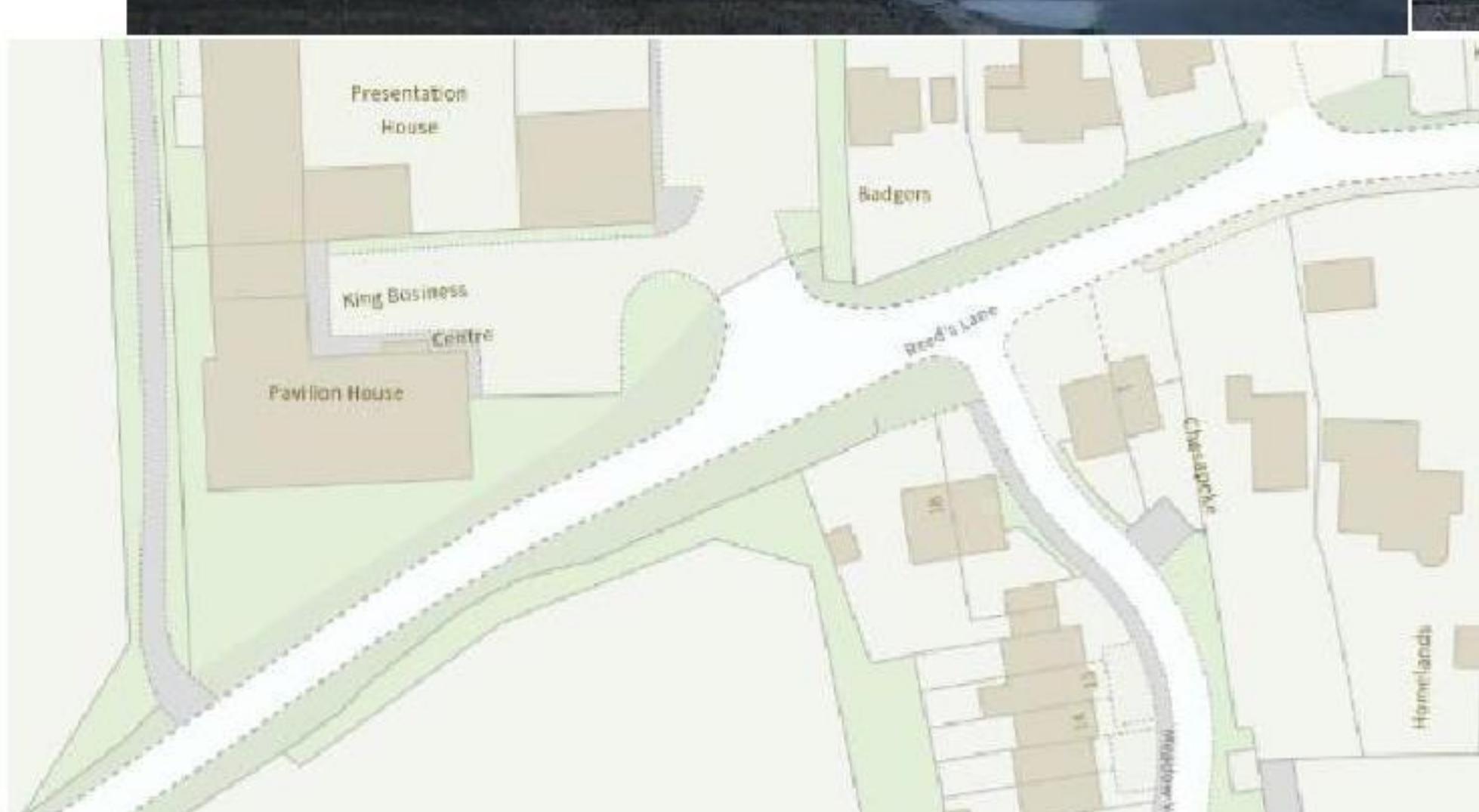
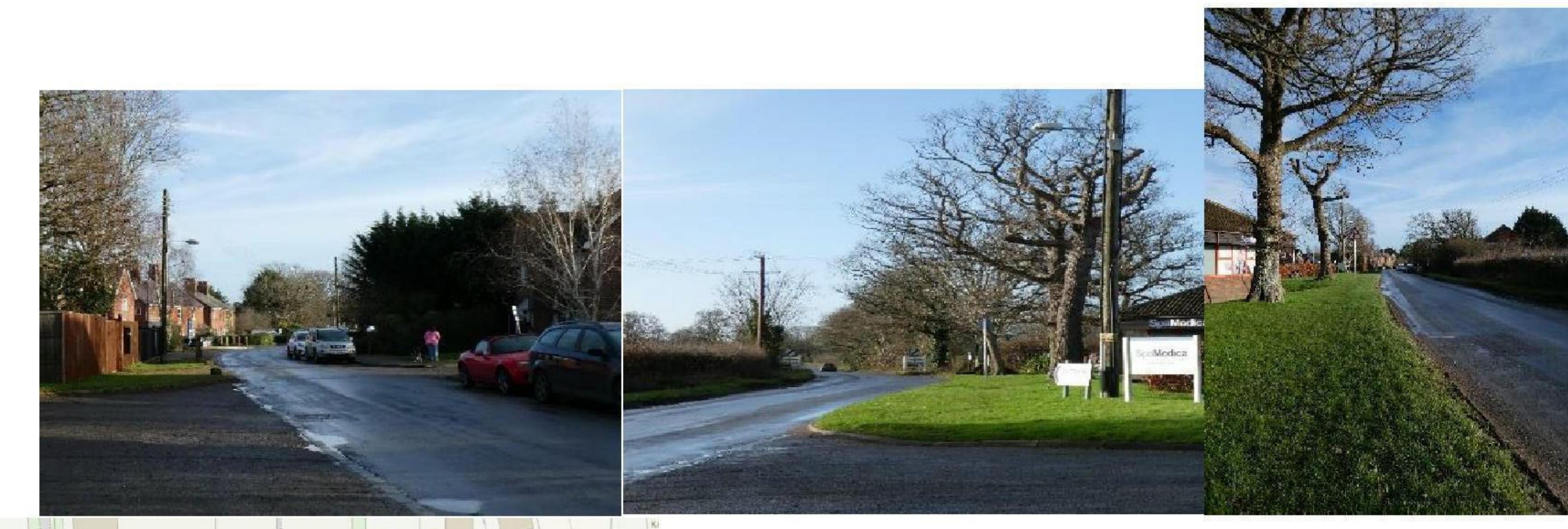
This is not helped by a reliance by the site on tandem parking for off road parking for nearly all of the properties. This type of parking can lead to more on street parking because the inconvenience and hassle caused by moving one car to access another. This causes residents to park on the road instead, as has been happening in the new Sayers Meadow estate.

The lack of parking spaces to meet actual needs will result in on road parking including along the share roadway spaces within the site. This will increase the risks to pedestrians and cyclists and cause issues with refuge trucks and fire engines manouvering around the site. Such on road parking would also spread to the Woodlands estate to the east and to also to Reeds Lane where on street parking is popular and happens daily.



***Photos of some of the on road parking in Reeds Lane morning of 19/12/2025***

The applicant is proposing to construct a footway along the northern length of Reeds Lane between their site and the Woodlands estate road crossing to the east of it, as no footway on the northern side of Reeds Lane currently exists.



***Photos 19/12/2025 of the length of the northern side of Reeds Lane that the applicant is proposing to construct a footway along. The plan shows that WSCC Highways owns a narrow strip of the front of the verge than runs along side Kings Business Park but not the land behind it which the trees sit on. The building of this new footway would cause root damage to the 3<sup>rd</sup> party owned trees.***

This will result in a long stretch of pavement with no parking restrictions and so will be extremely attractive for parking vehicles along. It will appeal to the residents of the new housing estate, their visitors, existing residents of Reeds Lane and the Meadowview estate. It will also appeal to those using the businesses of Kings Business Centre which it runs along side. Previously the business in that Centre were not customer facing focused so the amount of parking which they needed was low. However this changed when Spa Medica moved into the Pavillion House building. They carry out eye operations including ones for the NHS so need a lot more parking for patients and staff than they can currently accomodate onsite. This has resulted in an increase in on road parking on Reeds Lane.

On road parking not only causes traffic congestion but results in it being difficult for vehicles to see on coming traffic to be able to stop in time. Vehicles (including vans, lorries, HGVs and Farm vehicles) frequently have to duck and dive between parked cars, pull into driveways to let traffic pass or even have to reverse. It is also very difficult for pedestrians to see past parked cars without having to step into the road when crossing it. This is even an issue at the new Reeds Lane crossing by the Woodlands housing estate because of the curved nature of the road at this point.

It is noted that the applicant and their Stage 1 Road Safety Audit have not acknowledged or addressed the issue that this new footway infrastructure would have on road safety due to the increase in on road parking it would cause. It should also be noted that there is no street lighting on Reeds Lane after the entrance to Kings Business Park. The applicant has not proposed to install any in their lighting plan but without such lighting this would result in a dangerous length of pavement. It is also not clear who would fund any such street lighting, the applicant or WSCC.

The site's parking proposals therefore do not meet NPPF 112 & 113 nor MSDC DP policies DP21 or 22. They would also impact on road safety which has not been addressed.

## **Access**

Modelling for the new site junction has been based on an Automatic Traffic Count (ATC) but it is unclear when this took place. The Transport Assessment does not appear to give a date for the survey or the number of days it lasted. Without this information it is not possible to confirm how representative of traffic the period used was both for volume and speed of vehicles, and if there were any factors at that time which would have affected the data.

The documents do not include a detailed vehicle speed survey. What averaged out speeds that are given show variances with other surveys. WSCC in the Access section of their pre application consultation of 17/08/2023 (loaded onto the District Plan 2021-2039 Site Allocations Evidence Library) advised of a survey at the proposed site entrance resulted in “*seven-day speed survey revealed 85th percentile speeds of 40.5mph in the north-east (for south-west bound vehicles) and 43.4mph in the south-west (for north-east bound vehicles)*”. *Splays of 215m to the south-east have been demonstrated as per DMRB for 60mph and 120m to the north-east as suitable for 40mph.*”

The applicant in point 2.25 of their transport assessment stated that their ATC “*demonstrated 85th percentile speeds of 37.2mph and 38.7mph in the north-eastern (towards Sayers Common) and south-western (away from Sayers Common) directions respectively.*” In point 4.7 they advise that based on this “*the required splays are 96m to the east and west respectively.*”

Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Council have also used a speed indicator device (SID) on Reeds Lane for west to east traffic and situated inside the 30pm section of the roadway by Kings Business Centre. In their Estates & Facilities Update document dated 8th September 2025 they advise that “*The SID was placed on Reeds Lane, Sayers Common from 12th August 2025 to 8th September 2025. • 25487 Vehicles recorded. • 13388 Vehicles traveling under or on the speed limit. • 12099 Vehicles traveling over the speed limit (47.5% speeding). • 2595 Vehicles were travelling over 10 mph over the speed limit (10.2% excessively speeding). • 61.3 mph was the top speed recorded.*” All data from their SID was passed onto the Community Speed Watch Officer.

There is therefore quite a variance in the speeds given of vehicles in Reeds Lane at this point. What is clear though is that a large number of vehicles do exceed speed limits in Reeds Lane. The rural derestricted length of the road encourages drivers to speed up going west out of the village as soon as they reach Kings Business Park. Equally it also means that it can take them some time to slow down from 60mph to 30mph when coming the other way. For example, in dry conditions on a flat road the stopping distance at 55mph for HGVs would be about 120m. This would still apply even if the 30mph speed limit was moved to the western side of the new site entrance. The traffic using Reeds Lane includes the many HGVs who use this road as a cut through to get to and from the A23 to sites on Reeds Lane and to the Partridge Green, Henfield and Steyning areas. This use is increased as both Henfield Road and Twineham Lane have 40mph speed limits whereas Reeds Lane is derestricted.

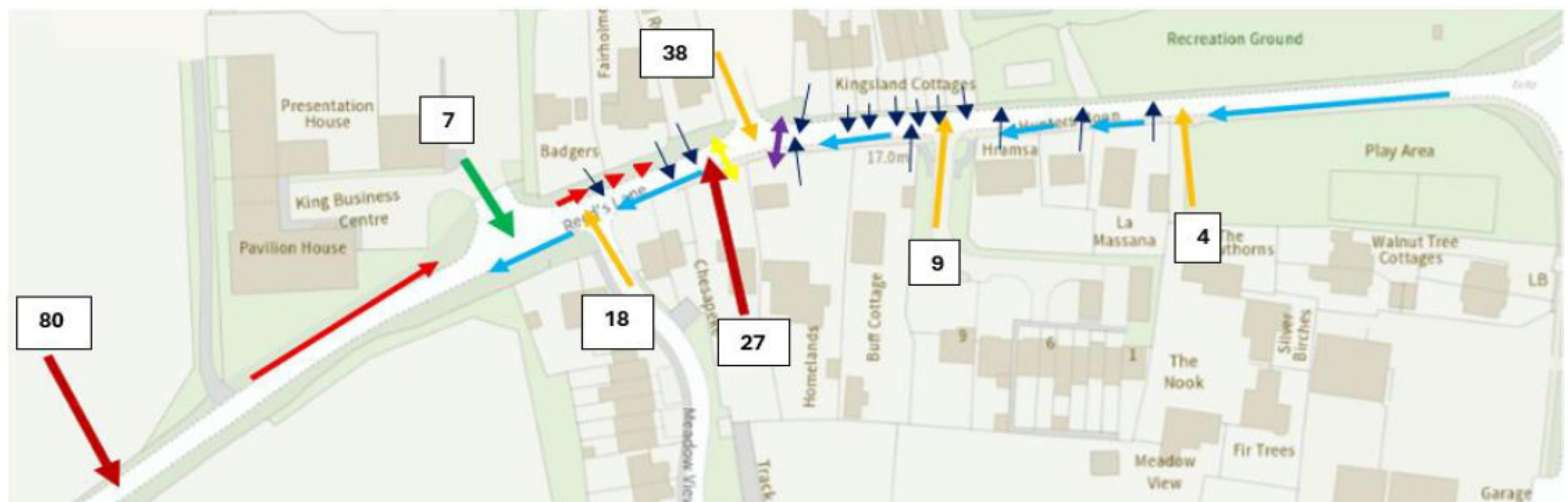
The applicant has not provided evidence or details of any workable solution to mitigate this excessive speed situation. Removing more vegetation around the new vehicle access point to the site does not slow down the vehicles already on the road. It therefore makes it questionable that the vehicle access to the site which they have designed is as safe as it could be.

With regard to wider highways impact / junction modelling the applicant states that they have not undertaken this themselves but are relying on a detailed modelling assessment of all local junctions within Sayers Common undertaken on behalf of another company, Welbeck Strategic Land. This was for the planning application for ‘Land at Coombe Farm’ and done to that application’s own specifications and remit. The applicant for this site advises that as this work has been undertaken that “*it is clear no additional modelling is required to support the Proposed Development.*”

However, they have not provided confirmation that Welbeck are happy for them to use their assessment, which they funded, to support this application or confirmation from them that it would meet the requirements of this particular application. In addition, Welbeck’s assessment did not cover the Reeds Lane/ Twineham Lane or the Twineham Lane/ Henfield Road B2116 junctions. Both of these junctions west of the site would be directly affected by this development and have been the location of several accidents. It can not therefore be accepted that the applicant has met their requirement to provide wider highway impact and junction modelling.

The applicant has also not proposed any measures to extend the street lighting to west of Kings Business Park to make the roadway and new junctions safer to use.

It has already been mentioned that the applicant has not considered the impact of on street parking on road safety, a impact which they are potentially adding to with the new roadside footways along the northern side of Reeds Lane. The whole of the residential length of Reeds Lane is a jumble of different road accesses and parking places all on a bend in the road as can be seen in the diagram below.



	Existing On Street Parking Places
	New On Street Parking Places (generated by this development)
	Property Accesses onto Reeds Lane
	Housing Estate Accesses onto Reeds Lane (with number of houses)
	Proposed Housing Estate Accesses onto (with number of Houses)
	Commercial Sites accesses onto Reeds Lane (with number of businesses)
	The proposed location of pedestrian road crossing on Reeds Lane

**Diagram showing location of on street parking spaces on, and accesses into, Reeds Lane at its eastern residential end.**

On street parking in Reeds Lane has caused accidents and damaged to vehicles, which due to their lack of interest, do not get reported to the authorities. It reduces Reeds Lane down to a single track and restricts the vision of drivers when driving along the road and coming out of junctions. To dismiss it and not seriously take it into account, and to not propose workable mitigations for it, is both reckless and dangerous and would lead to both the applicant and WSCC being open to litigation. So far only the cats of residents of Sayers Common have been run over and killed on Reeds Lane but without increased safety measures it could become people as well.

There are therefore serious issues with the safety of access to the site and the use of and impact on Reeds Lane by the new residents of this proposed development. It does not meet NPPF policies 115 and 117 nor MSDC DP policy DP21.

## **Flooding & Drainage**

### **Flooding and existing stream along western boundary of site**

The serious issue of surface water flooding in the western part of the site has already been mentioned in the section on footpaths. On third party land next to the site's western side, a stream runs along the boundary edge. This is part of a watercourse system of streams that drain water from both Coombe Hill and the B2118 to the south east of the site, together with the land south of Reeds Lane and the site itself. This is culverted under Reeds Lane and flows along the highway and then the side of the western boundary of this site. Unfortunately, the flow of water in heavy rain is too great for both the stream and the culvert under Reeds Lane to cope with. This causes Reeds Lane to flood and for the overflow flooding to go into this site because it sits lower than the roadway. These sources of flooding comes from 3<sup>rd</sup> party land outside of the site owners control so there is very little that they themselves can do about reducing it.

This is in addition to surface water flooding caused by rainwater falling on the site and also draining from east to west on the site itself.

The water from this stream eventually flows into the River Adur and is part of the cause of the flooding at Mock Bridge in Shermansbury, about which the Environment Agency gives regular Amber and Red flood warnings.

The instances of the flooding of Reeds Land are reported each time to West Sussex Highways, because it blocks the highway at this point, and these reports are listed in their Site History Report for Reeds Lane.



**Flooding across Reeds Lane by the south west corner of the site. Left 16/11/2022, centre 01/01/2023 & right 05/01/2025**



**Photos 02/11/2023 showing surface floodwater flowing off Reeds Lane into the South West section of this site.**

To attempt to mitigate this flooding, the applicant advises in 6.41 of their Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage strategy (FRAADS) part 1 that “*it is also proposed to clean out the existing ditch bed along the southern side of Reeds Lane*” and in point 9.13 “*Existing ditches along Reeds Lane will be cleared of silt and debris to improve capacity and invert levels.*”. They have not, though, done any survey work of the ditches or culverts to confirm flow directions and volumes in order to establish if this is a feasible course of action and what effect it would have.



**Photos 19/12/2025 of the ditches & the culvert entrance of the stream on south side of Reeds Lane, opposite the south west corner of this site.**



**Photos 19/12/2025 showing the stream flowing out of the culvert and along the north side of Reeds Lane, besides the southwest corner of this site.**

However, the clearance of the stream and ditches at this point has already been done by WSCC Highways on several occasions but it has still not stopped the Reeds Lane roadway from flooding, something which WSCC Highways have acknowledged. Below is a copy of an email dated 28/11/2024 from them concerning the flooding on Reeds Lane which occurs at this point and the lack of options it has for effectively dealing with the flooding.

**From:** West Sussex Highways <West\_Sussex\_Highways@OnDemand.Confirm.Co.uk>  
**Sent:** 28 November 2024 16:11  
**Subject:** | Update | Notes From Officer - Enquiry 3285894

Dear Customer

Your enquiry has been updated by our Highways Team.

**Enquiry Number:** 3285894 (WSCC-666118419)

**Street:** REEDS LANE, ALCOURNE (E: 526193.49 , N: 117996.07)

**Subject:** Drainage

**Highways Team Update:**

Thank you for your enquiry, The ongoing surface water problem looks to be caused by insufficient capacity in the surface water sewer/District Council watercourse/Rife/River that the council's surface water discharges into. Most surface water outlets into surrounding water courses, and where these exceed capacity during and after these events, there is nowhere for the water to go, the symptom of which is evident as highway flooding. No amount of gully emptying or jetting will resolve these issues, and it is likely to be a case of waiting for the water levels to recede. I will raise a job to put out signs to warn people of flooding and also ice boards due to the cold weather we are about to get. If the area becomes completely flooded and unusable please contact us on the emergency number so we can have a team attend.

Kind regards

WSCC

The volume of water draining off the third party land on the south side of Reeds Lane and into the stream is just too great for it, the culvert and ditches to cope with in heavy rain. This is something that the applicant has no power to control as it is all on third party land. Their proposal to clear the ditches on Reeds Lane would therefore have very little effect in any permanent reduction in the flooding to the site caused by this flooding source.

It is noted that although the applicant wishes to discharge surface water into this stream, as it flows on third party land along its western boundary, and mentions removing silt from it, they have not actually surveyed it. They have shown a lack of knowledge concerning its route, dimensions , capacity, its current state and its ecology. They have not provided any evidence that it has the capacity to take the discharged water at the rate of discharge that they wish to use.



**Photos 01/01/2023. Left, the northern discharge point to the stream. Right, the southern discharge point to the stream.**



**FRAADS Appendix O Site Drainage Strategy showing water being piped to 2 discharge point the stream either side of the footbridge.**



**Views of the stream along the western boundary of the site. Photos 19/12/2025 taken from its western bank on third party land as it flows between Reeds Lane and the footbridge carrying footpath 1A1 over it.**

The applicant, by making no mention of the impact of their development on this watercourse and its flooding issues, has therefore not shown that it would not increase flooding elsewhere in Sayers Common or downstream of the site. The application therefore does not meet NPPF policies 170, 172c or 181 nor MSDC DP policy DP41

#### **Insufficient Mitigation of onsite flooding issues**

The site suffers from surface water flooding issues due to its heavy Wealden clay soil, (it is situated next door to an ex brickyard and claypit), and also due to having a high underground water table.

In point 2.19 in the applicant's FRAADS advises that "The groundwater monitoring report indicates that the site is subject to a high groundwater table during the winter months (with groundwater levels recorded at approximately 0.5 mBGL or shallower across the development site). This supports the findings of the BGS borehole records of a high groundwater table within the clay geology."

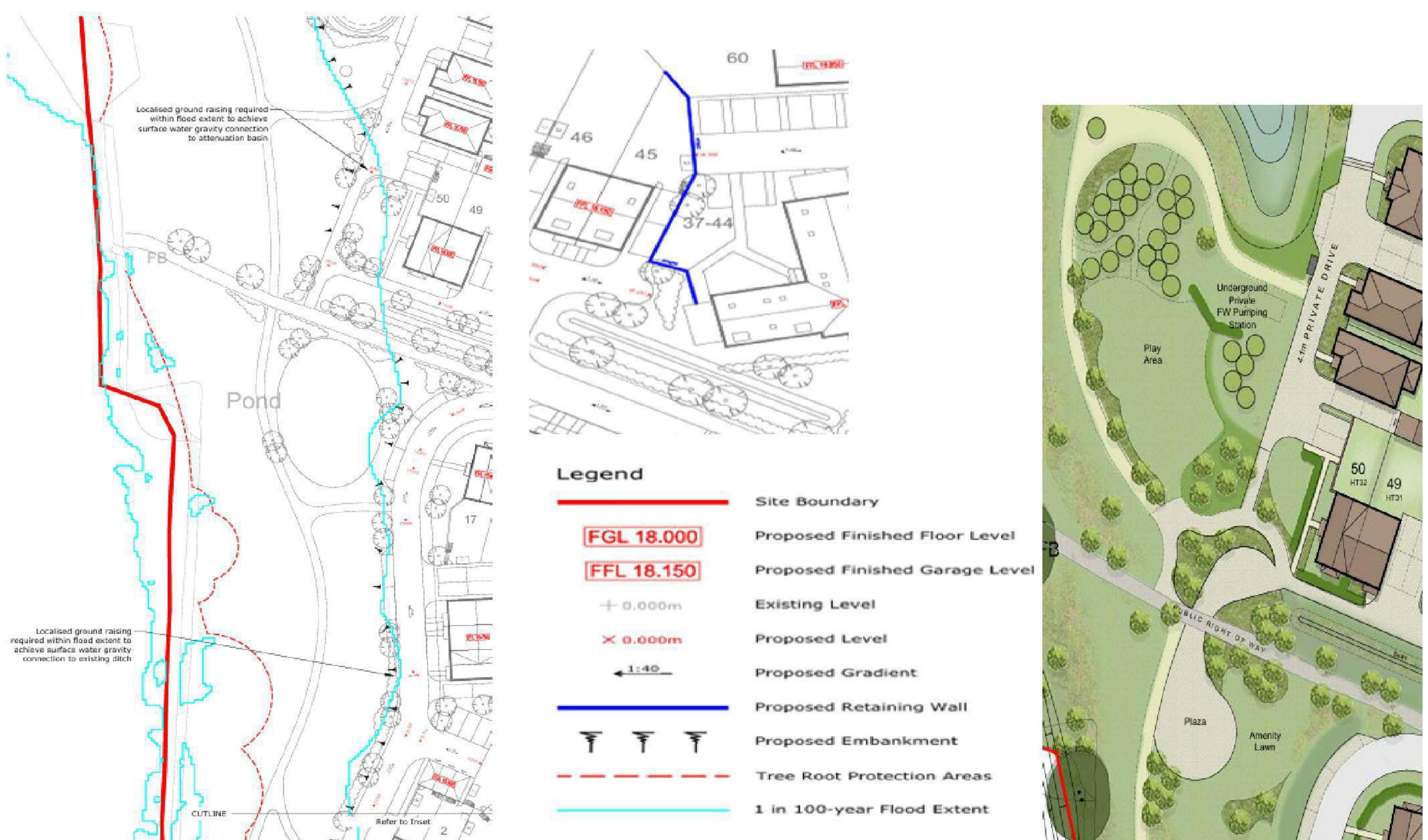
Also in point 2.21 they advise that as "the site geology consists primarily of clay, which is hydraulically unproductive, it is therefore concluded that drainage by infiltration is not possible for this site, and no further site infiltration testing is required to confirm this. This is supported by the findings of the borehole records and site groundwater monitoring confirming a high groundwater table, which precludes infiltration as a viable method of discharging the site due to a lack of a 1 m unsaturated zone between the base of any proposed soakaway and the groundwater table."

This situation is typical in Sayers Common because it is low lying on Wealden clay. In the cases of the Sayers Meadow Estate, and the applicant's previous next door development the new Woodlands housing estate, both have had to raise their ground levels by 30cm or more in order try and keep their buildings above any surface water flooding. This is also for them to be able to have the necessary gap between the surface level and the high water table level to enable the use of Suds drainage features of the required depth without water infiltration from below. In neither case was this significant raising of the ground level of the site made clear in their planning application documents and so it was not fully considered in the planning process.

In point FRAADS 6.36 for car parking areas the applicant advises that "The permeable paving construction in these areas will include a 450mm thick open graded sub-base pavement foundation". Also in point 6.37 they advise that "the southern catchment draining to a permeable paving consisting of a 700mm thick open graded sub-base pavement layer". In point 6.3 they confirm that "Due to the high groundwater table, all drainage features will be lined with an impermeable geomembrane to prevent groundwater ingress into the site's drainage network"

The applicant's Levels Strategy shows that a significant rise in the ground levels in their new housing estate is to be expected as an embankment will be needed to allow the ground to slope down safely westwards from the houses to the natural ground level to avoid subsidence. There is also a retaining wall needed in the middle of the estate. Significantly raising the ground level is also to allow an adequate depth for the new Suds drainage system which they are proposing.

This rise in ground level would also mean that the Play Area, Plaza, Amenity Lawn and Underground Pumping station would all lie on lower ground west below the new embankment and sit inside the site's 1 in 100 year Flood Extent Area. This brings into question how limited the use of this facilities would be because of this.



**Left, applicant's Levels Strategy showing a proposed embankment along the western edge of the new houses & a retaining wall in the middle of it. Right, the site masterplan showing that the Play Area, Plaza, Amenity Lawn & Underground Pumping station which would all be below the embankment & inside the 1 in 100 year Flood Extent Area.**

The raising of the ground level of the houses would lead to new issues in that it would make them into an island preventing water from draining into it. This then causes new drainage issues around the outside of it such as along the footpath between the estate and the Kings Business Park buildings, the northern boundary with Furze Field Wood, and along the southern boundary with Reeds Lane. These issues caused by the increase in land height have not been taken into account and so it is unclear if their drainage system can keep the development free from flooding and not cause increased flooding elsewhere.

It has therefore not shown that it meets the relevant NPPF policy 170 or MSDC policy DP41 and is therefore not sustainable.

### **Foul Water and Sewage Disposal.**

Foul water and Sewage Disposal is a sensitive issue in Sayers Common. Houses in Reeds Lane have suffered flooding from sewage as has been noted in Southern Water and WSCC records. Southern Water throughout 2024 conducted a £1,025,000.00 Flood Mitigation project to deal with foul water flooding in the village of Sayers Common. This involved the relining of pipes and repairs to manhole covers to prevent ingress into the system and relieve pressure on the village pumping station. These upgrades were solely for attempting to deal with issues arising from current not future demand on the system. Residents would therefore expect any application for new development in the village to show empathy and a willingness to work with the relevant bodies to not exacerbate the issue of foul water and sewage disposal.

Southern Water have a legal duty to connect new developments to the sewage system but can require that they build new infrastructure before the site is occupied if extra capacity is required in the current system to accommodate the new houses. It would be expected that the developer would therefore be happy to work with and cooperate with them to ensure this happens smoothly and efficiently.

The applicant advises on page 6 of their Utility Planning Report “*that Southern Water has confirmed that there is currently insufficient capacity within the foul sewerage network to accommodate a foul flow of 0.72 l/s (Gravity) / 6.0 l/s (Pumped) for the above development at manhole reference TQ2618401. The proposed development would increase flows to the public sewerage system which may increase the risk of flooding to existing properties and land. Additional off-site sewers or improvements to existing sewers will be required to provide sufficient capacity to service the development.*”

It is however then somewhat disturbing in the way that the applicant then refers to the method of resolution of this issue in their Utility Planning Report. The paragraph which refers to this issue is on page 6 (and repeated again on page 16) is in both cases is printed in bold type, being the only paragraphs in bold type in the whole document. This unfortunately comes across as being a confrontational, aggressive and a defensive way of making a statement about this matter.

This also comes across in the tone of language used by the applicant in their statement “*However, Southern Water has a duty to provide Network capacity from the point of practical connection (point of equivalent or larger diameter pipe) funded by the New Infrastructure Charge, furthermore Southern Water have an obligation to provide any reinforcement upgrades within 24 months following the date that planning has been granted for developments not identified as strategic sites in their current strategic growth plan, should Southern Water not achieve any necessary network upgrades within this timeframe it is the responsibility of Southern Water to provide an alternative temporary solution to allow foul water discharge from the development.*”

There is no mention of willingness to cooperate and help to resolve the issue but instead it comes across as it none of it is the developers problem and they are not going to help. This lack of constructive engagement with Southern Water is therefore very worrying to the residents of Sayers Common and unfortunately does not give a sense that the applicant take their own obligations seriously with regard to building the onsite sewage systems for the new houses in a way that does not make existing situation in the village worse.

### **Biodiversity**

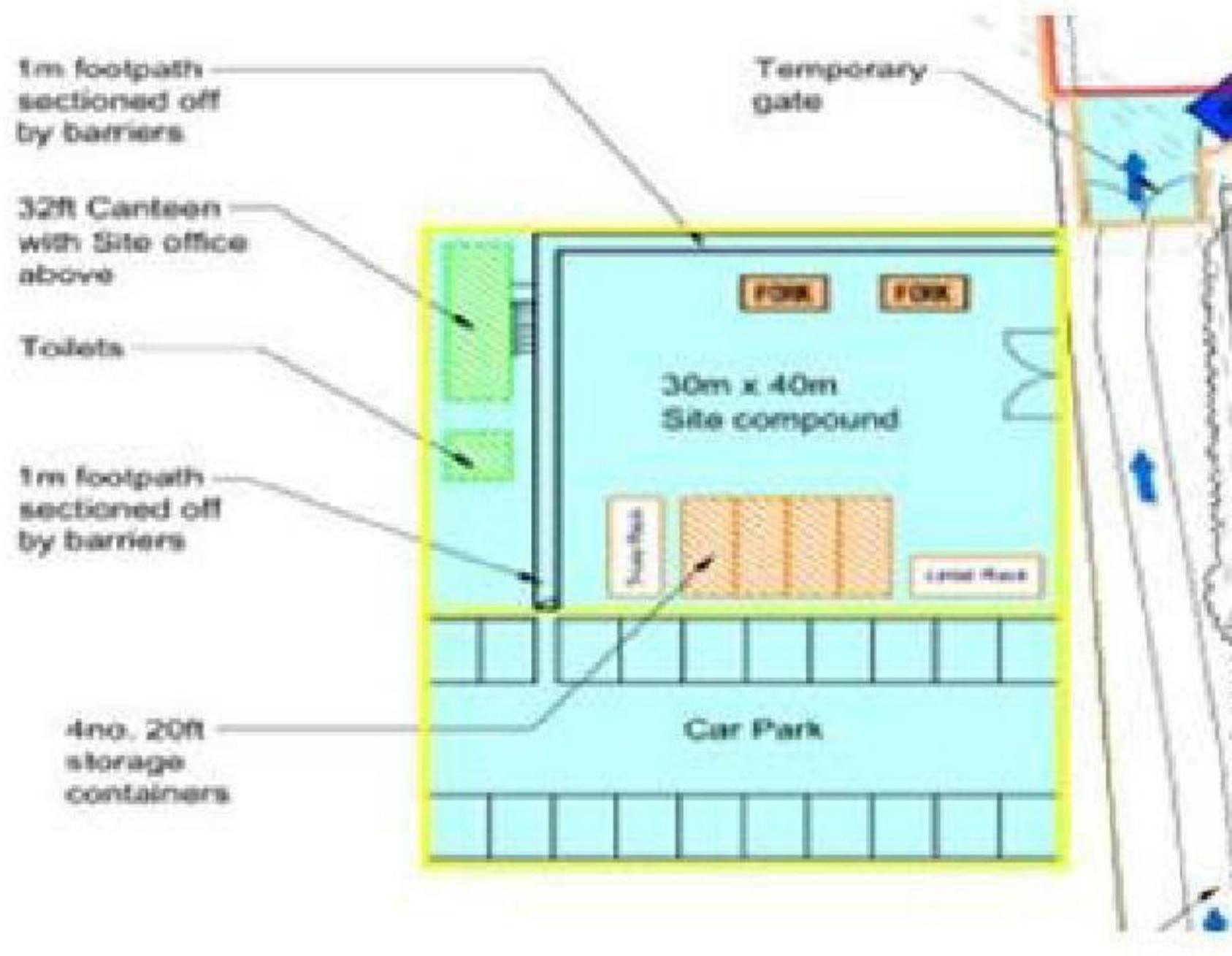
It is unclear if the applicant's biodiversity calculations are based on what the biodiversity of the site was prior to their own degradation activities carried out from June 2024 under Class A of Part 4 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015. MSDC Planning department were aware of these activities at that time through a discharge planning application DM/24/0726 relating to the next door Woodlands site, and separate email correspondence between the District Councillor and the Assistant Director for Planning and Sustainable Economy.

In order to assist with the construction of their previous site, Woodlands on the eastern boundary of this site, the applicant allowed the construction of a site compound and the storage of site spoils on this site. Details of this taken from the Updated Construction Management Plan of DM/24/0726 are shown below.

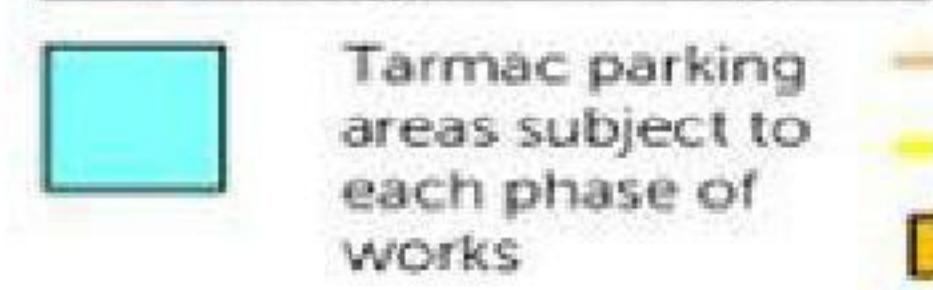
### Details of the proposed Site Compound and soil spoil storage site in the agricultural field



**Copy of the submitted Construction Management Plan showing the proposed compound in blue and soil storage area in the agricultural field to the left of the site.**



#### **Site Compound Legend**



**Close up of the detail of the proposed site compound in the agricultural field.**

In order for this to happen it required grass to be mown and trees to be chopped down but this did not just happen in the area of the compound and spoil heaps but over the site as a whole.

Prior to the above work being carried out there were a number of trees spread around the site as is shown in the applicant's documentation which they has submitted as part of the draft District Plan process.

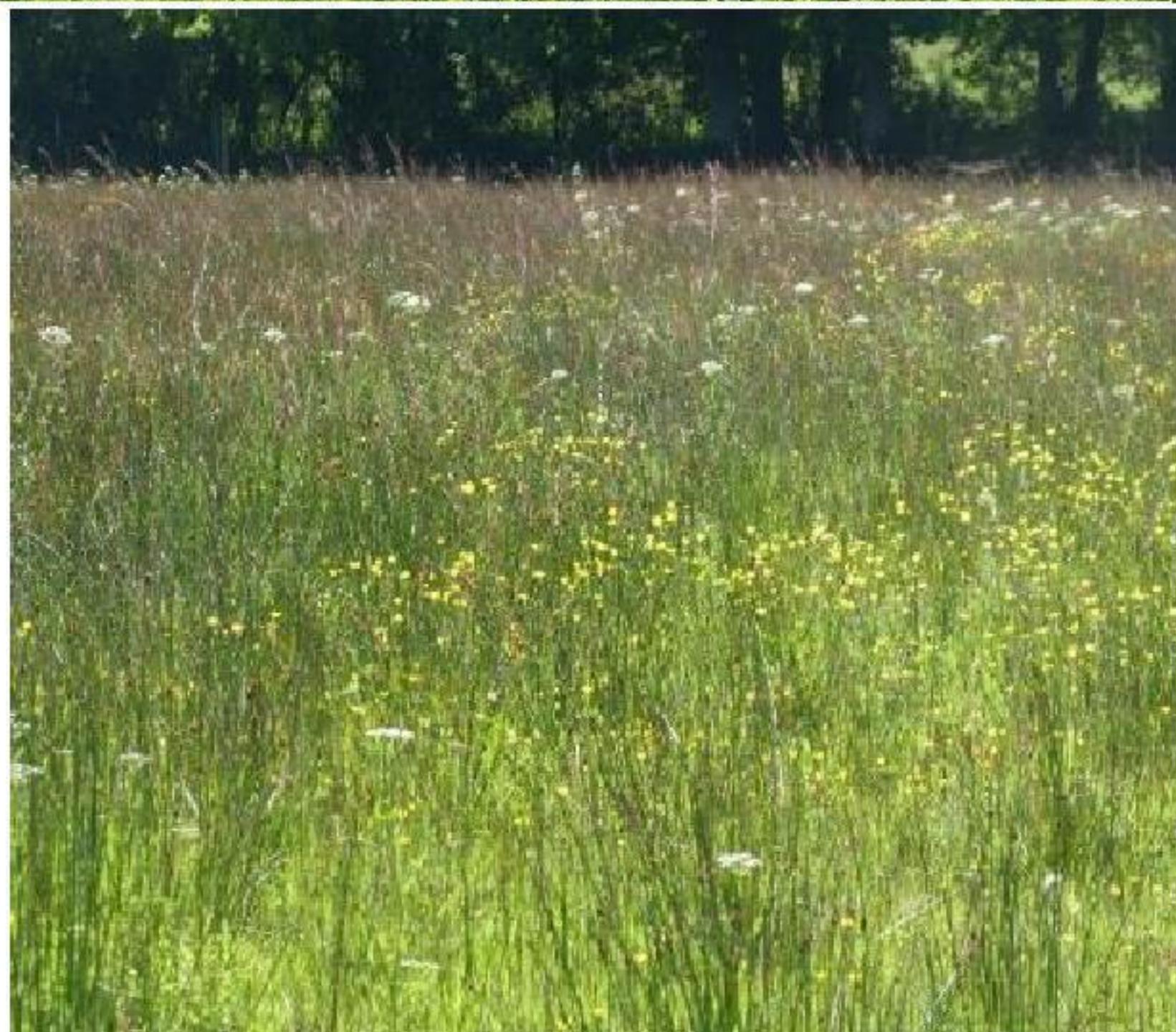
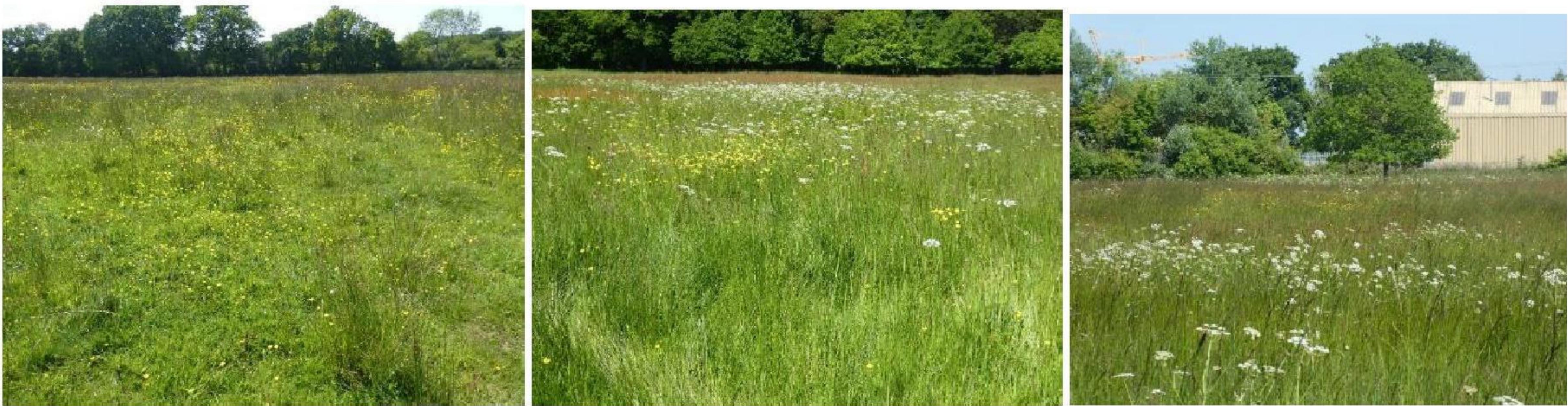


**The applicant's vision document from 11/2023 which can be found on MSDC District Plan 2021-2039 Site Allocations Evidence Library**

The grasses in the fields were normally tall at this time of year the usual policy was to allow them to grow until September/October time before any cutting took place.



**Photos of the site taken 02/06/2024 showing the trees and variety of grasses and flowers in it.**



**Photographs of the site taken  
01/06/2023 showing the variety  
of grasses and flowers in it.**

However, in the first half of June 2024 the grass was cut down all over the field, unexpectedly and unusually early.

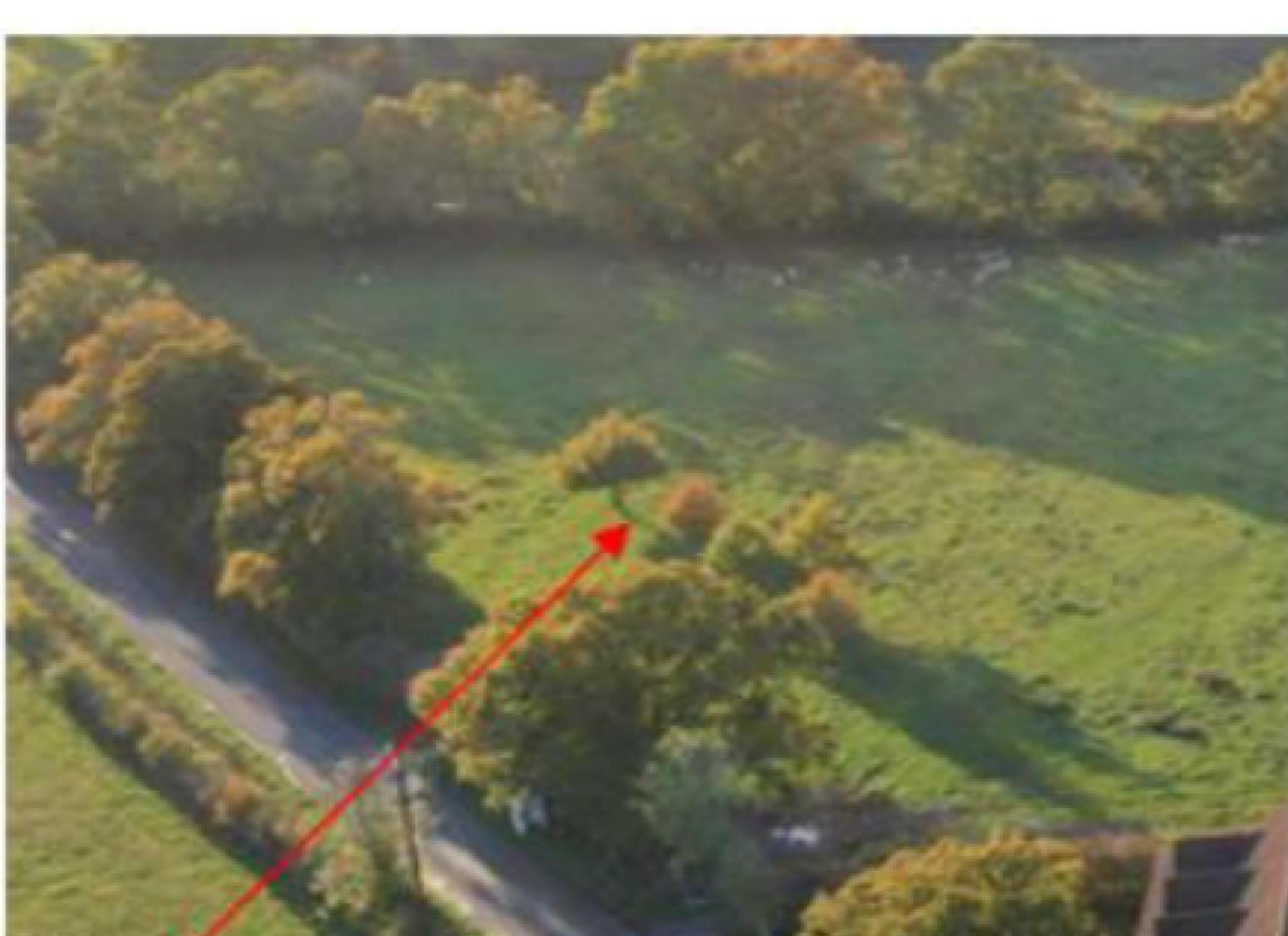


**Photographs of the site taken  
23/06/2024 after all the grass had  
been mowed right up to the field  
boundaries. This was before  
plants could fully flower and seed.**

By the middle of July trees inside the site had been chopped down even if they were on the other side of the site to the compound and spoil heaps.



Photos taken 16/07/2024 showing the trees having been removed in the southern and eastern parts of the site



These trees in the field were cut down in the first half of July 2024



These Oak trees were also cut down at the beginning of July 2024



Photos of the spoil heaps on the site which were started in June 2024. By the middle of July they were over 60m long. Also the compound started in the summer of 2024 as shown in its completed state in November 2024.

After being informed of the above situation the Assistant Director for Planning and Sustainable Economy advised in an email of 7<sup>th</sup> August 2024 that “*In relation to the biodiversity of the field, I can confirm that degradation of the onsite habitat can be taken into consideration under the statutory framework. In brief, this means that the biodiversity pre-development value of the onsite habitat should be calculated as the biodiversity value on the date immediately before the degradation*”. However, it is

not clear that the applicant has calculated the biodiversity value of the site to the date before their degradation of the site started.

The various ecological and biodiversity documents which the applicant has provided refer to various different site visits made after degradation had started to take place. The reports advise that they there have been updates to them but it has not been made clear which parts of the reports are the updates, and the reason for the updates, and which parts are the original report. There is no specific mention of the fact that degradation had taken place on the site, how that has been treated in the reports, and what its impact has been on the reports results.

The ecological report advises in point 3.1.1. that a “*UKHab survey was undertaken within the Application Site by Ecology Solutions on the 27th June and 30th July 2024 with an updated walkover completed on the 10th October 2025.*” All of these dates are after the degradation had taken place.

The out of the ordinary mowing of the site’s grassland in June 2024 would have had a serious impact on the results of several of the surveys undertaken. The report advises that “*a botanical survey comprising quadrat surveys was carried out on the 30th July 2024*”. This was after the grass was mowed removing and reducing the number of different flowers and grasses which would have been visible. It also advises that an update walkover survey was completed in the October 2025 but this was the time that the normal autumn mowing of the grass took place. The report does not state what the condition of the grass was at this time to clarify if the survey was done before or after the grass had been mowed.

The report also notes in point 3.4.1 that “*an area of the Application Site was noted to comprise of bramble scrub which had been cut close to ground level before the initial survey completed in June 2024*” again after the degradation had taken place.

In point 3.8.1 they advise that “*at the time of the June 2024 survey, a number of individual trees were noted to be present although a review of aerial imagery and the results of previous arboricultural surveys found that several additional trees were previously present but had been removed from the Application Site at some point since 2020 but prior to Ecology Solutions initial survey.*” They were therefore aware of the situation of degradation having taken place but did not investigate it further to establish its impact on their survey results.



**Some examples of the many different flora and fauna normally found on the site at different times of the year**

The mowing of the grass on the site would also have had an impact on various of the fauna surveys carried out by the applicant. At the time of such surveys the grassland would usually have been tall and varied, attracting a large number of invertebrates which in turn would be a food source for reptiles, birds and mammals. It would also have provided cover for

creatures from predators such as barn and tawny owls, kestrals and sparrow hawks and foxes. It would have allowed them to move around the field in safety and have increased numbers.

This would therefore have affected the reptile surveys which the applicant advises took place in July, August and September 2024. They advise in point 4.6.1 “*that the majority of the grassland present within the Application Site is of lower suitability for reptiles due to the short sward height*”. However if the grass had not been mowed it would have been at its normal high sward height at this time and there would therefore have been a higher number of invertebrates for them to feed on and places to hide increasing their number. This would also have been the case for the food supply for bats as their NBW surveys took place in July, August and October 2024 would have therefore been similarly affected.

The ecologly surveys also did not capture the fact that Furze Field Wood to the north of the site is a Sussex Bluebell wood which is also a sign of its age. The bluebells spill out of the wood into the proposed site as shown below



Bluebells are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 but the applicant has not provided details of any measures they would undertake to prevent them being trampled, picked or dug up or cross pollinating with domestic Spanish bluebells. They therefore can not demonstrated that they would be protected from harm.

There is also no mention of the various wildlife projects being carried out in the woodland next door to the site and surrounding land by the Woodland Fauna and Flora Group. These include installing bat boxes, barn owl boxes, restoration of pond systems and general monitoring of wildlife. They hold a good source of recognised collected data which is invaluable to inform the development of this site and its biodiversity.

The ecologly reports therefore do give an accurate portrayal of the biodiversity of the site on the date immediately before the degradation took place as they are required to do. The applicant advises in their Biodiversity Net Gain Report point 1.3 that the net gain is based around the results of the habitat surveys carried out in June 2024 and October 2025 after the degradation took place. The report does not include the value to the biodiversity deliberately removed before the surveys took place or investigates how biodiversity levels were affected by it. The gain the site would supply comes therefore from a lower base figure than would have been present prior to the degradation taking place. It therefore calls into question whether the biodiversity figures supplied for the site are under reported and therefore not able to be considered safe or accurate.

It is also noted that even with this lower base level the applicant advises that they can not provide the necessary 10% gain from just inside this site and will therefore have to purchase biodiversity credits on the open market. The residents of Sayers Common both existing and new will therefore not benefit from this gain. The applicant makes no mention of engaging with other landowners or wildlife groups in Sayers Common to find other ways to obtain the necessary biodiversity increase in the area of Sayers Common and so it is therefore a loss to the village.

The site therefore does not comply with the biodiversity NPPF policies 8c, 187d and 192 a & b and also MSDC DP DP38.

### **Landscape & Unsustainable Housing Density**

The site does not fit into the existing rural settlement pattern of Sayers Common and is outside its built up boundary.

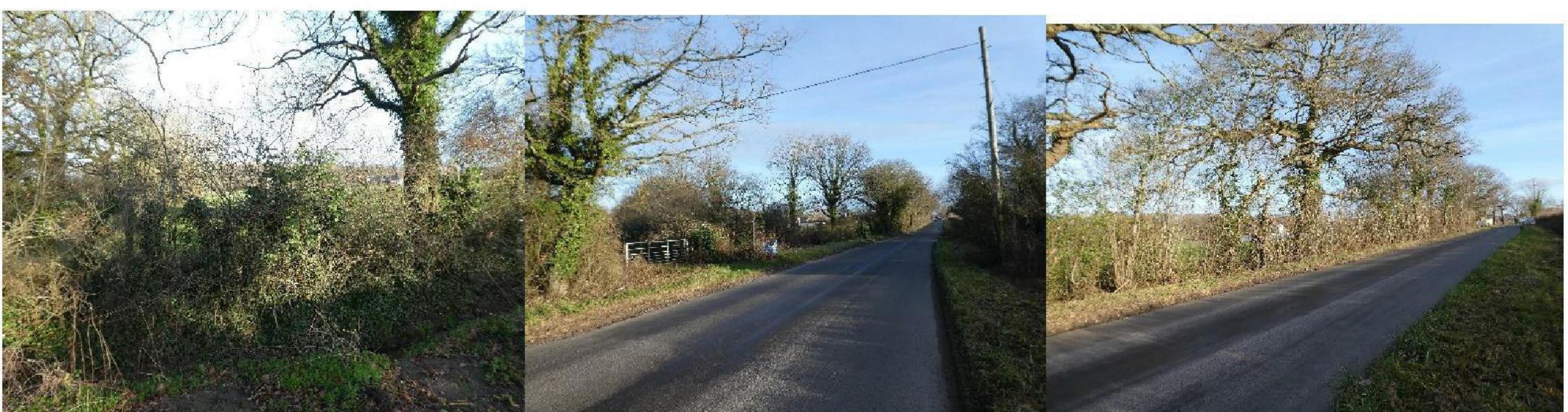
The settlement of Sayers Common is based along the B2118 London Road which runs north to south, and Reeds Lane which runs east to west. The two roads are lined by a row of houses with any housing estates built behind these and which hides them from view from the main roadways. This includes the housing estates of Oakhurst, Berrylands, Sayers Meadows, Furzeland, Dunlop Close, Osborn Close, Meadowview and The Woodlands. The greatest density of housing is in the middle of the village between the Old School and the Duke of York Pub. The density of housing gradually decreases towards the edges of

the village so that there is a clear change from the built up part of the village and the countryside around it, giving it its rural character.

This site would not follow that pattern. Where the density of housing should be seen to be decreasing when moving from village to countryside it would increase it. Where as the Woodlands housing estate(a former brownfield site), the exsiting Osborn Close and the proposed Chesapeake housing developments are behind existing houses and so not visible from Reeds Lane this estate would be. The last housing development on the south side of Reeds Lane is Meadowview (also built on a former brownfield site) which only consists of 18 houses with a frontage of 4 and so is in line with the existing street pattern.

This development would be built on a Greenfield site right alongside 150m of the roadway of Reeds Lane. It would consist of 80 houses which would significantly increase the density of housing in the village at its boundary with the countryside instead of decreasing it. That is in direct conflict with the exsiting village settlement pattern.

The hedgerow along the site's boundary with Reeds Lane is deciduous and so for a large part of the year the site can clearly been seen from the Reeds Lane roadway. That visibility will be increased by the expected raising of the ground level of the site by 30cm or more, the modern building materials used and the housing and street lights on dull days and at night.

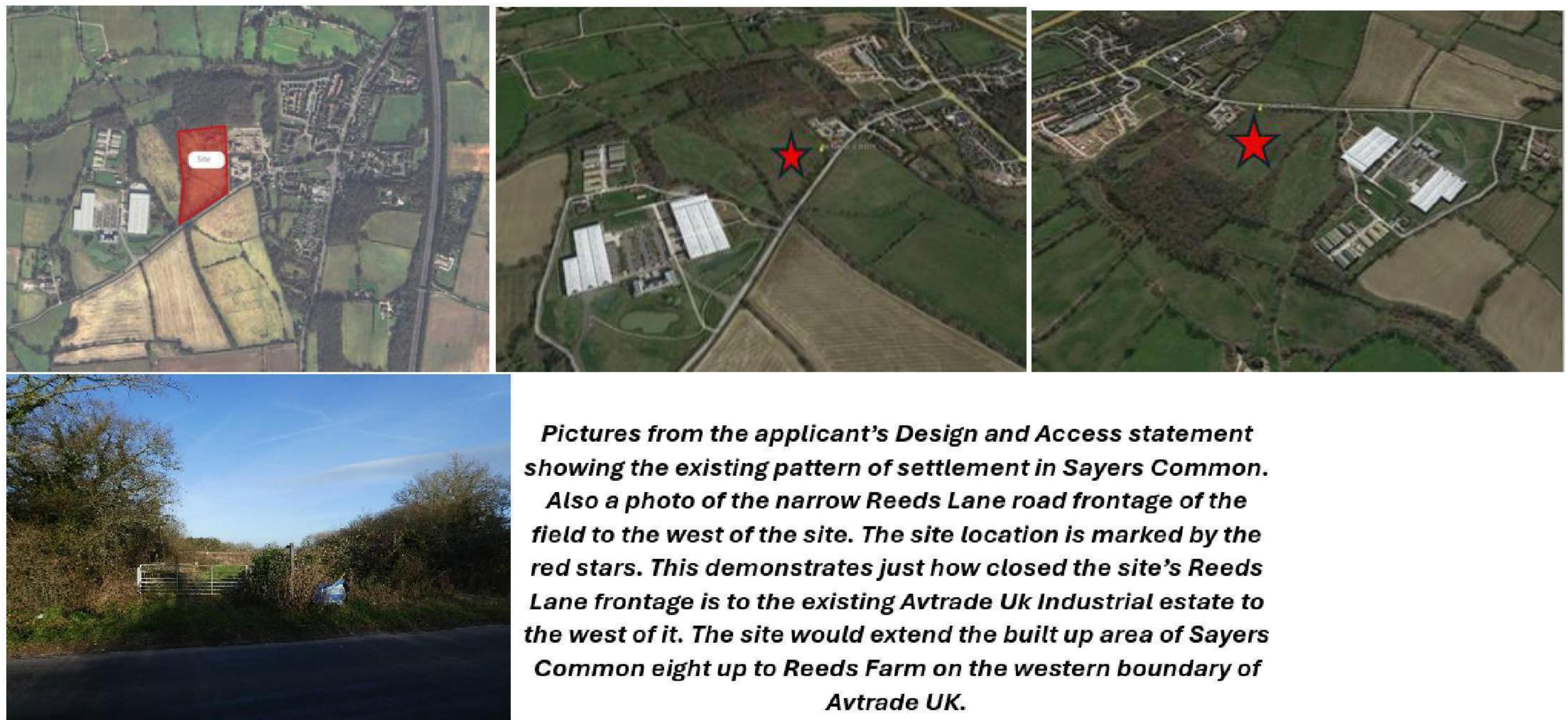


***Views of site from the south side of Reeds Lane 30/12/2025. Top row, left from entrance of footpath 1A. Centre from opposite the proposed new vehicle entrance to site. Right from the entrance of footpath 3AL. Bottom row, left from opposite proposed new pedestaian entrance at south west of site, centre and right views of the site from the roadway going west to east along Reeds Lane***



***Examples of visibility of modern building material used in recent developments in Sayers Common and how they stand out in the landscape. Left the entrance of applicant's new Woodland Estate next door to proposed site. Centre view of the recent Sayers Meadow estate from the entrance to Reeds Lane recreation ground. Right an overhead view of the Sayers Meaow estate with this site visible to the top right of it.***

It would also mean the loss of the visible rural gap between the village and the Avatrade Industrial Site along Reeds Lane and would extend the edge of the built up area of the village as far west as Reeds Farm. This is because of the shape of the field on the site's western boundary which tapers to a road frontage of less than 10m.



The high number of 80 houses proposed for this site not only results in the above issues but also causes issues for the prospective new residents of the site leading to a housing estate of poor quality and design.

When the applicant originally applied for the site to be included as an Allocated Site in the MSDC Draft District Plan it was to build 100 houses over the whole of the site. During that process it was pointed out to both council and applicant that due to the flooding in the western part of the site that this would not be possible, though this was ignored by them. The applicant, though, has now agreed with that advice and proposed a development that would only take up about two thirds of the land instead. However instead of reducing the house numbers by a corresponding third to between 60 and 70, they have only reduced them by 20% to 80. This has resulted in a crowded, crammed, high density layout, which while suitable perhaps for a urban suburban housing estate, is not suitable for the edge of a rural village.



**Left applicant's original 100 house site plan from the Draft MSDC DP, Centre current 80 house site plan. Right detail of site plan showing unworkable shaped gardens and gardens disconnected from their linked residents.**

This high density leads to a lack of space for well designed houses and amenities. For example there is not enough land for sufficient parking spaces. Roads, including primary ones through the site, lack walkways so pedestrians end up sharing the roadway with vehicles. The pedestrian access to the next door Woodlands development is not separated but has to go through a car park. Houses have to be built so close to Reeds Lane that they need noise protection barriers to be built. Gardens such

as number 18 have to be of unworkable shapes or as at number 25 have to be detached and separated from its residence. A disproportional number of 2.5 floor houses need to be built, which are taller than any other houses fronting onto Reeds Lane. Amenities such as play grounds have to be built in parts of the site at risk of flooding.

The number of 80 houses therefore proposed for the site is not suitable nor sustainable for this location and does not provide a well designed estate. If this location were to be built on then the number of houses needs to be reduced by at least another 20 houses to meet the design quality standards of both the NPPF and MSDC DP.

It therefore does not meet NPPF 131, 133 or 135 and MSDC DP DP4, DP12 or DP14

### **Lack of Community Involvement**

It is noted that the applicant has undertaken the minimal amount of community engagement that it is legally required to do so with regards to engagement with the residents of Sayers Common. There has been no face to face engagement with residents, only with councils, and no exhibitions.

The information leaflet sent out by the applicant contained more information about their company than the site, and used the same generic symbols used by all sites. The pictures on it were mainly of urban settings taken in towns and not small rural villages. None of them were of Sayers Common. The diagram of the site was tiny and distorted. There was nothing informative about this major site that residents could actually constructively comment or give an opinion on.

That leaflet was therefore seen by the residents as merely a tick box exercise on behalf of the applicant and not a genuine attempt to engage with the local residents.

The timing of the 28 day consultation period for this major site application ending on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2026 is also regrettable. It unfortunately included the busy week before and both the Christmas and New Year holiday weeks which themselves contained three public holidays. In addition MSDC Planning Office was closed from Christmas Eve to the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2026 so they could not be contacted for guidance during that period. Residents who would have wished to comment upon this major application were restricted due to the time constraints imposed on them by the above. This would explain why hardly any public comments have been received for such a major application.

### **Conclusions**

This site of Land West Of Kings Business Centre Reeds Lane Sayers Common West Sussex is not a sustainable site for development. It lacks access to sustainable infrastructure and would be car reliant. It puts pressure on existing infrastructure and has not shown that this can be mitigated.

It is outside the built up boundary of Sayers Common and does not fit into the village settlement pattern. The number of houses, 80, is too high a density for the amount of land that can actually be built on. It causes serious issues of road safety which have not been addressed.

It has not shown that it could protect the houses in it from flooding without increasing the flooding risk elsewhere. The biodiversity figures provided have not been shown to have been calculated to a correct base figure from before the start of the degradation of the site by the applicant.

It fails to meet a number of NPPF and MSDC policies as has been evidenced above. Therefore at this present time it does not meet the necessary criteria for approval for development as a sustainable development site.

31<sup>st</sup> December 2025

1 Kingsland Cottages, Reeds Lane, Sayers Common, Hassocks. BN6 9JG