

Subject: Objection to Planning Application DM/25/1129 – Proposed Development at Foxhole Farm, Bolney

Date: 12 June 2025

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to formally object to the outline planning application submitted by Wates Developments for the construction of 200 dwellings and a so-called “community hub” on land at Foxhole Farm, Foxhole Lane, Bolney.

This proposal is speculative, unsustainable, and fundamentally at odds with both national and local planning policy. It would cause irreversible harm to the character, safety, and cohesion of Bolney village, a village whose scale, infrastructure, and social fabric are wholly unsuited to accommodate the scale of development proposed.

I set out my objections below, structured by theme and supported by relevant policy.

## **1. CONFLICT WITH PLANNING POLICY**

The proposal conflicts with multiple provisions of the **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**, including:

- **Paragraphs 109–118:** promoting sustainable transport

The site lacks adequate public transport and would materially increase reliance on private vehicles.

Example: A 17-year-old pupil living in Bolney would need to leave home before 6:30am to reach colleges in Haywards Heath or Brighton by 8:30am due to limited bus services.

- **Paragraph 176:** AONBs

The council must give great weight to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). The site lies adjacent to the High Weald National Landscape and would harm its setting. I would urge the Council to consider this development not in isolation but as part of a cumulative effect on the AONB. “Incremental expansion up to the boundary of the AONB would, over time, erode its natural setting and diminish both its visual and ecological buffer.

- **Paragraphs 187–201:** protection of the natural environment

The development would introduce artificial lighting, habitat fragmentation, and visual intrusion into a currently undeveloped rural landscape.

It also conflicts with the **Mid Sussex District Plan 2021–2039**, including:

- **DP6 (Settlement Hierarchy)**

Bolney is a Category 3 settlement, where only limited development to meet local needs is appropriate. This proposal would increase the village's population by over 60%.

- **DP12 (Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside)**

The site lies outside the built-up area boundary and is not allocated for development.

- **DP26 (Character and Design)**

The scale and density of the development would irreversibly alter the rural character of Bolney.

- **DP21 (Transport)**

The development fails to demonstrate sustainable transport links or safe access.

- **DPN6 and DPN8 (Pollution and Light Impacts)**

The lighting assessment is based on assumptions, poor evidence (a single night), an unconfirmed design, and fails to demonstrate that all opportunities to reduce light pollution have been taken.

## 2. TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAY SAFETY CONCERNS

The *Transport Assessment* and the *Framework Travel Plan* (both i-Transport, April 2025) are more of a vision statement than a deliverable strategy. Both documents overstate benefits, downplay risks, and lack binding commitments. In their current form they do not present a robust, enforceable travel plan.

Key concerns include:

- **Car Dependency:** The site is fundamentally car reliant. Despite references to “active travel” and “mobility hubs,” Bolney has no train station, minimal bus service, and no safe cycling infrastructure.
  - **Cycle** - The framework document references theoretical catchments for 5km+ cycle journeys, but offers no proposal for safe new routes or links to key destinations. Existing cycle access is fragmented, and local roads (particularly the A272) are hostile to cyclists.
  - **Bus** - Bus service frequency is poor: the 89 and 2 run only a few days a week with limited services; the 273 skirts the area but bypasses Bolney on many runs. The proposed mitigation for public transport (an un evidenced account of positive engagement with Metrobus) lacks any binding commitment to service upgrades or evidence of commercial viability for Metrobus or any future operator.

- **Walk** – the framework document fails to assess how it will handle the extra footfall from 200 new homes, especially during school drop-off and pick-up times. Bolney Primary School already suffers from a problematic lack of car access so pedestrian access will be required and it will need to be well-lit, step free or suitable for pushchairs.  
The development will not be accessible on foot to another village.
- **Unrealistic trip generation:** The report uses its own determined “business-as-usual” data, which is not supported by our own local assessments; but then claims actual trip rates will be lower due to “modal shift away from the car” without any modelling or evidence - against the backdrop of a village with poor infrastructure and public transport. This assumption is so fundamental and so flawed that it undermines the reliability of the junction capacity assessments.
- **Access:** The ‘ghost island’ right-turn on the A272 is based on best-case visibility assumptions (eg regularly trimmed hedges and ideal driver behaviour). The safety audit is mentioned but not shared.
- **Missing construction impact:** There’s no mention at all of how construction traffic would affect The Street or nearby lanes — a major gap, especially given how narrow and sensitive these lanes are. There is no estimate of volume, duration, or mitigation for heavy vehicle traffic during the build phase, which would place unacceptable pressure on The Street and the surrounding network.
- **Cumulative impacts deferred:** The report defers responsibility for cumulative impacts to future Infrastructure Delivery Plans, rather than assessing them now as required by NPPF paragraph 118.
- **Inadequate mitigation for the Street:** While the report proposes two pedestrian crossings and kerbed build-outs, these do not address the full impact of increased footfall, school traffic, and rat-running.

These issues mean the proposal fails to meet the requirements of DP21, DPT1, BOLT1, and NPPF paragraphs 115–118.

### 3. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL HARM

The *Landscape and Visual Appraisal* (SLR, April 2025) concedes that the development would result in major/moderate adverse effects on the site’s landscape character and visual amenity. This includes:

- **Loss of Rural Character:**

The site lies within the High Weald Fringes (LCA10), a well-wooded, tranquil landscape of historical and natural significance. The fields next to the development are currently vineyards and popular tourist/recreational destination relying on the rural nature of the area.

- **Visual Intrusion:**

Viewpoints from Foxhole Lane and footpath 44Bo show clear, unmitigated views of the development. While mock-up visuals imply improvement over 15 years, there is no evidence that planting will be appropriate, sufficient, or maintained.

Experience of similar developments would indicate that *at best* footpath 44Bo would be lined with planting - birch or hornbeam twigs in plastic tubes - that would not be maintained and nurtured by the developer.

Policy Conflict: The proposal contravenes DP12, DP26, DP16, and BOLD2, all of which require protection of rural character and scenic beauty.

#### **4. LACK OF COMMUNITY INTEGRATION**

The proposal will sit completely separately from the existing community. It will double the size of the village without being properly integrated into it. Its layout and access points reinforce physical and social separation from the existing village. This undermines Bolney's compact character and community ethos, which are central to its Neighbourhood Plan.

The mitigations for the community are not mitigations for the *existing village* at all, they either support the new development (allotments, orchards, playgrounds etc) or a county-wide facility (Kangaroos) which while valuable, is not used by or tailored to the local community.

#### **5. INFRASTRUCTURE**

Bolney already experiences regular challenges with basic infrastructure — including water supply interruptions, electricity outages, poor internet reliability, and localised flooding from surface water runoff. The proposed development would place further pressure on systems that are demonstrably fragile.

**Water supply** is a particular concern. On 8 June 2025, my home was without water for the entire day and night — something that happens regularly in this area. Despite this, the applicant's Statement of Community Involvement claims that "*Wates has engaged with Southern Water, who has confirmed there is capacity to accommodate the development.*" However, water in Bolney is supplied not by Southern Water, but by South East Water. This fundamental error raises real concerns about the robustness of their evidence base — and by extension, the credibility of their wider technical assessments and sustainability claims.

If Mid Sussex District Council considers this site appropriate in principle, I would urge officers to scrutinise the applicant's infrastructure assertions with particular care.

Assumptions about capacity — especially when made without reference to the correct utility providers — cannot be taken at face value

## 6. PROCEDURAL CONCERNS

- **Not Allocated:** The site is not allocated in the adopted District Plan and was rejected in the Bolney Neighbourhood Plan.
- **Plan-Led System Undermined:** The Regulation 19 draft plan is still under examination. Approving this application now would be premature.
- **Public Law Duties:** MSDC must consider all relevant facts and give weight to overwhelming community objections, voiced consistently through Reg 18, Reg 19, and informal consultations.
- **Insufficient evidence:** there is a risk that the evidence provided does not adequately support proper decision-making and needs further interrogation or detail.

## CONCLUSION

While I recognise the need to plan for future housing, this application does not reflect the principles of sustainable, well-integrated development. It conflicts with both national and local policy, introduces significant and unresolved impacts on infrastructure, transport, and the rural character of Bolney, and fails to demonstrate that the harms can be effectively mitigated.

Given the scale of local concern, the site's sensitive context, and the gaps and inconsistencies across the supporting documents, I respectfully ask the Council to consider whether this is the right scheme in the right location. In its current form, I believe it should be refused.