

Objection to Planning Application DM/26/1315 Land West of Gatesmead, Wickham Way, Haywards Heath

Loss of Green Space, Biodiversity and Environmental Harm

The proposal would result in the loss of approximately 11 acres of open grassland, causing significant and irreversible harm to local character and biodiversity.

Local residents have recorded the presence of several notable and protected species on the site, including:

- Black redstart (Schedule 1 protected species; fewer than 100 breeding pairs in the UK)
- Slow worm (protected under wildlife legislation)
- Additional species including green and great spotted woodpeckers, buzzards, sparrowhawks and red kites

Given the ecological sensitivity of the site, the applicant's submitted ecological assessment should be subject to independent verification to ensure accuracy and completeness.

Further concerns arise regarding:

- Potential pollution of the adjacent watercourse through site run-off
- The site's proximity to the railway embankment
- Increased noise, air and light pollution, adversely affecting both wildlife and residential amenity
- A comprehensive Flood Risk Assessment is essential, particularly given past concerns regarding the presence of natural springs in this area, which may increase the risk of groundwater flooding and place additional pressure on local drainage infrastructure

These impacts are contrary to:

NPPF Chapter 15 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Mid Sussex District Plan Policy DP12 Protection and Enhancement of Countryside

Access and Highway Safety

The development relies entirely on vehicular access via Gatesmead, a narrow and quiet residential road not designed to accommodate the traffic associated with a development of this scale.

The application fails to adequately address:

- Highway safety risks, including pedestrian safety
- Junction capacity and visibility splays
- The impact of construction traffic
- Suitability for refuse and emergency vehicles
- Existing congestion, particularly during the school run

In its current form, the proposal raises significant concerns regarding safe and suitable access.

Pressure on Local Infrastructure

Existing local infrastructure is already under considerable strain, including:

- School capacity
- GP and healthcare provision
- Drainage and sewerage systems

Given recent warnings from Southern Water advising reduced water use during hot weather to manage shortages, this proposal would exacerbate existing pressures on local water infrastructure, an issue that does not appear to be being adequately addressed in planning for new developments across the South East.

The application does not provide robust or credible evidence demonstrating that the additional demand arising from 49 new dwellings can be accommodated without further degradation of services for existing residents.

Undetermined Public Right of Way (DMMO 3/22)

A Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO 3/22) affecting this site has been outstanding with West Sussex County Council since 15 November 2021, a period now exceeding four and a half years.

Until this application is determined, the legal status of the claimed Public Right of Way (PRoW) across or adjoining the site remains unresolved. Determining the present planning application in advance of this decision would risk prejudicing the outcome of the DMMO process and could lead to irreversible harm should the route be confirmed.

Accordingly, the application should be deferred until the DMMO has been properly determined.

Conclusion and Request

For the reasons set out above, Lindfield Parish Council objects strongly to this application.

Should the case officer be minded to approve the development, it is formally requested that the application be referred to the Mid Sussex District Council Planning Committee for full and transparent determination.