

Dear Mr Swift,

Ref: Planning Application DM/26/0073

This is to inform you that my family and I are strongly opposed to the above application to build 44 homes OUTSIDE the southern boundary of East Grinstead and WITHIN the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Some Councillors will remember me as the leader of the ROUGHS (Residents Opposed to Unsuitable Great Harwoods Site) group, and will have supported me some 14 years ago when we fought against and won at appeal, against an application which attempted to breach the southern boundary of our beautiful town and build in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). My group pledged to fight against any other such hare-brained schemes in the future, and we will!

At least before that application was submitted Croudace had the decency to display their plans and allow the general public to comment upon them. In contrast, very few people appear to have been informed of these plans with little time to provide adequate representation!

I note with alarm that you didn't even bother to include the High Weald AONB Unit in your list of consultees! I have contacted them and hope they will object to point out the obvious – this development would contravene almost all of that Unit's Management Plan!

Planning precedents are relevant here in that at least six previous attempts have been made to build an "agricultural track" across this site from West Hoathly Road to Harwoods Lane in the past, and they have ALL been "Recommended Refusal" by the Town Council and REFUSED permission by MSDC. These were clearly seen as an attempt to breach the southern boundary of East Grinstead at the expense of the AONB, and create a dangerous precedent for the future! How much worse would a housing estate be, and it is noted that the plans show a suspicious spur for another attempt!?

The Planning Committee says that this was an allocated site in the draft District Plan, but that should NEVER have happened! I accept that it is site 198 listed in the SHELAA documents, which lists areas OFFERED BY LANDOWNERS that they would like to sell, but that does NOT make them allocated or suitable! Many of the sites listed are in the High Weald AONB, which SHOULD ALWAYS be allocated the highest level of protection unless there are NO other alternatives, as per the NPPF Guidelines! Clearly there are many sites available around East Grinstead which do not have that level of protection.

Many of us adamantly believe that the beautiful south-east of town is completely the wrong part of East Grinstead to even consider developing further. As East Grinstead is principally a commuter town, almost all traffic generated by such developments would have to fight its way through the town and out to the north and west through the roads already acknowledged as being overcrowded in the Atkins and other reports, creating more jams and pollution than ever!

These development proposals are DIRECTLY CONTRARY to the following:

1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF);
2. At least FIVE policies of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan (EGNP), including the top three,
3. No fewer than ELEVEN policies of the MSDC's own District Plan! Where the EGNP and DP policies overlap, the breach is detailed under the DP number.

For so many reasons therefore application DM/26/0073 should be REFUSED permission by MSDC!

The remainder of this document contains extracts from the NPPF, the EGNP and the District Plan. It is my hurriedly put together evidence base to show how and why each of these policies would be breached.

The National Planning Policy states, at Paragraph 14, that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. However, this presumption in favour is removed where a site lies within the AONB and footnote 9 of NPPF confirms that this is the case. National Planning Policy goes on to state at Paragraph 116 of the NPPF... 'Planning permission should be refused for major developments in these designated areas except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest.

Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of: • the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy; • the cost of, and scope for, developing elsewhere outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and • any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated'

There is no reason to build in such a sensitive area!

Policy EG1 - Within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty planning permission will be refused for major development proposals unless the development is demonstrably required in the public interest and meets the exceptional circumstances criteria outlined in the NPPF. Planning permission for other forms of development will be granted where the proposals are for the: (i) Conversion of redundant buildings; (ii) Replacement, on a like for like basis, of existing buildings; or (iii) Extension of an existing dwelling house, relate to agricultural development or some other minor recreational use; Provided that for each of the above (i, ii and iii) all of the following criteria are met: • The highest standards of Design are achieved; • The natural and scenic beauty of the landscape is conserved or enhanced; • The proposals do not result in an obtrusive feature in the landscape. The onus is on the applicant to demonstrate that the scheme would not negatively impact on the existing quality of the protected landscape and its setting taking account of locally important features. Proposals that have not fully considered and addressed the impact on the AONB will normally be refused.

Policy EG2 – Areas of Development Constraint Planning permission will normally be granted for the sympathetic conversion of redundant rural buildings, limited small-scale new development and extensions to existing buildings within the Countryside Areas of Development Constraint provided they comply with the following criteria: (1) In the case of replacement dwellings, the proposal is no more obtrusive than East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan November 2016 20 the dwelling it replaces and is of an appropriate design for its location and setting; (2) In the case of extensions, the proposal is subservient in scale and form to the original dwelling along with the coherent use of materials; (3) In the case of converted buildings, the new use has minimal impact on the openness of the countryside, in terms of the new curtilage, and parking; in the case of outdoor sport, recreation and community uses of land, the proposals support the objective of keeping land open; (4) The proposal comprises essential small-scale proposals for agricultural or sport and recreation such as pavilions and changing rooms; or (5) It is essential to meet specific necessary utility infrastructure needs and no alternative feasible site is available

Policy EG2a – Preventing Coalescence Planning permission will not normally be granted for development which: (1) Results in the coalescence of East Grinstead with Crawley Down or Ashurst Wood; (2) Results in the perception of openness being unacceptably eroded within this area; or (3) Contributes towards the ad hoc or isolated development of dwellings outside the built up area, including infilling of built up frontages or linear development along roads.

DP6: Settlement Hierarchy The approach of the District Plan is to focus the majority of housing and employment development at Burgess Hill as it has greater potential to deliver sustainable communities and to benefit from the opportunities that new development can deliver than at East Grinstead and Haywards Heath. Within defined built-up area boundaries, development is accepted in principle whereas outside these boundaries, the primary objective of the District Plan with respect to the countryside (as per Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside) is to secure its protection by minimising the amount of land taken for development and preventing development that does not need to be there.

DP6: Settlement Hierarchy Strategic Objectives: 2) To promote well located and designed development that reflects the District's distinctive towns and villages, retains their separate identity and character and prevents coalescence; 8) To provide opportunities for people to live and work within their communities, reducing the need for commuting; 9) To create and maintain town and village centres that are vibrant, attractive and successful and that meet the needs of the community; 12) To support sustainable communities which are safe, healthy and inclusive; and 13) To provide the amount and type of housing that meets the needs of all sectors of the community. Evidence Base: Settlement Sustainability Review. Development will be permitted within towns and villages with defined built-up area boundaries. The growth of settlements will be supported where this meets identified local housing, employment and community needs. Outside defined built-up area boundaries, the expansion of settlements will be supported where: 1. The site is allocated in the District Plan,

a Neighbourhood Plan or subsequent Development Plan Document or where the proposed development is for fewer than 10 dwellings; and 2. The site is contiguous with an existing built up area of the settlement; and 3. The development is demonstrated to be sustainable, including by reference to the settlement hierarchy.

DP6 Breach. This development is NOT within the East Grinstead built-up area. Indeed it is NOT contiguous with an existing built up area of the town, as the sports and playground area in between is itself OUTSIDE the built up area and INSIDE the High Weald AONB!

DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside Strategic Objectives: 3) To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities; 11) To support and enhance the attractiveness of Mid Sussex as a visitor destination; and 15) To create places that encourage a healthy and enjoyable lifestyle by the provision of first class cultural and sporting facilities, informal leisure space and the opportunity to walk, cycle or ride to common destinations. The countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty. Development will be permitted in the countryside, defined as the area outside of built-up area boundaries on the Policies Map, provided it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District, and: • it is necessary for the purposes of agriculture; or • it is supported by a specific policy reference either elsewhere in the Plan, a Development Plan Document or relevant Neighbourhood Plan.

DP12 Breach. There is a clearly defined Built-up area boundary along this part of East Grinstead, which is also the boundary of the High Weald AONB. Clearly to build in the AONB and outside of the built-up area here would NOT protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities.

DP13: Preventing Coalescence Strategic Objective: 2) To promote well located and designed development that reflects the District's distinctive towns and villages, retains their separate identity and character and prevents coalescence.

DP13 Breach – also breaches EG Neighbourhood Plan policy EG2a

There is a very small defined Local Gap between East Grinstead and Ashurst Wood. This development, if allowed, could lead to a domino effect across the south-eastern boundary of the town which would cumulatively result in coalescence and the loss of the separate identity and amenity of the settlements.

DP15: New Homes in the Countryside Strategic Objectives: 3) To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities; and 13) To provide the amount and type of housing that meets the needs of all sectors of the community. Provided that they would not be in conflict with Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside, new homes in the countryside will be permitted where special justification exists. Special justification is defined as: • Where accommodation is essential to enable agricultural, forestry and certain other full time rural workers to live at, or in the immediate

vicinity of, their place of work; or • In the case of new isolated homes in the countryside, where the design of the dwelling is of exceptional quality and it enhances its immediate setting and is sensitive to the character of the area; or • Affordable housing in accordance with Policy DP32: Rural Exception Sites; or • The proposed development meets the requirements of Policy DP6: Settlement Hierarchy.

DP15 Breach – also breaches EG Neighbourhood Plan policy EG2, Areas of Development Constraint. The special justifications for building outside of town listed above are simply not applicable here!

DP16: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty The National Planning Policy Framework gives great weight to the need to conserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are also identified as important considerations. National policy also states that planning permission should be refused for major developments in these areas except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that they are in the public interest. The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty covers most of the northern part of the District. The High Weald AONB Management Plan identifies the distinctive features of the landscape and how these can be conserved and enhanced. Significant consideration should be given to the conservation and enhancement of the locally distinctive features of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, as defined by the High Weald AONB Management Plan. The setting of the High Weald AONB is also important as landscapes connect ecologically, economically and socially. In particular, the views into and out of the AONB may be affected by activities outside of the designated area. The National Planning Practice Guidance explains that the duty to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of AONBs is relevant when considering development proposals situated outside of an AONB, but which might have an impact on its setting.

DP16: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Strategic Objectives: 3) To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities; and 11) To support and enhance the attractiveness of Mid Sussex as a visitor destination. Evidence Base: The High Weald AONB Management Plan. Development within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), as shown on the Policies Maps, will only be permitted where it conserves or enhances natural beauty and has regard to the High Weald AONB Management Plan, in particular; • the identified landscape features or components of natural beauty and to their setting; • the traditional interaction of people with nature, and appropriate land management; • character and local distinctiveness, settlement pattern, sense of place and setting of the AONB; and • the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage. Small scale proposals which support the economy and social well-being of the AONB that are compatible with the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty will be supported. Development on land that contributes to the setting of the AONB will only be permitted where it does not detract from the visual qualities and essential characteristics of the AONB, and in particular should not adversely affect the views into and out of the AONB by virtue of its location or design.

DP16 Breach – also breaches EG Neighbourhood Plan policy EG1, and indeed the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)!

This is the principal objection to the proposed development for the following reasons. AONB SHOULD be given the highest status of protection and there are NO exceptional circumstances in the public interest here, Development here will DAMAGE, not enhance, the conservation and natural beauty of the area, and should be REFUSED for this reason above all others!

DP17: Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Strategic Objectives: 3) To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities. In order to prevent adverse effects on the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC, new development likely to have a significant effect, either alone or in combination with other development, will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures are put in place to avoid or mitigate any potential adverse effects. Within a 7km zone of influence around the Ashdown Forest SPA, residential development leading to a net increase in dwellings will be required to contribute to mitigation through: 1) The provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) to the minimum level of 8Ha per 1,000 net increase in population; or a financial contribution to SANGs elsewhere; or the provision of bespoke mitigation; and 2) A financial contribution to the Ashdown Forest Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Strategy. Where bespoke mitigation is provided, these measures will need to be in place before occupation of development and must be managed and maintained in perpetuity. The effectiveness of such mitigation will need to be demonstrated prior to approval of the development. Bespoke mitigation will need to be discussed and agreed by the District Council as the competent authority following advice from Natural England.

DP17 Breach – also breaches EGNP policy EG16.

Although East Court has been designated a SANG and another is partially developed near the Bluebell Railway viaduct, they are not interlinked or of adequate size to justify further development at this time. Also, this development is at the closest boundary to the Special Protection Area, thus generating pollution closer than anywhere else in town. It is understood that pollution levels in the Ashdown Forest are already close to the limit.

DP20: Securing Infrastructure Strategic Objectives: 6) To ensure that development is accompanied by the necessary infrastructure in the right place at the right time that supports development and sustainable communities. This includes the provision of efficient and sustainable transport networks.

DP20 Breach. East Grinstead is primarily a commuter town, so most of the traffic has to go to the north and west through the Imberhorne Lane and Felbridge junctions which are already well over capacity, as acknowledged in the Atkins and Jubb reports. To build to the south and east of the town makes no sense at all, just feeding more and more traffic through the town and these bottlenecks!

DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows Strategic Objectives: 3) To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities; 4) To protect valued characteristics of the built environment for their historical and visual qualities; and 5) To create and maintain easily accessible green infrastructure, green corridors and spaces around and within the towns and villages to act as wildlife corridors, sustainable transport links and leisure and recreational routes. The District Council will support the protection and enhancement of trees, woodland and hedgerows, and encourage new planting. In particular, ancient woodland and aged or veteran trees will be protected. Development that will damage or lead to the loss of trees, woodland or hedgerows that contribute, either individually or as part of a group, to the visual amenity value or character of an area, and/ or that have landscape, historic or wildlife importance, will not normally be permitted.

Development should be positioned as far as possible from ancient woodland with a minimum buffer of 15 metres maintained between ancient woodland and the development boundary.

DP37 Breach. This development proposal includes the removal of some ancient woodland and hedgerows, so clearly does not conform with policy DP37.

DP38: Biodiversity Strategic Objectives: 3) To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities; and 5) To create and maintain easily accessible green infrastructure, green corridors and spaces around and within the towns and villages to act as wildlife corridors, sustainable transport links and leisure and recreational routes. Biodiversity will be protected and enhanced by ensuring development:

- Contributes and takes opportunities to improve, enhance, manage and restore biodiversity and green infrastructure, so that there is a net gain in biodiversity, including through creating new designated sites and locally relevant habitats, and incorporating biodiversity features within developments; and
- Protects existing biodiversity, so that there is no net loss of biodiversity. Appropriate measures should be taken to avoid and reduce disturbance to sensitive habitats and species. Unavoidable damage to biodiversity must be offset through ecological enhancements and mitigation measures (or compensation measures in exceptional circumstances); and
- Minimises habitat and species fragmentation and maximises opportunities to enhance and restore ecological corridors to connect natural habitats and increase coherence and resilience; and
- Promotes the restoration, management and expansion of priority habitats in the District; and
- Avoids damage to, protects and enhances the special characteristics of internationally designated Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation; nationally designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and locally

designated Sites of Nature Conservation Importance, Local Nature Reserves and Ancient Woodland or to other areas identified as being of nature conservation or geological interest, including wildlife corridors, aged or veteran trees, Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, and Nature Improvement Areas.

DP38 Breach. These proposals BREACH this policy in several ways!

DP41: Flood Risk and Drainage Strategic Objectives: 1) To promote development that makes the best use of resources and increases the sustainability of communities within Mid Sussex, and its ability to adapt to climate change; and 12) To support sustainable communities which are safe, healthy and inclusive. Proposals for development will need to follow a sequential risk-based approach, ensure development is safe across its lifetime and not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.

Particular attention should be paid to those areas of the District that have experienced flooding in the past and proposals for development should seek to reduce the risk of flooding by achieving a reduction from existing run-off rates.

DP41 Breach. Clearly the frequent flooding at the nearby listed buildings of Dunnings Mill will be WORSENER by paving over a higher field just a hundred metres away!

DP42: Water Infrastructure and the Water Environment Strategic Objectives: 1) To promote development that makes the best use of resources and increases the sustainability of communities within Mid Sussex, and its ability to adapt to climate change; 6) To ensure that development is accompanied by the necessary infrastructure in the right place at the right time that supports development and sustainable communities. This includes the provision of efficient and sustainable transport networks. Development proposals which increase the demand for off-site service infrastructure will be permitted where the applicant can demonstrate; • that sufficient capacity already exists off-site for foul and surface water provision.

DP42 Breach. Recent water shortages, current water leaks and road closures at this site demonstrate that there is NOT adequate water supply to serve the development.