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Dear Ms Richardson,

RE: Objection to Planning Application DM/25/1973 - 11 Barnfield, Balcombe RH17 6FW

Proposed loft conversion including two dormer windows to rear elevation

I write on behalf of **Mr and Mrs Major of 15 Barnfield** and **Colin Vallis & Coral Wallis of 13 Barnfield**, to formally **object** to planning application DM/25/1973 concerning a loft conversion at **11 Barnfield**.

This objection focuses on two principal areas:

1. The **unacceptable impact on residential amenity**, particularly to Nos. 13 and 15 Barnfield; and
2. The **harmful effect on the carefully considered streetscene and design character** of this distinctive group of homes.

The current proposal represents a **clear departure from the design principles** upon which the original planning permission was granted for the estate in 2019. It must be assessed independently on its own planning merits.

1. Residential Amenity – Overlooking, Dominance and Loss of Privacy

The proposed dormer windows, by reason of their elevated position, size, and orientation, will result in **direct and sustained overlooking** into the kitchen window **No. 13 Barnfield** and over the **private gardens and principal elevations of both Nos. 13 and 15**.

This introduces a significantly intensified and oppressive overlooking relationship, which materially reduces the privacy of both properties. In particular:

- The **kitchen window at No. 13** lies approximately **17 metres** from the proposed dormers—already marginal in terms of acceptable privacy. The additional height and prominence of the dormers worsens this relationship.
- The dormers would allow direct views into two bedroom windows at No. 15, another bedroom window, two ground floor windows, and even the front door—resulting in a sustained and invasive sense of being overlooked.
- The cumulative result is a **continuous and intrusive sense of surveillance**, undermining the quality of private life expected in a well-planned residential development.
- Due to natural land slope, No. 13 sits approximately 30cm lower and No. 15 approximately 100cm lower than No. 11, further increasing the visual dominance of the proposed dormers.

This is contrary to:

- **Design Guidance DG45** of the Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD (2020), which states development must not reduce the privacy of neighbouring properties;
- **Paragraph 6.36**, which states dormers must be designed to avoid overlooking into neighbouring gardens and windows;
- **Policy DP26** of the Mid Sussex District Plan.

2. Design and Character – Erosion of the Approved Scheme

The proposed dormer extensions at 11 Barnfield must be considered against the **original design concept** for the estate. This was not a speculative housing scheme permitted by default—it was a carefully designed and negotiated development, approved on the strength of its **architectural coherence, roof simplicity, and respect for the rural character of Balcombe and the surrounding AONB**.

The **Design and Access Statement (2019)** submitted by Rydon Homes makes repeated reference to the **intentional modesty** of the homes. Key design themes included:

- **Traditional pitched roofs** with simple, uninterrupted forms;
- A commitment to avoiding **dominant or intrusive roof features**;
- **Visual consistency** through restrained detailing and symmetry;
- Integration with the **rural grain** of Balcombe.

“The homes will be modest in scale, with traditional roof pitches and eaves lines, avoiding any dominant or intrusive roof features.”

(Design and Access Statement, 2019)

This was not incidental language. It formed the **foundation of the design rationale** and was later reflected in officer recommendations and design revisions. The **uniformity and simplicity of the roofscape**—free from dormers or bulky protrusions—was a key element of that strategy.

The **Council’s Urban Designer** made specific interventions at pre-approval stage, reinforcing the importance of elevation hierarchy and roof massing, stating:

“The elevations evoke more of the rural character... individuality that more effectively disguises their standard layout.”

No. 11 is physically and visually embedded within this coordinated group of homes. Any alteration to its form must be judged **not in isolation**, but in the context of the **overall composition of buildings and rooflines** that define this part of the estate.

The introduction of **two large, box-like rear dormers** on this dwelling would:

- **Break the intended simplicity of the roof form**, which was deliberately left uninterrupted;
- Disrupt the **visual balance and consistency** that was key to achieving design quality;
- Create a **false visual massing** at roof level, making the dwelling appear top-heavy and poorly integrated;
- Set a **negative precedent** that would erode the architectural clarity of the estate if repeated.

This conflicts with the expectations set in:

- **Design Principle DG49:** Householder extensions must not dominate the host building and must reflect the scale and materials of the original;
- **DG52 and paragraphs 6.35–6.37:** Dormers must be subordinate and respectful of the existing roof form;
- **Policy DP26**, which seeks to protect both the character of the built environment and the visual integrity of existing streetscapes.

The 2019 **Committee Report** reinforced this position:

“The revised elevations would evoke more of the rural character... with better articulated frontages and more modelled roofs.”

“It is considered that the scheme would be compliant with those policies seeking to promote good design and protect the character of the village and wider AONB.”

Approving these dormers would unravel a core visual and spatial principle of the original permission: that buildings would retain their **modest, rural character without bulky roof interventions**.

The design guidance is clear that the presence of large gardens or private rear elevations does not justify unsympathetic roof additions. The primary test is whether the addition respects the **form, character, and materiality** of the host dwelling and its context. In this case, it does not.

3. Buildability and Compliance Concerns

It is also noted that the proposed roof space appears to offer **very limited usable head height**. There are concerns that, as drawn, the proposal **may not satisfy Building Regulations**, particularly in relation to minimum headroom for habitable spaces. If this is the case, it brings into question the **practical buildability** of the loft conversion and the justification for the proposed dormer windows, which may not deliver functional floorspace.

The applicant has reportedly stated that dormers are necessary to accommodate stairs, which highlights that the roof form is not inherently suitable for loft conversion without harmful alterations.”

4. Past Revisions Do Not Justify Harm

While it is acknowledged that the proposal has evolved from previous versions, that fact alone cannot be the basis for approval. The test must be whether this version **meets the required design and amenity standards**—not whether it is better than what came before.

The previous versions were unacceptable. The current proposal, while reduced in impact, **still causes demonstrable harm. Lesser harm is not the same as no harm**, and the application must be assessed **on its own planning merits**, not in comparison to worse alternatives.

Furthermore, the extent of glazing in this revised proposal remains largely unchanged from the original, maintaining similar levels of exposure.

Suggested Reasons for Refusal

For the reasons set out above, the following policy-based reasons for refusal are respectfully submitted:

1. Unacceptable Impact on Residential Amenity

The proposed dormer windows, by reason of their elevated position, size, and orientation, would result in an unreasonable level of overlooking into the kitchen window of the neighbouring property at No. 13 Barnfield, as well as into bedroom windows and private garden areas of Nos. 13 and 15. The proposal would therefore have a materially harmful impact on the residential amenity of nearby occupiers.

This is contrary to:

- **Policy DP26** of the Mid Sussex District Plan;
- **Design Guidance DG45** and paragraph **6.36** of the Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD (2020).

2. Harm to the Character and Appearance of the Area

The proposed dormers, by reason of their scale, design, and prominent position on the rear roofslope, would appear as visually intrusive additions that fail to respect the original design of the host dwelling and the architectural cohesion of this residential group, particularly as they would be visible from the frontages of Nos. 13 and 15. The development would erode the carefully considered roofscape established under the original permission and result in a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the area.

This is contrary to:

- **Policy DP26** of the Mid Sussex District Plan;
- **Design Guidance DG49, DG52**, and paragraphs **6.35–6.37** of the Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD (2020);
- The **original Design and Access Statement** for the scheme.

Conclusion

This proposal introduces harm where none previously existed. It conflicts with adopted policy, undermines residential amenity, and weakens the original design integrity of a carefully planned residential development. For these reasons, we respectfully request that the application be **refused**.

Yours Sincerely,



Steve Hesmondhalgh BA(Hons) MRTPI

Managing Director

AMS Planning and Architecture Limited

(On behalf of Mr and Mrs Major of 15 Barnfield, and Colin Vallis & Coral Wallis of 13 Barnfield)