

From: planninginfo@midsussex.gov.uk <planninginfo@midsussex.gov.uk>
Sent: 25 June 2026 16:15:57 UTC+01:00
To: "Caroline Grist" <caroline.grist@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: Mid Sussex DC - Online Register - Comments for Planning Application
DM/26/1315

Comments summary

Dear Sir/Madam,

Planning Application comments have been made. A summary of the comments is provided below.

Comments were submitted at 25/06/2026 4:15 PM.

Application Summary

Address:	Land West Of Gatesmead Wickham Way Haywards Heath West Sussex
Proposal:	Proposed 49 new homes together with open space and associated infrastructure.
Case Officer:	Caroline Grist

[Click for further information](#)

Customer Details

Address:	27 Gatesmead Haywards heath
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Comments Details

Commenter Type:	Neighbour or general public
Stance:	Customer objects to the Planning Application
Reasons for comment:	
Comments:	Planning Application DM/26/1315 - Formal Objection Dear Planning Officer, I wish to register my strong objection to planning application DM/26/1315 for the proposed development of 49 dwellings on land west of Gatesmead, Wickham Way, Haywards Heath. In my view, this application is fundamentally premature. The site

remains subject to an unresolved Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) application concerning public access rights, yet the applicant is seeking to secure planning permission before that matter has been determined. The Council should not be asked to approve the development of land where a key issue concerning public access and use remains unresolved.

The proposal would also result in the loss of a valued area of open green space that has been used and enjoyed by local residents for decades. My family and I have regularly used these fields for more than twenty years. They provide an important recreational resource, contribute significantly to the character of the area and form a valuable green buffer between existing development and the surrounding countryside.

My objections are as follows:

1. Unresolved Public Right of Way (DMMO 3/22) - A Fundamental Obstacle to Development

A Definitive Map Modification Order application remains outstanding in relation to a claimed public right of way affecting the site. This application has been awaiting determination for several years.

The existence of this unresolved claim is not a minor technical matter. It goes to the heart of how the land is used and accessed by the public. The Council is being asked to determine a major residential development while simultaneously leaving unresolved a long-standing question regarding public rights over the land itself.

Many local residents have used these fields continuously for decades. The fact that a formal application has been made to recognise those rights demonstrates that there is a genuine and substantial issue requiring determination before development proposals can properly be considered.

Granting planning permission before the DMMO process has concluded would risk prejudicing that process and could ultimately result in a development being approved on assumptions that later prove to be incorrect.

At the very least, determination of this planning application should be deferred until the DMMO application has been resolved. More appropriately, the existence of this unresolved issue should weigh heavily against granting permission.

The applicant appears to be seeking consent first and resolution of public access rights later. That is the wrong way around. The legal status of the land and the rights enjoyed by the public should be established before, not after, a decision is made that would

permanently alter the site.

2. Highway Safety and Traffic Impact

The local road network is already under considerable pressure. Birchen Lane and surrounding roads suffer from poor maintenance and significant pothole problems. Traffic congestion during school drop-off and pick-up times is already a concern, particularly given the presence of several nearby primary schools.

The junctions onto Birchen Lane and subsequently onto Portsmouth Road are difficult and, in places, have restricted visibility. Additional vehicle movements associated with 49 new homes will inevitably increase risk and congestion on roads that are already struggling to cope.

The application does not adequately demonstrate how the existing road network can safely accommodate this increase without worsening congestion, increasing road safety risks and placing further strain on infrastructure that is already under pressure.

3. Access Arrangements and Credibility of the Proposals

The application states that access will be taken from Gatesmead. However, local residents have heard similar assurances before.

A previous Crest Nicholson development was granted access via Gatesmead, despite ongoing disputes regarding ownership and access arrangements involving Birchen Lane. Residents were given assurances regarding access routes, yet the practical reality experienced on the ground differed significantly from expectations.

Today, access to the current site is effectively achieved via Wickham Way. Residents are therefore entitled to question whether the proposed access arrangements will operate as described in practice or whether Wickham Way will once again become the primary route for vehicles associated with the development.

This concern is heightened by the fact that Crest Nicholson recently disposed of its interest in Birchen Lane for a nominal sum despite previously refusing to acknowledge ownership. Given that alternative access options clearly exist, the developer should be required to demonstrate why the most direct and appropriate routes to local amenities cannot be utilised rather than directing additional traffic through quiet residential roads and cul-de-sacs.

The Council should require robust evidence that Gatesmead can safely accommodate all construction and operational traffic and that effective measures exist to prevent traffic migrating onto surrounding residential roads.

Without such assurances, residents face increased congestion, additional road safety risks and a further erosion of residential amenity.

4. Impact on Existing Residents and Residential Amenity

Wickham Way is a quiet residential cul-de-sac that has already experienced a substantial increase in traffic as a result of previous development in the area.

This proposal would direct additional vehicle movements through a road that was never designed to accommodate significant traffic volumes. Residents should not be expected to absorb the cumulative impacts of successive developments simply because it is convenient for developers to do so.

There is also a genuine risk that the development will become a hub for station parking, with residents, commuters and visitors parking on surrounding roads before walking to Haywards Heath station. This issue is already experienced elsewhere in the area and would place further pressure on local roads and parking availability.

5. Impact on Schools and Community Infrastructure

Local schools are already operating at or near capacity. Three nearby primary schools already experience significant traffic pressures during drop-off and pick-up times.

The introduction of dozens of additional households will inevitably increase demand for school places, healthcare provision and other public services while adding to congestion and road safety concerns around schools.

There is insufficient evidence that the necessary infrastructure exists, or will be delivered, to support this level of additional development.

6. Loss of Valuable Green Space

Wickham Fields is one of the few remaining areas of open countryside immediately accessible to local residents.

For more than twenty years these fields have provided local families with space to walk, exercise, enjoy nature and maintain their wellbeing. They represent an increasingly rare piece of accessible green space within a rapidly expanding town.

Once lost, this land cannot be replaced. The cumulative erosion of such spaces fundamentally changes the character of Haywards Heath and diminishes the quality of life of existing residents.

7. Ecology and Biodiversity

The site supports a range of wildlife, including reported sightings of black redstarts, a nationally scarce species with only around one hundred breeding pairs in the United Kingdom.

The fields also provide important habitat and wildlife corridors for a variety of species. Development would inevitably result in habitat loss and fragmentation.

Given the biodiversity crisis and the Council's environmental responsibilities, a precautionary approach should be adopted and comprehensive ecological evidence should be required before any determination is made.

8. Harm to Heritage Assets

The development would adversely affect the rural setting and significance of nearby Grade II* listed buildings, including Wickham Farmhouse and Sunte House.

The remaining open countryside surrounding these heritage assets contributes materially to their historic character and significance. National planning policy requires great weight to be given to the conservation of heritage assets, and I do not believe the applicant has demonstrated that the public benefits of this proposal outweigh the resulting harm.

9. Cumulative Impact

This application cannot be viewed in isolation. The area is already facing significant development pressures.

The cumulative effect on roads, schools, healthcare services, drainage infrastructure, biodiversity, parking provision and local character has not been adequately assessed.

Residents are repeatedly being asked to absorb the impacts of additional development while seeing little evidence that supporting infrastructure is keeping pace. The result is a gradual but continual erosion of the qualities that make this area an attractive and sustainable place to live.

10. Previous Damage and Unfulfilled Commitments

Residents have not forgotten the impact of previous development activity in the area. Gatesmead itself was significantly damaged during earlier construction works associated with Crest Nicholson developments.

Residents were assured that remedial works, including

resurfacing, would be undertaken. Despite correspondence and commitments made at the time, many residents would argue that the road has never been properly restored to its former condition.

This history is relevant because it undermines confidence in the assurances being offered as part of the current application. The Council should carefully scrutinise any commitments made regarding access, traffic management and infrastructure mitigation in light of previous experience.

Conclusion

This proposal is premature, unsustainable and places an unacceptable burden on local infrastructure, road safety, biodiversity and residential amenity.

The unresolved public rights issue alone should give the Council serious pause for thought. When combined with the highway concerns, questionable access arrangements, loss of green space, ecological impacts, heritage harm and cumulative pressure on local services, there are compelling reasons to refuse planning permission.

For all of the reasons set out above, I respectfully request that Mid Sussex District Council refuses planning application DM/26/1315.

Yours faithfully,

Kind regards