

Andy Watt

From: planninginfo@midsussex.gov.uk
Sent: 11 April 2026 15:31
To: Andy Watt
Subject: Mid Sussex DC - Online Register - Comments for Planning Application DM/26/0764

Comments summary

Dear Sir/Madam,

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

Comments were submitted at 11/04/2026 3:30 PM.

Application Summary

Address:	Franc Jean Farm The Street Bolney Haywards Heath West Sussex RH17 5PJ
Proposal:	Proposed single dwelling (self/custom build)
Case Officer:	Andrew Watt

[Click for further information](#)

Customer Details

Address:	Morningside Lodge Lane Bolney Bolney, 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:

Morningside Lodge Lane Bolney West Sussex RH17 5RR

11 April 2026
Planning Services Division
Mid Sussex District Council
Oaklands, Oaklands Road
Haywards Heath RH16 1SS
Email: planninginfo@midsussex.gov.uk

FORMAL OBJECTION - Planning Application Ref: DM/26/0764

Proposed single dwelling (self/custom build) at Land at Franc Jean Farm, The Street, Bolney, West Sussex RH17 5PJ

Dear Sir or Madam,

I object to the above planning application for the erection of a three-bedroom, two-storey detached dwelling on land at Franc Jean Farm, The Street, Bolney. The deadline for representations is 27 April 2026.

The Council should refuse this application for the reasons set out below.

1. The Application Is a Departure from the Development Plan

The Planning Notice states expressly that this application has been advertised as 'a departure from the Development Plan for the area in which the land is situated'. No material considerations have been advanced to displace the presumption against the grant of permission that this departure status requires.

2. Principle of Development in the Countryside - Policies DP12, DP15 and DP6

The site lies outside the defined built-up area boundary of Bolney and is accordingly designated as countryside under the Mid Sussex District Plan (2018).

Policy DP12 (Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside) permits development in the countryside only where it maintains or, where possible, enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the district, and is either necessary for agriculture, nor supported by a specific policy reference in the Plan, nor a relevant Neighbourhood Plan. The proposed development does not meet any of these criteria. Crucially, rather than enhancing rural character, the proposal would negatively impact existing rural businesses operating at the adjacent stable block and in the outbuildings situated behind Franc Jean Farm, which currently rely on access routes across the site and contribute to the active rural character of this part of The Street.

Policy DP15 (New Homes in the Countryside) permits new dwellings in the countryside only where 'special justification' exists. The specified categories of special justification are: essential agricultural or forestry workers' accommodation; isolated homes of exceptional design quality; rural exception sites; or where the requirements of Policy DP6 are met. No credible special justification is advanced here. The proposal is not for essential agricultural or forestry workers' accommodation. It does not come close to meeting the 'exceptional design quality' threshold for isolated dwellings. It is not a rural exception site. The only remaining limb relied upon - Policy DP6 - is addressed below.

Policy DP6 (Settlement Hierarchy) states that outside defined built-up areas, the expansion of settlements will be supported where the proposed development is for fewer than ten dwellings, the site is contiguous with the existing built-up area of the settlement, and the development is demonstrated to be sustainable. The applicant asserts that all three criteria are met. This is incorrect. The claim of contiguity is an artificial interpretation plainly contrary to the spirit and intent of the policy, which was designed to facilitate genuine infill and extension of settlements, not to permit development on countryside land at its periphery. As to sustainability, the claimed sustainability of the site is disputed below. The proposal also cannot satisfy Policy DP6 because it negatively impacts existing rural businesses rather than meeting identified housing, employment or community needs.

It is noted that the Bolney Neighbourhood Plan was made in September 2016, is now more than five years old, and that the Council does not currently demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. However, NPPF paragraph 11(d)(i) expressly provides that the tilted balance does not apply where policies protecting areas or assets of particular importance provide a strong reason for refusing the development. The countryside protection policies, the proximity to the High Weald National Landscape, the impacts on rural businesses, and the highway safety concerns set out below collectively constitute such strong reasons.

3. Bolney Neighbourhood Plan - Policies BOLE2, BOLD1 and BOLT3

The Bolney Neighbourhood Plan (made September 2016) forms part of the Development Plan. Policy BOLE2 (Protect and Enhance the Countryside) requires development outside the built-up area boundary to demonstrate that it does not have an unacceptable impact on the landscape. It is submitted that the proposed development has an extremely high impact upon the landscape.

The applicant also claims compliance with Policy BOLT3 (Transport) on the basis that the proposed access provides improved visibility and a safer connection to The Street. As set out below, this claim is incorrect. The proposed access is situated on a 90-degree bend where visibility is severely constrained. Compliance with BOLT3 and Policy DP21 has not been demonstrated.

4. Setting of Grade II Listed Buildings and Conservation Area Character

The application site impacts the setting of Grade II listed properties on The Street, including Yew Tree Cottage and The Thatched House. The significance of these designated heritage assets extends to their immediate setting and the character of the rural lane in which they sit. A two-storey residential dwelling with an 8.5-metre ridge, semi-circular forecourt driveway, and UPVC fenestration would be an incongruous addition to a setting characterised by historic farm buildings and traditional rural properties, causing harm to the setting of nearby listed buildings in conflict with Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, NPPF Chapter 16, and Policy DP34 of the Mid Sussex District Plan.

MSDC's own conservation officer, when consulted re. DM/24/2215, emphasised that the surviving rural setting makes a strong positive contribution to the special interest of nearby listed properties, and in terms of the northern conservation area said that the surviving rural setting of the northern part of the Area will be considered to make a strong positive contribution to its special character. The Council should seek the formal views of its Conservation Officer on this application.

5. High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty / National Landscape Setting

The boundary of the High Weald National Landscape lies immediately to the north of the application site. Policy DP16 of the Mid Sussex District Plan requires that development on land contributing to the setting of the AONB does not detract from its visual qualities and essential characteristics. NPPF paragraph 189 requires great weight to be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes and their settings.

No Visual Impact Assessment or Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been submitted with this application to assess the impact of the proposed development on views from within the AONB. The applicant asserts without supporting evidence that the development will not be visually intrusive from any viewpoint within the AONB. This is wholly inadequate and the Council should require a proper assessment before determining this application.

6. Disputed Sustainability Claims

Walking and cycling routes

The planning statement asserts (at paragraph 2.8) that village facilities are accessible via existing pedestrian routes and that the site is 'sustainably located.' This characterisation is misleading. The pedestrian routes in question include an unlit, unmade track of constrained width with zero passing opportunities for most of its length, with a rough, loose surface notorious for potholes, prone to surface water flooding and icing, and impractical for cyclists and wheelers. The photograph below illustrates the typical condition of this track immediately west of the site (the track is typically in similar disrepair between the site and Top Street).

Figure 3: Typical condition of the track (used by pedestrians and vehicles) - extensively flooded, severely potholed, and strewn with loose material. This track does not provide the 'safe continuous pedestrian access' described by the applicant.

The applicant has recently smoothed portions of the track surface, but this is a temporary amelioration of a structural problem on an unadopted, unmaintained route. The track reverts to its hazardous condition repeatedly after wet weather.

Cycle provision and accessibility for those with mobility impairments (including those using wheelers) have not been considered, despite both being required elements of a comprehensive sustainable transport assessment.

No mention is made in the application of access to medical facilities or other similar, essential services. The claim in paragraph 2.10 that the PRoWs provide 'safe continuous pedestrian access to shops and services' is incorrect.

Public transport

The planning statement (at paragraph 2.9) cites bus stops within 400 metres providing links to Haywards Heath, Wivelsfield and Balcombe railway stations as evidence of sustainable accessibility. In practice, the frequency and timetabling of bus services is wholly inadequate to support routine journeys to employment, healthcare, further education, or higher-order retail facilities. Bus services from any part of Bolney are extremely limited. Future residents would be almost entirely reliant on private motor vehicles for everyday travel. The sustainability credentials of this site are accordingly overstated to a degree that should attract significant scepticism when assessing Policy DP6 Criterion 3.

The proposed development is located within the countryside and occupies a location which is distant from readily accessible local services. As such, future occupiers will be heavily reliant on the private car to meet their daily needs. The development thereby conflicts with Policy DP21 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031, and paragraphs 8, 11 and 109-111 of the NPPF.

7. Self-Build Credentials and Biodiversity Net Gain Exemption

The application claims exemption from the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirement on the basis that it is a self-build or custom build development. However, the Self-Build and Custom Build Statement justifies the self-build credentials in a single sentence: 'The proposal is that it will be built by the applicant for his own use.' This falls entirely short of demonstrating the primary input into design and layout required by the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended). The application form ticks 'Self-build and Custom Build' as the housing category, whilst the planning statement variously describes the proposal as 'custom build.' These are legally distinct categories. The BNG exemption justification provided is 'as above' - a wholly inadequate response. On such threadbare evidence, the Council cannot be satisfied that the BNG exemption is validly claimed.

8. Impact on Existing Rural Businesses and Access Routes

The application documents make no mention of the fact that the site currently provides access routes to outbuildings behind Franc Jean Farm that are used for rural business activities. The photograph below, taken recently, shows the eastern boundary access in active use, with a tractor and gas delivery cylinders visible confirming ongoing rural activity at these outbuildings.

Figure 2: The eastern boundary access in active use, showing a tractor (left background) and gas delivery cylinders for outbuildings behind Franc Jean Farm. This - not the southern boundary gate - is the established means of vehicular access to the site. The proposed development would block this existing route to outbuildings.

The proposed development would physically block these access routes. The likely consequence is that vehicles serving those outbuildings would be diverted to an alternative route: the single-lane track passing residential properties, turning north to the west of Malt House, to reach the outbuildings. This diversion would increase vehicular movements on a narrow residential lane not designed for regular commercial traffic, creating unacceptable risks to pedestrians, including children and dog walkers who regularly use this route. It would also increase vehicle conflict on a track where passing is extremely difficult, and worsen conditions for those who park at the rural business immediately to the west of the application site, whose current access would be blocked.

The application makes no assessment of these impacts. Development that displaces and disrupts established rural businesses plainly fails to comply with Policy DP12, which requires development in the countryside to maintain the rural and landscape character of the district.

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9. External Lighting Condition

Given the proximity of the site to the High Weald National Landscape boundary and the presence of [REDACTED] wildlife confirmed by the submitted PEA, I submit that if permission is granted a condition be imposed preventing the installation of any external artificial lighting other than PIR-activated security lights on short timers that do not illuminate beyond the boundary of the site. Permanent ambient external lighting would be harmful to the ecological value of the site and surrounding land and contrary to the precautionary approach required by NPPF Chapter 15 and Policy BOLE1 of the Bolney Neighbourhood Plan.

10. Conclusion

For all the reasons set out above, I strongly urge the Council to refuse this planning application. The grounds of objection can be summarised as follows: this is a departure from the Development Plan with no sufficient material considerations to justify permission; the principle of development in the countryside is not established under Policies DP12, DP15, or DP6; rural businesses are negatively impacted; the self-build credentials are inadequately evidenced; the setting of the High Weald National Landscape and Grade II Listed Buildings is inadequately assessed - MSDC's own conservation officer has confirmed, in respect of DM/24/2215, that the surviving rural setting makes a strong positive contribution to the special interest of nearby listed properties and to the special character of the northern conservation area; highway safety on this unadopted 60 mph road is wholly unaddressed and the applicant's claim of improved visibility is incorrect; public pedestrian routes are unsafe and the development is unsustainable, conflicting with Policy DP21 and paragraphs 8, 11 and 109-111 of the NPPF;

Please inform me of the outcome of this application.

Yours faithfully,


Planning Application Reference: DM/26/0764
Deadline

Kind regards