

RE: Planning Application DM/26/1306 – Objection

Dear Planning Officer,

We wish to register a strong objection to planning application DM/26/1306.

The proposal for two large residential dwellings on actively farmed agricultural land would cause significant harm to the countryside, landscape character, biodiversity and the Strategic Gap between Lindfield and Scaynes Hill. For the reasons set out below, We respectfully request that planning permission be refused.

1. Conflict with the Purpose of the Strategic Gap

The site lies within the Strategic Gap separating Lindfield and Scaynes Hill. The purpose of this designation is to prevent the erosion of open countryside and maintain the separate identity, character and setting of individual settlements.

The introduction of two substantial dwellings, together with domestic gardens, driveways, parking areas, lighting, fencing and associated infrastructure, would urbanise a currently open agricultural landscape. Although the proposal relates to only two dwellings, the impact on the Strategic Gap would be permanent and would undermine the purpose of maintaining openness between settlements.

Approval would also create a harmful precedent for further incremental development within the gap.

2. Loss of Agricultural Land

The application would result in the permanent loss of actively farmed agricultural land.

At a time when national and local planning policy seeks to protect the countryside from unnecessary development, there appears to be no overriding justification for replacing productive farmland with market housing in an unsustainable countryside location.

The site currently contributes to the rural economy, landscape character and agricultural function of the area. Its loss would be irreversible.

3. Harm to Landscape Character and Visual Amenity

The site occupies a prominent hilltop position and is highly sensitive in landscape terms.

Development on elevated land is particularly visible within the wider countryside. Two large houses would introduce substantial built form into an otherwise open rural landscape and would alter the existing skyline. The resulting visual impact would be exacerbated by associated domestic features including access roads, parked vehicles, lighting, outbuildings and boundary treatments.

The proposal would therefore result in unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the countryside.

4. Threat to Ancient Oak Trees and Hedgerows

The site contains or is immediately adjacent to ancient oak trees and mature hedgerows which are important landscape and ecological assets.

Ancient and veteran trees are recognised as irreplaceable habitats. Development within close proximity risks damage through:

- Excavation and construction activity;
- Root disturbance;
- Soil compaction;
- Installation of services;
- Changes to drainage patterns;
- Future pressure for pruning or removal due to perceived nuisance.

Likewise, mature hedgerows provide valuable wildlife corridors and contribute significantly to the rural character of the lane and surrounding landscape.

The proposal would place these features under unacceptable pressure.

The Tree Survey, and associated Report, make judgements about the impact on each tree and identifies 9 ancient Oak trees that will need to be removed – in our opinion this is a totally unacceptable “price” to be paid and probably equates to roughly one ancient oak for each resident of the proposed properties! Other than those looking to profit from the development we very much doubt any other rational person would see this as, in any way, justifiable.

The Report also assesses some impact and pruning of other trees to enable the buildings to be constructed. Given these trees have been established for centuries, it’s remarkable how many have a remaining life expectancy of just 20-40 years (or even less).

It is now also well recognised that the root systems allow trees to communicate with each other and enable threats of disease to be addressed. The report is very weak in recognising and defining the impact of this – it should include a full assessment the root structures and how they will be impacted

Given the above, a second opinion should be sought from a fully qualified Party who is independent (ie not paid by) the Developer or associates. This assessment should also include the impact of removal and pruning on the wildlife that will inevitably be disrupted as a result (see point 5 below).

5. Biodiversity Impact

The combination of ancient trees, mature hedgerows and a natural ponds within a few metres of the proposed development creates a valuable ecological network.

Such habitats may support protected and priority species including bats, breeding birds, amphibians and invertebrates.

The proximity of development to the pond raises particular concerns regarding habitat disturbance, lighting impacts, changes in hydrology and long-term degradation of ecological value.

The Local Planning Authority should be satisfied that robust ecological surveys have been undertaken and that biodiversity enhancement requirements can genuinely be achieved. In the absence of convincing evidence, the precautionary principle should apply.

6. Highway Safety Concerns

The site is served by a narrow single-track rural lane.

The additional traffic generated by two large dwellings would increase vehicle movements from residents, visitors, deliveries, contractors and service vehicles. This would place further pressure on a road that is already constrained and used by pedestrians including young children

The lane's limited width, restricted visibility and lack of adequate passing places raise legitimate highway safety concerns.

Construction traffic would further intensify these impacts.

7. Surface Water Drainage and Impact on the Natural Pond

The site is located on elevated land and in close proximity to natural ponds.

Replacing permeable agricultural land with buildings, driveways and hardstanding has the potential to increase surface water runoff and alter natural drainage patterns.

Given the topography of the site, there is a risk that runoff could adversely affect the pond and surrounding habitats. Any drainage strategy would need to demonstrate beyond doubt that there would be no increase in flood risk or ecological harm.

8. Unsustainable Countryside Development

The proposal represents isolated residential development in the countryside without any evident functional need to be located on this agricultural land.

Allowing residential development in this location would undermine the plan-led approach to growth and would erode confidence in countryside protection policies.

Conclusion

The proposal would:

- Harm the openness and purpose of the Strategic Gap between Lindfield and Scaynes Hill;
- Result in the unnecessary loss of productive agricultural land;
- Damage the character and appearance of the countryside;
- Threaten ancient oak trees and established hedgerows;

- Risk harm to biodiversity and nearby natural ponds;
- Increase traffic on an unsuitable single-track lane;
- Introduce unsustainable residential development into a sensitive rural location.

Given that the application site lies within the Strategic Gap between Lindfield and Scaynes Hill and comprises actively farmed agricultural land containing mature hedgerows, ancient oak trees and a nearby natural ponds, we request that the officer report specifically addresses:

- (a) compliance with Strategic Gap policy,
- (b) the effect on settlement separation and countryside character,
- (c) impacts on irreplaceable habitats and protected species,
- (d) highway safety implications of increased traffic on Snowdrop Lane
- (e) whether the proposal represents sustainable development in this countryside location.

For the reasons covered in this submission, we respectfully request that Mid Sussex District Council refuses planning permission for application DM/26/1306.

Thankyou for your consideration of my comments

Yours faithfully,

[Redacted Signature]

White Gables
Lyoth Lane
Lindfield
West Sussex
RH16 2QB