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Sent: 03 August 2026 13:07:25 UTC+01:00
To: "Joseph Swift" <joseph.swift@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: Mid Sussex DC - Online Register - Comments for Planning Application
DM/26/0073

Comments summary

Dear Sir/Madam,

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

Comments were submitted at 03/08/2026 1:07 PM.

Application Summary

Address:	Land Off West Hoathly Road East Grinstead West Sussex
Proposal:	The erection of 42 new homes with access from West Hoathly Road, vehicle and cycle parking, landscaping, drainage, and associated infrastructure and highway works (Amended plans received).
Case Officer:	Joseph Swift

[Click for further information](#)

Customer Details

Address: 145 Dunnings Road East Grinstead East Grinstead

Comments Details

Commenter Type:	Neighbour or general public
Stance:	Customer objects to the Planning Application
Reasons for comment:	
Comments:	Formal Objection to Revised Planning Information Application DM/26/0073 - Land off West Hoathly Road, East Grinstead Revised proposal: 42 dwellings Dear Mr Swift, I write to maintain my formal objection to application DM/26/0073

following publication of the amended plans and supporting information.

I have reviewed the revised layout, Design and Access Addendum and the updated consultation responses. I acknowledge that the amended submission represents an improvement over the original proposal. For example the number of dwellings has been reduced from 44 to 42 and I also acknowledge that the Lead Local Flood Authority now raises no objection subject to conditions and that the highway, ecology and drainage positions have materially improved.

However, these improvements do not mean that the development now complies with the development plan as a whole. The principal policy conflicts identified in my original objection have not all been overcome. Most importantly, the land remains outside the adopted built-up area boundary, within open countryside and within the High Weald National Landscape. The revised proposal must therefore still be assessed against the adopted countryside, National Landscape, character and design policies, rather than treated as acceptable simply because several technical objections may now be capable of being addressed by condition.

My original objection identified the site's status as unallocated countryside outside the built-up area boundary and within the High Weald, together with the resulting conflict with the adopted spatial strategy. Subject to the qualifications set out below, I maintain my objection.

1. Continued conflict with the adopted spatial strategy

The site is not allocated for housing in the adopted Mid Sussex District Plan and lies outside the defined built-up area boundary. It remains countryside for the purposes of the adopted development plan.

The relevant adopted policies include:

- Policy DP6 - Settlement Hierarchy;
- Policy DP12 - Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside;
- Policy DP15 - New Homes in the Countryside; and
- Policy DP16 - High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, now referred to as the High Weald National Landscape.

The Council's own planning-policy consultation identifies these as key policies applicable to this application.

Reducing the scheme by two dwellings and revising its design does not alter the site's location or status. The proposal therefore continues to represent a substantial residential development in a countryside location where adopted policy does not generally support new housing of this scale.

I recognise that the site is identified as draft allocation DPA4 in the emerging District Plan. However, the emerging plan remains under independent examination and has not replaced the adopted

development plan. The Council confirms that the adopted 2014-2031 District Plan remains its principal adopted planning document, while the 2021-2039 plan remains under examination.

The proposed allocation is a material consideration, but it is not equivalent to an adopted allocation and does not automatically remove the development-plan conflict. Under section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the application must still be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The officer's assessment should therefore identify clearly:

1. the extent of conflict with the adopted plan;
2. the weight attributed to draft allocation DPA4;
3. the benefits relied upon to outweigh the adopted policy conflict; and
4. whether those benefits are sufficient when considered alongside the harm to the National Landscape.

2. High Weald National Landscape - Policies EG1 and DP16

The most important unresolved issue remains the proposal's effect on the High Weald National Landscape.

The National Planning Policy Framework requires great weight to be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes, which have the highest status of protection in relation to those matters. It also states that the scale and extent of development within such areas should be limited. This protection is reflected locally through Policy DP16 and East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan Policy EG1.

I accept that the revised layout is better considered than the original scheme. The Design and Access Addendum responds to earlier concerns regarding roof forms, building positions, streetscene, landscaping and the treatment of the development edge. The Council's urban designer also described an earlier iteration of the revised layout as "much improved," although further changes and information were still requested.

Nevertheless, an improved scheme is not necessarily a policy-compliant scheme.

The development would still introduce:

- 42 dwellings;
- estate roads and parking;
- street and domestic lighting;
- boundary treatments;
- domestic activity;
- refuse and servicing arrangements; and
- a permanent suburban residential edge onto presently undeveloped countryside within a nationally protected landscape.

The key test is not merely whether the amended scheme is

visually preferable to the original. It is whether the development would conserve and enhance the natural beauty and special qualities of the High Weald and satisfy the high standard required by Policies EG1 and DP16.

I remain unconvinced that the layout is genuinely landscape-led. It appears to remain, in substance, a conventional suburban housing scheme whose form and appearance have been moderated through additional landscaping and architectural variation.

Landscaping may screen or soften parts of the development over time, but screening is not equivalent to conserving landscape character. The Council must consider the character and presence of the development itself, including during the years before proposed planting reaches maturity.

The High Weald National Landscape documents recognise that the whole designated area is important and that areas perceived as degraded should be regarded as opportunities for enhancement rather than as locations where further harm is acceptable. The Council's planning-policy response also confirms that a landscape-led, high-quality design is particularly important because of the site's edge-of-settlement location within the National Landscape.

The revised submission has therefore reduced, but in my view has not removed, the conflict with Policies EG1 and DP16.

3. Character and design - Policies DP26 and EG3

I acknowledge that the amended layout has improved the architectural treatment, variation in roof forms and relationship between some dwellings and public spaces.

However, Policy DP26 requires more than attractive house elevations. The Council must assess whether the development responds positively to:

- the landscape and rural settlement edge;
- local distinctiveness;
- topography and existing vegetation;
- the pattern and character of the surrounding area;
- the amenity of neighbouring occupiers; and
- the need to avoid a car-dominated environment.

East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan Policy EG3 similarly addresses overall design quality, site character, landscape features, adjoining amenity, access and parking.

The updated scheme may now be capable of satisfying criterion EG3(d) in relation to vehicle and pedestrian access, parking, cycle storage and refuse arrangements, particularly given the absence of an outstanding highway objection. I therefore do not repeat my previous suggestion that an access failure under EG3(d) is established.

That does not mean that the proposal complies with Policy EG3

as a whole.

The remaining questions include whether the proposal:

- respects the landscape character of the site;
- preserves important natural features;
- avoids an unduly suburban and car-led character;
- provides an appropriate transition between East Grinstead and open countryside; and
- adequately protects the amenity of the only dwelling directly adjoining the site.

These matters remain questions of planning judgement and should not be treated as resolved solely because the detailed highway access is considered technically acceptable.

4. Effect on 145 Dunnings Road

My property at 145 Dunnings Road is the only existing dwelling directly adjoining the application site.

I recognise that changes to the layout and landscaping may reduce some of the effects identified in my original objection. Nevertheless, the development would still cause a fundamental and permanent change to the setting and enjoyment of the property.

The present relationship with open countryside would be replaced by residential development, associated activity, lighting and movement. The Council should assess the combined effect of:

- overlooking and perceived overlooking;
- loss of privacy within the garden;
- noise from homes, vehicles and outdoor spaces;
- domestic and street lighting;
- headlight movement;
- loss of tranquillity; and
- the urbanising effect of the development along the boundary.

The assessment should not be limited to whether conventional separation distances can be achieved. The unusual position of my property, as the sole dwelling directly adjoining the site, means the effect should be considered specifically rather than treated as an ordinary relationship between dwellings within an established residential area.

I therefore maintain that the proposal's relationship with 145 Dunnings Road remains relevant under Policies DP26, DP29 and EG3.

5. Footpath alignment and recreational access adjacent to 145 Dunnings Road

The current site plan shows a pedestrian route running alongside the boundary hedge of 145 Dunnings Road, at points approximately two metres from the boundary. It also provides a new pedestrian access into Sunnyside Recreation Ground close to the rear boundary of the property.

I support the principle of providing safe and convenient pedestrian links. However, the particular alignment shown would concentrate pedestrian movement, activity and potential disturbance

immediately beside the only existing dwelling that directly adjoins the application site.

The likely effects include:

- regular pedestrian movement close to the private garden boundary;
- overlooking and perceived overlooking into the garden;
- conversations and general noise immediately alongside the hedge;
- increased evening activity;
- lighting and security implications;
- potential loitering or congregation near the recreation-ground access;
- increased dog-walking activity; and
- a reduction in the privacy and tranquillity presently enjoyed at the property.

These effects should be assessed cumulatively with the proposed dwellings, roads, lighting and other activity arising from the development. The impact is not limited to direct views from windows. A heavily used pedestrian route immediately alongside a private rear garden can materially affect the occupier's sense of privacy and enjoyment of that garden, even where a hedge or fence is retained.

There does not appear to be any overriding functional reason why the access to the recreation ground must be positioned immediately beside 145 Dunnings Road. The recreation-ground boundary extends further along the site, and it appears that the connection could be relocated farther from the existing property while still providing a convenient and usable pedestrian link.

The applicant should therefore be required to demonstrate:

1. why the current route and access position are necessary;
2. what alternative alignments have been considered;
3. why the access cannot be moved farther south or otherwise farther from 145 Dunnings Road;
4. how privacy, noise, lighting and security impacts would be mitigated; and
5. whether an appropriate landscaped buffer could be provided between the route and the residential boundary.

In my view, placing both the internal footpath and the recreation-ground access in close proximity to the only adjoining dwelling is an avoidable design choice. Relocating the access farther along the field would distribute movement more appropriately and reduce the disproportionate effect on one existing household without undermining the connectivity benefits of the development. The present arrangement therefore remains relevant to the assessment of residential amenity, character and design under Policies DP26, DP29 and EG3. Unless the applicant can provide a convincing justification for the chosen alignment, the footpath and recreation-ground access should be repositioned farther from the boundary of 145 Dunnings Road.

6. Flood risk and drainage - Policy DP41

I acknowledge the important change in the drainage position.

The Lead Local Flood Authority now raises no objection subject to recommended conditions.

However, the Council should distinguish between:

1. whether a surface-water drainage system can be engineered to operate without increasing flood risk; and
2. whether the drainage infrastructure and its long-term management will preserve the environmental and hydrological conditions associated with the adjacent Ancient Woodland.

The first matter appears largely capable of being addressed through the LLFA's recommended conditions. The second is a wider landscape, woodland and ecological matter.

The Council's drainage guidance requires consideration of flood risk from all sources and measures to ensure that risk is not increased elsewhere. Given the site's natural drainage characteristics and its relationship with neighbouring land, any permission should include robust conditions requiring:

- final detailed drainage calculations;
- confirmed exceedance-flow routes;
- construction-stage drainage controls;
- a verification report;
- arrangements for long-term maintenance;
- protection against uncontrolled flows towards neighbouring land; and
- monitoring and protection of the Ancient Woodland hydrological environment where appropriate.

7. Ancient Woodland and biodiversity - Policies DP37 and DP38

The ecological information has improved materially since the original submission. Further survey work and a defined licensing route for Great Crested Newts have been provided, and the ecology objections now appear more capable of being addressed through mitigation and conditions.

I therefore do not seek to overstate matters that the relevant ecological consultees consider capable of resolution.

However, the proposal's relationship with the adjacent Ancient Woodland remains relevant. The Council's planning-policy consultation expressly states that an appropriate buffer must be provided in accordance with national policy and guidance.

The Council should be satisfied that the amended scheme, including its drainage connection, construction operations, lighting, gardens, recreational activity and long-term occupation, would not result in:

- deterioration of woodland-edge habitat;
- changes to the woodland's hydrological conditions;
- light spill affecting woodland-edge species;
- recreational or domestic encroachment;
- pressure for future tree works; or
- gradual degradation of the woodland buffer.

The absence of a technical ecology objection does not remove the

Council's obligation to assess these wider and cumulative effects under Policies DP37, DP38, DP16 and EG1.

8. Heritage

The revised submission has not removed the identified effect on the setting of Dunnings Mill, a Grade II listed building. Where less-than-substantial harm arises, that harm must be given considerable importance and weight and weighed against the public benefits of the proposal in accordance with national heritage policy.

The existence of public benefits does not automatically outweigh heritage harm. The officer's report should identify the degree of harm, the contribution made by the site to the asset's rural setting and the particular public benefits relied upon to justify that harm. The heritage effect should also be considered cumulatively alongside the loss of countryside and effects on the High Weald National Landscape, rather than as an isolated issue.

8. Planning balance

I recognise that the development would provide material public benefits, including:

- 42 additional dwellings;
- affordable housing;
- biodiversity enhancements;
- open space;
- infrastructure contributions; and
- assistance towards meeting the Council's housing requirement.

I also recognise that the Council is presently unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, as confirmed in its planning-policy consultation response.

Those benefits must be given appropriate weight.

However, the absence of a five-year housing supply does not remove the designation of the High Weald or make its protection optional. National policy continues to require great weight to be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of National Landscapes.

Nor does the emerging DPA4 allocation mean that any layout or form of development on the site is automatically acceptable. Even should the principle of residential development attract increasing weight through the emerging plan, the present application must still demonstrate that its particular scale, layout, density and design are appropriate.

The reduction from 44 to 42 dwellings and the design amendments are welcome, but they do not fundamentally change the nature of the proposal: a sizeable suburban housing development on undeveloped land outside the adopted settlement boundary and within the High Weald National Landscape.

Conclusion

The development has not become compliant with the development plan as a whole.

The proposal continues to conflict with the adopted countryside and spatial-strategy policies because the site remains outside the built-up area boundary and is not allocated in the adopted development plan. More importantly, I remain unconvinced that the amended scheme has demonstrated that it would conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the High Weald National Landscape, as required by national policy, Policy DP16 and Neighbourhood Plan Policy EG1.

The Council should not equate the resolution of technical consultee objections with resolution of the principal planning issues. The central matters are now questions of landscape character, development-plan conflict, design quality and the overall planning balance.

For these reasons, I respectfully maintain my objection and request that planning permission be refused unless the Council is satisfied, on clear and compelling evidence, that:

1. the conflict with the adopted spatial strategy is outweighed by material considerations;
2. the proposal satisfies the high level of protection applicable to the High Weald National Landscape;
3. the amended layout represents genuinely landscape-led development rather than a suburban scheme moderated through mitigation;
4. the setting and ecological function of the Ancient Woodland will be protected over the lifetime of the development; and
5. the effects upon 145 Dunnings Road have been fully and fairly assessed.

The alignment of the pedestrian route and recreation-ground access should also be reconsidered, as both are unnecessarily concentrated close to the boundary of the only adjoining dwelling when a less harmful position appears reasonably available.

Should the officer be minded to recommend approval, I respectfully request that the committee report expressly addresses each of these matters and explains the weight given to the adopted policies, the emerging DPA4 allocation, the National Landscape designation and the residual harm.

Kind regards