

To:
Planning Services Division
Mid Sussex District Council
Oaklands, Oaklands Road
Haywards Heath
West Sussex RH16 1SS

Date: 07/08/2025

Re: Objection to Planning Application DM/25/1593 – Woodlands Close and Land to the North of Burleigh Lane, Crawley Down

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to formally object to Planning Application DM/25/1593, which proposes a major residential development at Woodlands Close and Land to the North of Burleigh Lane, Crawley Down.

This objection is made with reference to the Mid Sussex District Plan (MSDP), the Crawley Down Neighbourhood Plan (CDNP), and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), as well as recent planning and environmental evidence relevant to the site and surrounding area. My objection is based on the following material planning grounds:

1. Overdevelopment and Non-Compliance with the Neighbourhood Plan

The Crawley Down Neighbourhood Plan (CDNP), adopted in 2016, forms part of the statutory development plan and reflects the community's vision for managed, sustainable growth. Policy CDNP01 states:

"Large-scale developments that significantly expand the village envelope will not be supported unless there is an exceptional demonstrable need."

The current proposal is not only a large-scale expansion without demonstrable need, but it also comes in the immediate context of the recent approval of 350 dwellings by Wates Developments, located at land north of Turners Hill Road, within the same settlement area.

The cumulative effect of this recently approved scheme and the current application (DM/25/1593) poses a clear risk of overdevelopment, directly conflicting with the CDNP and the spatial strategy of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014–2031.

Additionally, the proposal contributes to a pattern of incremental development creep, increasing the likelihood of link or infill developments between the new housing estates and existing village boundaries. This risks merging formerly separate land parcels and eroding the defined village envelope, ultimately threatening the coalescence between Crawley Down and neighbouring settlements—contrary to MSDP Policy DP12 and CDNP objectives aimed at preserving village identity and open space.

The Crawley Down Neighbourhood Plan identifies Sandhill Lane as an area of particular townscape character meriting special consideration in development proposals. The plan recognizes the varied house types, large plots, and diverse building styles along Sandhill Lane as contributing to its distinct character. Burleigh Lane is a small lane which can only be accessed via Sandhill and follows the same pattern of varied house types, large plots, and diverse styles. The proposed development backs directly onto this lane and would cause a distinct and jarring building change to this area specifically singled out as one of only two noted areas in the village for character.

2. Strain on Local Infrastructure and Services

Healthcare

The closest GP surgeries, including Crawley Down Health Centre, are already under considerable pressure. NHS England data confirms that average GP list sizes in the region exceed the national average, with significant delays in access to routine appointments.

Furthermore, recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspections of local GP practices have raised concerns about service quality, patient safety, and management standards. Crawley Down Health Centre, in particular, has faced regulatory scrutiny, which further undermines its capacity to absorb additional patient numbers resulting from new development. Without confirmed investment or capacity planning from the Integrated Care Board (ICB), it would be unsound to permit further residential expansion in the area.

This situation directly conflicts with NPPF paragraph 95, which states that planning decisions should promote healthy communities by ensuring that necessary social infrastructure, including health services, can support new developments.

Education

Local primary and secondary schools are under sustained pressure. West Sussex County Council's School Place Planning Strategy identifies the need to expand capacity in East Grinstead schools to meet wider area demand. While there is some flexibility in secondary provision, including Imberhorne School, recent enrolment levels show that further significant housing growth in Crawley Down will add strain to existing schools without confirmed infrastructure or capital planning.

3. Transport and Roads

Crawley Down is highly car-dependent, with limited and infrequent bus services. The proposed development would significantly increase vehicular traffic on already constrained local routes, especially the B2028, Grange Road, and other access points to Turners Hill Road, where congestion is common during peak hours.

Although developers often submit transport modelling, no recent independent traffic survey specific to Crawley Down has been published, and there is a lack of up-to-date turning count or queue length data for key junctions. This makes it impossible to objectively assess the capacity and safety of local roads.

A development for 97 homes in Hassocks was refused by Mid Sussex District Council in 2014 on grounds of unacceptable traffic impact and lack of highway capacity mitigation, particularly concerning the overburdened Stonepound Crossroads (A273). Although the applicant appealed and sought legal challenge, the appeal was dismissed and the scheme was never approved.

In Crawley Down, which suffers similar constraints, particularly due to car reliance and limited transport alternatives, the same principles apply. In the absence of current, evidence-based traffic analysis, approving further large-scale development would be inconsistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 111, which requires refusal where the residual cumulative impact on the road network is severe.

4. Access and Connectivity Constraints

The proposed site would be accessed via narrow residential roads, notably Kiln Road, Woodlands Close, and Woodland Drive (leading to Woodlands Close), which were not designed for high traffic volumes or construction vehicles. The existing road widths and geometry present significant risks to

both pedestrian and vehicle safety. There is a particular danger from construction vehicles waiting on the roads, which can block visibility for pedestrians and increase the risk of accidents.

There is no evidence of a site-specific access strategy that meets West Sussex County Council highway design guidance, nor any commitment to off-site improvements or traffic calming measures.

5. Flood Risk and Drainage

The site lies in an area prone to waterlogging, with a documented history of localised surface water flooding. Soil permeability in the area is poor, and development of the site would increase the impermeable surface area, further exacerbating runoff.

The proposed SuDS lacks detail on runoff controls, exceedance routes, and long-term maintenance. Given the site's poor infiltration and proximity to neighbouring homes, there is a clear risk of water being displaced onto adjacent properties during heavy rainfall or system failure. Without robust modelling and enforceable maintenance, the scheme may increase, rather than reduce, local flood risk.

6. Environmental Impact and Loss of Biodiversity

The proposed development would directly affect hedgerows, field margins, and local habitats that currently support bats, birds, and other protected species. The biodiversity net gain strategy proposed is vague and fails to demonstrate that a minimum 10% net gain can be achieved in accordance with the Environment Act 2021 and MSDP Policy DP38.

The site is also known to support an area of native bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), which are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. This legislation prohibits the intentional picking, uprooting, or destruction of wild bluebells, including their bulbs.

Conclusion

In light of the above, Planning Application DM/25/1593 should be refused on the basis that it:

- Conflicts with the Crawley Down Neighbourhood Plan and Mid Sussex District Plan;
- Lacks adequate infrastructure support, particularly in healthcare, education, and highways;
- Fails to address traffic and access issues with sufficient evidence;
- Presents flood risk and environmental concerns; and
- Represents an unsustainable and uncoordinated expansion of the village envelope.

I urge the Council to respect the evidence, local planning policy, and recent precedent, and to refuse this application.

Yours faithfully,

6, Acorn Avenue
Crawley Down
RH10 4AL