

4th September 2026

Dear Sir/ Madam

Proposed development of 31 homes on land between Muntham Drive and Smuggler's Lane, Chapel Road, Barns Green, West Sussex

I was asked to comment on the previous application for new housing in the village which was outside the village development boundary, and so I have been asked by some residents to look at this new application for 31 houses. My thoughts are very much along the same lines as before.

Barns Green is a very attractive Sussex village which deserves to be protected from second rate housing schemes that bear no relationship with the existing village character and village structure. This is not an objection to the principle of new development in a village such as this but instead an analysis on why this scheme does not meet any current design criteria for a site so close to such a distinctive heritage asset as the centre of this charming village.

Firstly, if we take a look at the immediate surroundings we have a mix of typical West Sussex houses often arranged in groups or short terraces which define the external public and private areas. This type layout is often referred to as a 'gentle density' and is typical of the village centre [see photos below]



Gentle density implies a design with a higher density of buildings on the site. These terraces and connected buildings help to create vibrant centres and reduce land use. This maintains a friendly, accessible feel and creates a street frontage traditional to the existing village. This doesn't necessarily mean going higher but instead terraced or grouped houses. These are not laid out on a regular grid but flow around the external

spaces they form to create a real village street. The current proposals ignore all of this and instead rely on the standard suburban ideal of repetitive, detached boxes all set back behind private lawns. See below an extract from the current application showing a “street scene”. This could be anywhere in the UK



Any new housing development should work to a human scale and workability. It should prioritise pedestrians and cyclist with safe, direct routes creating environments where people want to walk and linger. There is an obligation to give back by creating more interesting and shared public spaces between buildings. The design of the layout is equally as important as the internal layouts of each house.

The scheme is of sufficient size to create a network of streets that connect through to different parts of the village and link to the surrounding areas. These new through ways should integrate the new development into the structure of the village, link people and avoid a detached, private enclave. New housing should strive to include public spaces like squares and parks to encourage subtle interaction in the village and build a strong sense of community.

The proposals give a nod to local materials and detailing but this reference is only paper thin. The choice of materials, as with the layout of buildings, is critically important and should create new streets with context and character. They should reflect local history and vernacular using traditional methods of construction and traditional materials - see below, next page.

National Model Design Code (NMDC)

The Government has recently published the National Model Design Code (NMDC), to encourage regional design codes and the support for local identity

Design codes have been particularly instrumental for local authorities to mitigate against the characterless large-scale post-war housing development, car-dominated urban sprawls and engineering-led highways design. Some of them have been more successful than others. Now with the new NMDC and proposed revisions to the NPPF, it is clear that the success of new emerging design codes, and thus future developments, will rely heavily on whether they are ‘beauty’ compliant in policy terms.

The Government has stated that *“Beauty includes everything that promotes a healthy and happy life, everything that makes a collection of buildings into a place, everything that turns anywhere into somewhere, and nowhere into a home. It is not merely a visual characteristic but is revealed in the deep harmony between a place and those who settle there.”*

As far as I am aware such a design code for this part of West Sussex has not been published as yet. There is however the Neighbourhood Plan for Itchingfield Parish which I understand is now adopted with strong local consent. As far as I can see these current proposals ignore the majority of the findings in this Neighbourhood plan. The site is not included in the development zone as it is unsuitable and the design is totally inappropriate.

As a reference here are some examples of successful designs -

<https://wadhurst-pc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Wadhurst-Design-Code.pdf>



And further away but each their own local vernacular

<https://www.createstreets.com/projects/sandycote/>

<https://www.cgfry.co.uk/about-us/previous-development-schemes/kingston-farm-bradford-on-avon/>

<https://www.tornagrain.com/>

If the site was within the village development boundary included in the adopted Local Plan then I would urge the Council to push for a more informed and better designed scheme. As this is not the case and this is, I assume an initial punt to sway the Local Plan in the future, then I ask that the proposals are refused clearly on the choice of site, the unsuitability of the site and the serious flaws in the scheme proposed.

Yours sincerely,

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