

Objection to DC/25/2057, Land North of Little Slaughterford Chapel Road Barns Green West Sussex, submitted on 1st February 2025

I object to the land being developed into 68 houses because of the negative long-term impact that the proposed changes to the landscape will have on the local community of Barns Green.

Below is my list of objections

1. Other: Our neighbourhood plan identified this site as not suitable for development using a well-documented democratic process which reflected local knowledge and values.
 - a. HDC empowered the local community to propose sites that are suitable for development by accessing local knowledge. This resulted in a local Neighbourhood Plan that proposed two suitable sites for 90 dwellings.
 - b. The process started around 10 years ago in 2015 with strong engagement from the community, including myself, to ensure we did not select sites that were at high risk for surface flooding. It was ratified in 2025 following delays due to additional requirements sought by HDC in meeting water neutrality. It is our wish that by complying with HDC's requirements for building expansion, that our wishes to keep the land at Lower Chapel Road as an agricultural site be respected.
2. Trees and Landscaping: Why the hedgerow should not be removed
 - a. The hedgerow counteracts the village's biggest constant threat, which is overland flow of water, especially for 6 months of the year between October to March. Its retention is a decision fit for the long-term
 - b. The contested hedgerow acts as a bank to slow surface water runoff towards Lower Chapel Road. The water would run off from the elevated position of the proposed site and the hill behind, and slopes down towards Lower Chapel Road and The Hordens
 - c. Retaining the established hedgerow is a sustainable delivery of the Land Use Framework for Natural Flood Management (NFM). It helps to increase net biodiversity through appropriate channelling of governmental-backed funds to areas that do need hedgerows as a first-level flood barrier ([Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, Environment Agency, and Robbie Moore, 2024](#)). Its retention is value-for-money, reduces waste of taxpayers' money, and aligns with HDC's aims in supporting local Sussex initiatives, in collaboration with the Environment Agency.
 - d. Its loss will result in unmitigated flooding, as seen by the widespread flooding in West Sussex in the past week due to Storm Chandra (Jan 2026), further reducing the village's resilience to the real impact of climate change.

- e. The established hedgerow plays an even more important role in flood defences in recent times due to ash dieback that has affected our local ancient woodland. Ash trees play a significant role in absorbing water. Our recent loss of the ash trees in the ancient woodland next to the proposed site will have impacted on surface water levels in the area.
 - f. I dispute Miller Homes' claims that the issue of flooding is anecdotal. I live in Sandhills road which is on higher elevation than Lower Chapel Road. Water level is high even from this point during winter rain (film, Appendix 1), and the water level worsens as the road descends to the lowest part (Lower Chapel Road), by the proposed site.
 - g. The proposal to install SUDS yet removing an established hedgerow is flawed by design. The proposal offers inadequate management of surface water as it underestimates the vital mitigating function of the hedgerow, which is of a sizeable area, covering over 131 metres in length (onsite measurements). This significant length is 100 metres longer than the minimum 20 metres required for protecting hedgerows (Hedgerow Protection Act 1997). This implies invaluable loss to the village should the hedgerow be removed.
 - h. Age (>30 years old) and historic significance that is integral to the village's identity and its people. It has continuously been featured in historic maps from the oldest version ([Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 Epoch 1](#), Sheet 24) to the present (see attached image in Appendix 2)
 - i. Effective at sinking 40 tonnes more carbon per hectare than grassland, making hedgerows a huge environmental asset in West Sussex, and help to meet UK's net zero targets ([Biffi et al., 2025](#)). With the UK Government's plans to create and restore 48,000 kilometres of hedgerows by 2037, it appears counterproductive to remove an existing one that is older and thus more effective at sequestering carbon than younger hedges ([Environmental Improvement Plan, Commitment 12, page 36, Dec 2025](#)).
 - j. The proposed removal is in contravention to HDC's aim to create net gains in biodiversity
 - i. Evidence shows the unique importance of hedgerows in supporting the bat population above other agri-environmental schemes for its positive impact on vital pest control, thus supporting the farming community in the local area (Froidevaux et al., 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2664.13412>)
 - ii. Accelerating the loss of this wildlife corridor will increase regional and national environmental impact
3. Highway Access and Parking: I argue against approving a housing development based on the installation of SUDS without pilot-testing SUDS in a built area that is already notorious for surface flooding.

- a. There are associated risks onsite, and surrounding areas and property owners, that need to be fully assessed to inform if SUDS is suitable in this specific site
 - b. A longitudinal study in real-world conditions needs to be done. Decisions on housing development cannot be based on theoretical assumptions.
 - c. Prior study is needed to inform how the proposed SUDS will be maintained throughout its lifetime and the HDC infrastructure needed to address it.
 - d. Root cause analysis of 70 failed SUDs in 11 municipalities in the Netherlands ([Vollaers et al., 2021](#)) attributed these to the design, construction, and user/maintenance phase. Interference with obstacle and clogging were the most common problems. The interface between SUDS and other urban systems are weak points where failure can arise. Correcting the failures involved multiple agencies, adding an added layer of complexity to the decision-making process.
 - e. My argument against approving housebuilding concurrent to SUDS is this: What infrastructure and funding will HDC put in place for the long-term should SUDS fail to manage flooding long after Miller Homes have left Barns Green? If this is not under HDC's remit, then approving an untested flood management solution in a built area (The Hordens, Lower Chape Road) will make Barns Green all the poorer in responding to increasing flooding in the next decades.
 - f. Does HDC have a working framework together with the Local Planning Authority, Local Highways Authority and Lead Local Flood Authority to correct SUDS if it does fail? I object to SUDS without a guarantee from HDC that our village will not have to bear the consequences of ill-fitting flood management designs.
4. Highway Access and Parking: Widening of Lower Chapel Road will pose an increased risk for harm to vulnerable road users involving: i) pedestrians, especially young children, mothers with buggies, and the elderly; and ii) cyclists. I would like to highlight that these vulnerable road users frequent this stretch of road to get to the local primary school, village store, and local pub.
- a. Removing the hedgerow to widen the road will increase the incidence of cars speeding through the village's centre and will increase road traffic accidents. This is evidence based through research and traffic safety data
 - b. The hedgerow is a natural deterrent for speeding (side friction) as it forces cars to slow down by the village shop and pub to avoid scratching the car, providing a holistic traffic-calming solution that provides value for money.
 - c. The village has not expressed a need to widen the road at Lower Chapel. We would like to maintain a low incidence of traffic-related casualties – one is far too many. A search on crash.map.co.uk shows we have had 5 accidents on Lower Chapel Road in the last 26 years: 1 serious (2013), 3 slight (2017, 2020,

2024). Widening the road may seriously increase the number of accidents due to false perception of safety associated with wider roads. The World Health Organisation reported that every 1% increase in mean speed produces a 4% increase in the fatal crash risk and a 3% increase in the serious crash risk. If you look at previous developments that engaged with the village (Two Mile Ash and Sumners Ponds), there were no changes to the road width nor creation of a lay-by. The village's Neighbourhood Plan stipulated that the hedgerow at Sumners were to be retained (2025).

- d. The recent instillation of the smiley face speed advisory sign entering the village is proof that we are committed to preventing traffic-related casualties. The proposed widening at Lower Chapel Road will undermine these efforts.

5. Trees and Landscaping: Installing houses close to an ancient woodland will pose harm for people, properties, and the woodland itself. See map of ancient woodland in Appendix 3.

- a. 15-metres distance from the ancient woodland is insufficient for protecting tree roots from garden waste, as evidenced in areas around Barns Green and across the country where houses are situated next to ancient tree borders. This leads to degradation of the woodland's health. There is currently not enough government funding to monitor and protect these small corridors. It is not enough to tell people not to do it as a matter of code of conduct.
- b. 15-metres is not enough to protect humans and proposed houses from potential tree collapse. Ancient tree heights average 20 metres, but vary up to 45 metres. Trees collapsing from this height can sustain significant damage to life and properties during high-wind storms, especially if housing development and human factors increase degradation of the ancient woodland over time. This means a high number of 68 houses poses greater risk for humans by placing houses very close to the ancient woodland border.
- c. HDC needs to enforce the necessary protections for ancient woodlands to ensure we maintain the future health and expansion, not its disintegration over time due to human factors.
- d. We want to leave a legacy for future generations that we can be proud of by prioritising the preservation of the ancient woodland. I endeavour HDC to help Barns Green not only in protecting the survival of old trees, but equally in maintaining structural diversity of this habitat by enabling younger trees a chance to develop.

6. Design: The traditional house design does not meet the needs for an ecologically sensitive development that prioritises the community's needs over profit

- a. The use of concrete bases for 68 houses and driveways will significantly reduce surface water absorption in an area that consistently gets water-saturated throughout winter

- b. The house height is higher than the average cottage in the area on an elevated field. This will be visible from various vantage points: Smugglers lane (footpath), ancient woodland (Literary trail), and even from the village green.
 - c. Miller Homes have not designed the houses to integrate, rather it will create a disconnect with villagers.
- 7. Loss of General Amenity and Overdevelopment: Happiness is measured by open access to blue and green spaces.
 - a. People in Barns Green consider this site special and unique. It is flanked by footpaths that follow ancient hedgerows, ancient road, ancient woodland, and opposite to a pub that has been in existence since the 17th century. The proposed 68 houses will create a feeling of enclosure on these footpaths, effectively reducing the total available green spaces in the village.
 - b. The feeling of enclosure will reduce access to vistas that give the feeling of open space while within easy reach for most people
 - i. Reduced access to vistas will have greater impact on specific groups, including the elderly, who cannot access hillier, and therefore more difficult, footpaths in Barns Green. This area is easy to navigate on a fairly flat terrain with only a slight, gentle elevation in some parts. It connects to the ancient woodland, the fishing ponds, and popular local café. The route is short which makes it accessible to people with limited physical abilities.
 - ii. Reduced access to vistas from the local pub, further reducing enjoyment of the area for locals and visitors who come in search of green spaces
 - c. Preserving the feeling of open access of this area will offer multiple mental health benefits to people living locally, regionally, and visitors from further afield. A UK study of around 10,000 people followed over 17 years have consistently shown that local access to green space lowered mental distress and increased well-being (indexed by higher life satisfaction) ([White et al., 2013](#)).
 - d. An annual car show on this land has drawn so many people across the country, creating connectivity, social inclusion and cohesion.
 - e. We will lose this special place if it is allowed to be developed. I hope I have shown you why the proposal is not sensitive to the needs of the community.
 - f. The site proposed for development will impact on these vital spaces related to mental well-being. This is an important factor why most people chose the two other sites in the Neighbourhood Plan (2025) and not this one.

Appendix:

1. Sandhills Road surface water flowing downslope towards Lower Chapel Road.
During heavy rain, peak levels of surface water can cover the whole width of the road. Pavement erosion is evident in this picture and video.



