

**Interested party comments by Dr John Kay,
on behalf of CPRE Sussex, Lewes District Branch**

LAND SOUTH OF GREEN ROAD, WIVELSFIELD GREEN, EAST SUSSEX RH17 7QL

John Kay, for CPRE Sussex, Lewes District branch, Interested Party

Appeal by Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd against the failure of Lewes District Council to determine an outline planning application (with all matters reserved except for means of access) for the erection of up to 150 dwellings, with associated works, parking, landscaping, publicly accessible open space, land for education or community use, with access from Green Road and Eastern Road.

PINS Ref: 6005671

LPA Ref: LW/24/0820

June 2026

1. CPRE Sussex supports the views of Lewes District Council with respect to the conflict of the proposed development with the spatial strategy of the adopted Local Plan and with the policies of the adopted Neighbourhood Plans; with respect to its impact on the landscape character of the village; with respect to the proposal to create new development on a designated Local Green Space within the application site; and with respect to its conflict with local and national policies directing new development to sustainable locations.
2. We note specifically that para 1.16 of the appellant's Planning and Affordable Housing Statement states: "*The Application Scheme is an urban development project ...*". That is entirely correct, and is indeed a fundamental defect of this proposal.
3. We note that under this proposal the sole vehicular access to the development for 150 houses would run through the area designated as Local Green Space, in a way that would clearly detract from its character. We note also that the land proposed to be donated to Wivelsfield Primary School to accommodate its potential expansion is also to be taken from that same Local Green Space.
4. We note that Wivelsfield Green lies within the Low Weald countryside and in sustainability terms it is in the second lowest category of settlement within the District. The village has very few of the facilities needed for everyday life. There is no supermarket, or even a take-away, nearer than Haywards Heath. Specifically, there are no medical, dental or other health care services, and those available to local residents are not accessible by public transport. Secondary education (11-16 only) is at Chailey,

to which there is no public bus service, and post-16 education is available only in distant urban centres such as Haywards Heath or Lewes.

5. The proposal is for an unprecedentedly large number of new homes, given the size of the settlement, and as there are no proposals for new local employment it must be assumed that all the new residents will be new commuters. There are no convenient railway stations within walking distance or with available parking for new car commuters, and none have safe travel routes for any but the most intrepid cyclists. The bus service is infrequent and unreliable. There are only a handful of buses per day to Lewes (none on Sundays). The service to Haywards Heath and Brighton is less than hourly and ends early.
6. Access to employment from Wivelsfield Green is thus overwhelmingly car-dependent, with far more and better employment options for residents with private transport than for the small minority who manage without. This explains why census data show that Wivelsfield residents have one of the very highest rates of car-ownership in Lewes District. They own almost 2.0 cars per household, twice the level of car ownership in sustainable towns like Lewes (1.0 cars per household) or the 1.1-1.2 cars per household found for the District's coastal towns.
7. There are some here, representing different parties, who argue that because Wivelsfield has a school, a local convenience store and an occasional bus it can be considered 'sustainable'. I would ask you, Sir, to challenge them by requiring those attending your accompanied site visit to arrive by sustainable transport, and when you meet them on site enquire of them exactly how they met your challenge.
8. Sadly for the countryside, and for the climate, perverse incentives encourage developers to seek permissions for unsustainable, car-dependent, sites like this one, while sustainable, allocated, urban brownfield sites in the District's urban centres languish derelict. There are half a dozen such sites within a 5-minute walk of where we are meeting today, in Newhaven, with an aggregate capacity for around 1,000 new homes, sites that were allocated for development in the 2016 Local Plan, many of them with (or having had) planning permission, but which have not been delivered, and appear to have no prospects of delivery. Just up the river in the even more sustainable town of Lewes there are another set of allocated and permissioned sites, with the capacity for well over 1,000 new homes. The largest and most central of these has now been derelict for decades, and become a running joke.
9. It is exactly these urban sites that are essential to provide the new homes we need, especially the new affordable-rented homes that are the only way to resolve the local housing crisis. A brand new affordable-rented home in Wivelsfield is absolutely no use to a family in need of such a home in the District's coastal towns, which is where most of the need is, most of the employment is and where their family support systems are. Why is this need not being met? It's because of policies that have permitted applications like this one, diverting the great majority of the District's housebuilding over the past decade to unsustainable village locations like this one.
10. Finally, I would like to consider the impact of these issues on the planning balance that you are required to draw up. Alternative versions are offered to you in the Statement of Common Ground. Clearly you will give some weight to the provision of additional housing, even though Lewes is a District where annual deaths comfortably exceed births every year, and new housing is needed only to accommodate additional migration into the District from other parts of the UK. However, CPRE Sussex would urge you to give less weight to the value of new housing at this village location, because of the negative impact of its car-dependence than you would give were the

housing more sustainably located. Some types of new housing are more valuable than others – we are short of small, cheap market homes and homes for down-sizers, but we have an excess of larger detached homes. Most previous outline applications have given a clear indication of the proposed housing mix, but here we do not know at all. The precautionary principle again requires limiting the positive weight in your balance for this reason – it may well be that the eventual mix will be planned to maximise development profit rather than to meet actual need.

11. Such considerations apply with even greater force to the affordable housing, to which you will doubtless give additional weight. The appellants provide a number of recent examples from this District to encourage you to give very substantial weight. However, I believe I am correct that in every one of those examples the outline application included detailed commitments about both the tenure mix and the unit sizes of the affordable homes to be delivered, and that information was included in the s.106 agreement. Here that is left for the future. Only the affordable-rented element of that affordable housing is of value in preventing homelessness by accommodating families from the District's Housing List, and we do not yet know whether that proportion will or will not be policy-compliant, or whether the unit size will match local need. CPRE Sussex would suggest that your weighting should reflect that local need for affordable-rented homes in Wivelsfield has largely been met by previous village developments and those currently building, and that Wivelsfield is a poor location for the great majority of the District need for this type of housing, which requires new housing in the District's urban areas, Lewes and the coastal towns.
12. CPRE Sussex thus strongly recommends that you take this into account when assessing the weight to be given to these factors in your balance.

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