

OBJECTION LETTER – PROPOSED GYPSY/TRAVELLER SITE, CHURCH LANE, BARNHAM

Planning Reference: BN/97/25/PL

To Whom It May Concern,

We are writing as concerned neighbours regarding the revised planning application for the proposed development of four permanent Gypsy/Traveller plots off Church Lane, Barnham (Planning Reference: BN/97/25/PL). This letter outlines material planning objections based on conservation, flooding, biodiversity, visual and residential impact, highways safety, policy non-compliance, and recent breaches of planning control.

1. Conflict with Conservation Area Status

The site is located within Barnham and Eastergate's only designated Conservation Area. According to Arun District Council's Conservation Area Appraisal, the fields between Church Lane and the rife are vital to the setting and rural character of the historic medieval settlement. The introduction of permanent mobile homes, day rooms, and engineered hardstanding is entirely out of keeping with the area's character. The Heritage Statement lacks meaningful visual impact assessment from key viewpoints, and references to raising the site level to mitigate flood risk would increase the prominence of structures, further damaging the visual amenity. The recently installed dense laurel hedge already compromises visual enjoyment of the area and has no ecological value.

2. Flood Risk

The site lies partially within Flood Zone 3 and is adjacent to a functional floodplain. Development here could compromise natural water attenuation and increase local flood risk, particularly in light of recent nearby housing developments with untested drainage systems. The Flood Risk Assessment relies on speculative land raising and future testing, with no confirmation from the Environment Agency or Lead Local Flood Authority. The proposal fails to demonstrate safe development and does not apply the exceptions test, despite the residential vulnerability of the use.

3. Visual and Residential Impact

The proposed development would be highly visible from neighbouring properties, public footpaths, and key viewpoints within the Conservation Area, resulting in extensive and unavoidable visual intrusion. The applicant's reliance on existing hedging is insufficient to mitigate the visual impact, especially given the elevated nature of surrounding land. Raising the land to mitigate flooding will exacerbate the height and dominance of the structures, intensifying the loss of privacy and outlook for nearby residents. Artificial screening (e.g. tall hedges or fences) intended to reduce visual intrusion will in itself harm the open character of the landscape and further degrade the visual quality of the Conservation Area. The introduction of lighting, often associated with such sites, could

contribute to night-time light pollution, particularly due to the site's exposed and elevated nature.

4. Highways and Access Concerns

We acknowledge the supplementary comments provided by West Sussex County Council Highways following their site visit on 24 June 2025. While they conclude that the proposals are not anticipated to give rise to a “severe highway safety impact,” they also recommend improvements to access points and internal layout to accommodate vehicles towing caravans, including the use of swept path tracking diagrams.

Despite this assessment, we remain concerned that the narrow nature of Church Lane, the proximity to a public footpath, and the visibility constraints caused by the laurel hedge present ongoing safety risks. The absence of swept path tracking diagrams and the need for multi-point manoeuvres for larger vehicles reinforce our view that the access arrangements are inadequate and pose a material safety concern.

5. Existing Traveller Provision

There is an existing and established Gypsy and Traveller site at The Cottage Piggeries, Church Lane (PO22 0DB), which was developed appropriately. The need for new pitches should not override policy protections for greenfield, conservation sites—particularly when existing provision is in place.

6. Policy Conflict: Arun Local Plan – Policy H SP5

This proposal fails to meet the criteria under Policy H SP5 (Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation):

- a. The scale and form of the development is out of character with the surrounding historic and low-density residential area.
- b. The proposal lies adjacent to a functional floodplain and proposes mitigation through land raising, which would increase visual and hydrological impacts.
- c. The access is unsafe and impractical for touring caravans and has not been fully assessed. Proximity to a public footpath raises further safety issues.
- d. The development lies within Barnham's only Conservation Area, impacting a protected and valued landscape.
- e. The site is agricultural greenfield land. The presence of a suitable, established site at The Cottage Piggeries demonstrates that alternatives exist.

7. Biodiversity and Protected Species

The ecological assessment confirms minimal biodiversity net gain, and existing hedgerows are non-native and of low ecological value.

Furthermore, slow worms—a protected species—have been observed in very close proximity to the site. While the Arun District Council ecology report raised no objection, the Preliminary Ecological Assessment itself acknowledged that “the sward structure... has potential to support reptiles.” Based on our experience and recent observations, it is highly likely that slow worms are present on or near the site. This risk has not been

adequately addressed or mitigated in the application, contrary to the requirements of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

8. Use of Outdated Biodiversity Net Gain Information

Barnham and Eastergate Parish Council have noted that the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) habitat assessment submitted with the application was undertaken in 2025. However, under the Environment Act 2021, the baseline habitat assessment must reflect the land as it was in 2020. The BNG metric should therefore be recalculated using the statutory baseline date and must incorporate habitat values for the trees and hedges present at that time. This is verifiable via historic aerial imagery, which shows that trees and hedgerow were in situ between 2019 and 2022. The use of an incorrect baseline undermines the validity of the BNG assessment and fails to comply with statutory requirements.

Additional Grounds for Objection

Failure to Demonstrate Public Benefit (Conservation Officer's Advice)

The Conservation Officer's formal response concludes that the proposal would cause "less than substantial harm" to the conservation area and the setting of listed buildings. In accordance with paragraph 215 of the NPPF (2024) and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, any such harm must be clearly outweighed by demonstrable public benefits.

No attempt has been made by the applicant to identify or evidence any public benefit that would justify this harm. The application fails to meet the statutory requirement to give great weight to the conservation of heritage assets. In the absence of any public benefit, the harm to the conservation area and heritage assets cannot be justified and planning permission should be refused.

Lack of Required Engineering Drawings and Details (Principal Planning Officer's Advice)

Simon Davis, Principal Planning Officer, specifically requested detailed engineering drawings and cross-sections to support the proposed land raising and lowering. He stated that these significant changes to site topography "should have been included in the description" and that the lack of such detail is a critical omission.

No engineering drawings or cross-sections have been provided with the application, despite this explicit request. Furthermore, the proposed land lowering is outside the application's red line boundary and cannot be considered as part of this application. This omission means the application fails to provide the necessary information for a proper assessment of the engineering impacts, contrary to national and local planning requirements.

History of Unauthorised Development

Arun District Council is already aware of unauthorised developments on this site,

including:

1. Change of use from agricultural to dog accommodation (since January 2023) causing significant noise and nuisance.
2. Installation of high-mast CCTV overlooking neighbouring homes and gardens—completely inappropriate in a conservation/agricultural setting.
3. Installation of a dilapidated caravan and later a motorhome used for shelter and dog food storage—positioned directly beside a historic flint wall obstructing the view of the Conservation Area.
4. Dense planting of laurel hedge, completely out of character with agricultural surroundings.
5. Unlawful tree felling and removal of native West Sussex hedging in a Conservation Area, including trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders.

We urge Arun District Council to act swiftly and robustly to investigate the illegal development of the site and take enforcement action to restore the land to its appropriate lawful use and character.

Recent Breach of Planning Control

We understand that the applicant was found guilty recently of working under a temporary stop notice in the neighbouring field which is also currently subject to Planning Enforcement and planning application BN/96/25/PL. This demonstrates a clear disregard for planning rules and raises serious concerns about future compliance and respect for planning conditions should this application be approved.

Conclusion

This proposal:

- Conflicts directly with Arun Local Plan Policy H SP5 (a–e);
- Would significantly harm the setting and character of Barnham’s Conservation Area;
- Is not sustainable in terms of flood risk, access or landscape impact;
- Proposes a scale and form of development that is inappropriate for the site;
- Fails to demonstrate that suitable alternative sites (such as The Cottage Piggeries) have been properly considered;
- Raises serious concerns about enforcement and compliance based on recent land use changes;
- Fails to address the presence of protected species and the requirements of relevant ecological legislation;

- Fails to demonstrate any public benefit to outweigh the identified harm to heritage assets;
- Lacks the required engineering detail to properly assess the impact of significant land level changes;
- Relies on an outdated and invalid Biodiversity Net Gain assessment, contrary to statutory requirements.

We therefore strongly urge the Local Planning Authority to refuse this application.

Yours faithfully

Rebecca and Tom Lapraik

Ferndale, Church Lane, Barnham. PO22 0DA

[Redacted]

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From: Rebecca Lapraik [Redacted]
Sent: 22 September 2025 10:53
To: Planning <Planning@arun.gov.uk>
Subject: Objection to Planning Reference: BN/97/25/PL - PROPOSED GYPSY/TRAVELLER SITE, CHURCH LANE, BARNHAM

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Good morning

Please find attached our objection to the above Planning Application.

Kind regards

Rebecca Lapraik