

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Local Plan \(TWBC\)](#)  
**Subject:** REVISED DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY: HAWKHURST BIRCHFIELD SITE AL/HA5  
**Date:** 25 February 2024 13:02:04

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From: Mr Robin & Mrs Anna Crowther

Dear Sirs

We understand you are inviting comments in relation to plans for a Revised Development Strategy to the Tunbridge Wells Submission Local Plan (SLP). As Hawkhurst residents, we have a particular interest in plans for the development of the Birchfield Site [extract from your website text: it is proposed to revise site allocation policy number AL/HA5: Land to the north of Birchfield Grove, to include housing, and land safeguarded for primary school expansion (in accordance with a planning committee resolution on application reference 22/02664/HYBRID)].

Further to a submission on 1/9/23, we write once again to say that we **STRONGLY OBJECT** to this proposed Birchfield Site development and we emphasise the following:

Hawkhurst lacks the infrastructure to deal with another 70 houses. Traffic congestion and pollution are key issues that must be addressed before any more houses are built here. We've heard from Parish Councillors that sewage and water works are already inadequate and cannot support further housing development. Schools and other services are under enough pressure as things stand. Furthermore, this location is in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and alternative brownfield sites elsewhere are being ignored.

Based on Derek G's comments on the Nextdoor website last week (see below), we gather over 200 people objected to the application, as well as Hawkhurst Parish Council being against it (with only some half a dozen people supporting it). Derek G says the application to build 70 houses, a medical centre and a 50 bay car park was approved by the Planning Committee in November but still shows online as "Awaiting Decision".

About that Planning Committee meeting, Derek G raises these issues - and we'd be very interested to have a response to his questions:

- Why did Councillors have to sign Non-Disclosure Agreements prior, so that it could not be discussed with voters?
  - Why should Councillor Ellen Neville be barred from voting on a technicality because she had previously objected?
  - Why should the query as to due diligence carried out on Rydon by the Planning Department be ignored?
  - Why should a Councillor be silenced by the Chairman when he said: "Of course, if we vote against this Application, it would cost the Council £1m to defend our decision"?
- This statement does not appear in the Minutes! Would that in effect bankrupt TWBC?

- Why should the Committee Chairman, a Hawkhurst & Sandhurst ward Councillor vote FOR the Application?
- Had the decision to approve the Application already been taken before the Planning Committee met?

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully  
Robin and Anna Crowther