Wimblehurst Road Residents Association

Wimblehurst Road Residents Association
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Planning Department
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Date: 19 May 2025

Ref: Outline Planning Application DC/25/0629, Former Novartis Site, Parsonage Road, Horsham RH12 5AA.

Proposal: Residential development comprising approximately 206 dwellings, including the conversion of 'Building 3' and the demolition of 'Building 36'. Vehicular access taken from Wimblehurst Road. Car and cycle parking, landscaping and open space and associated works. The replacement of the existing cedar trees at the site.

Stance of response for Outline Planning Application DC/25/0629: Object

This response to Outline Planning Application DC/25/0629 is being made by Wimblehurst Road Residents Association (WRRA) working in conjunction with residents of the Richmond Road Conservation Area together with residents of North Heath Lane and Allcard Close.

Gordon Road, Wimblehurst Road, and part of Hurst Road form part of the Richmond Road Conservation Area.

Reasons for comment:

1. Overdevelopment
2. Highway, Access and Parking
3. Drainage and Environmental Considerations
4. Trees and Landscaping
5. Privacy Light and Noise
6. Loss of General Amenity

Listed on the following pages are our reasons for comment on this Planning Application.

This has been referenced as 'Phase 1' and 'Phase 2'. If the ‘Phase 3’ development proceeds it will bring the total housing units on site to 450 dwellings and 578 allocated parking spaces.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Chair, Wimblehurst Road Residents Association.

Contents list

1.0 Overdevelopment

1.1 Housing numbers:

The proposal is for the construction of 206 residential dwellings of which 35% would be affordable housing and 252 parking spaces for the area of the site accessed from Wimblehurst Road. This area of the site will be developed by Lovell and is referred to as 'Phase 1' and 'Phase 2'.

Together the housing allocated for the Parsonage Road section of the site and for the Wimblehurst Road section of the site there will be a total of over 450 housing units on the entire site together with over 570 parking spaces.

This will have a substantial incremental impact on the surrounding infrastructure. The road network is unable to accommodate the huge increase in traffic that will result from the development. Wimblehurst Road, Richmond Road, Parsonage Road and North Heath Lane are subject to an excessive amount of traffic movements each day which has increased substantially since the development of the Mowbray estate and other nearby housing developments. These roads are narrow roads with little room for overtaking and any stationary vehicle causes immediate traffic jams.

At the nearby Parsonage Road level crossing new safety gates were installed three years ago. The gates are operated from the Signalling Control Centre at Three Bridges. The gates are closed for several minutes when a train is moving over the level crossing and when three trains cross in close succession (which is often the case) the gates can be closed for 15 minutes thus causing long tailbacks of stationary vehicles in Parsonage Road. This increase in stationary vehicles is also causing air pollution.

All of these issues would be made worse by the proposed development.

1.2 Increase in Population:

There are already insufficient places at local schools, doctors' surgeries and dental practices which will be further less able to cope with the significant rise in the population of Horsham as a result of the proposed development.

Although there are 4 secondary schools in the Horsham town area most are at capacity and those within the Horsham district have very little capacity. This is especially the case for boys, resulting in them being sent to secondary school in Crawley.

There is a lack of A&E in Horsham and within a reasonable distance.

The over-crowded local roads will be a significant issue for emergency vehicles if needing to attend an emergency at the site and also in the surrounding vicinity.

Commuter trains from Horsham are already over-crowded even from 6.50am with passengers not being able to have a seat
.
A substantial increase in population size will make all of these issues worse.

1.3 Policing

The development will place a significant additional demand upon Sussex Police.

It is noted in the letter submitted by the Joint Commercial Planning Manager for Sussex and Surrey Police on 1st May 2025 if enough developer contributions towards the provision of essential policing infrastructure are not given they would object to the development due to the additional strain placed on their resources.

2. Highways, Transport and Parking

Note – All the photographs, including the drone photographs and videos commissioned to support this analysis, are © Martin White

2.1. Overview

2.1.1 This transport impact analysis is based on information in the Transport Assessment included by Lovells in Planning Application DC/25/0629.

2.1.2 Over the last decade a number of major housing developments have been approved in the Horsham area, including Highwood (1100 housing units), Wickhurst Green (1000 housing units), Mowbray (2750 housing units) and Kilnwood Vale (2500 housing units). Not all of these have yet been fully completed.

2.1.3 A feature of all these developments is that there is immediate access to a major road (A264 or A24) via a roundabout that can accommodate two lanes of traffic. In addition, these developments (and those in North Horsham south of the A264) have two access points into and out of all residential areas.

2.1.3 Because of this integration of full-scale dual-lane roundabouts and high-capacity urban and main roads, residents are able to gain access to the local infrastructure and facilities (especially major supermarkets) within a few minutes of leaving their home.

2.1.4 From the time that the CIBA office was commissioned in 1936 the primary access route for employees and commercial deliveries was through a security-controlled gate in Parsonage Road. The Wimblehurst Road entrance was used only for visitors who were able to park directly in front of the main building. In 1996 CIBA-Geigy merged with Sandoz, which then adopted the Novartis name.

2.1.5 The number of visitors arriving by car each day was very low. A reason for the selection of Horsham for the CIBA building was the excellent rail links to the site from London Bridge, Victoria, Waterloo, Guildford and Gatwick Airport.

2.1.6 Even with the light traffic conditions, in the late 1970s a survey of CIBA employees undertaken in 1978 showed a unanimous concern about the dangers of cars entering and leaving the site through the Wimblehurst Road gate. This led to the provision of a ghost lane for visitors turning right into the site from Wimblehurst Road, where they were able to use a small car park to the left of the boulevard to the main building. Employees entered and left the site through the Parsonage Road gate and could make use of the car park in front of the building by driving around the office building.

2.1.7 This analysis follows the sequence of the Transport Assessment in the Application. References to sections of the Assessment are indicated by bold paragraph numbers.

2.2 Cycle Network

2.2.1 Much is made in the Transport Assessment of the support for cyclists. To quote **3.21** "The gentle topography and wide carriageways make the area attractive for cyclists. With many amenities within an acceptable distance via cycling the site location provides a good opportunity to encourage cycling as a preferred mode of transport"

2.2.2 Although there is indeed a local cycle network, taking advantage of it is impracticable because Wimblehurst Road and North Heath Lane do not provide a safe environment for cyclists. In Wimblehurst Road there is inadequate carriageway width to overtake a cyclist unless there is no on-coming traffic. The situation is exacerbated by the use of the road by Metro bus services. (Fig.1)

Fig. 1 200 service bus northbound on Wimblehurst Road.

2.2.3 Wimblehurst Road has a very minimal kerb height along some sections, a result of the surface being relaid without the original surface being scarified. Younger cyclists in particular faced with a queue of traffic take advantage of the very low kerb to cycle on to the pavement and then cut back into the queue further on down the road, often to the consternation of drivers who are not expecting a cyclist to suddenly appear alongside them.

2.2.4 North Heath Lane is also very challenging for cyclists. The double-deck buses occupy the entire width of the carriage way at Blenheim Way and there is only a single bus refuge on the north-bound road though this is not dedicated to use by

buses. There are no refuges on the southbound side. The road width also varies along the length of the road.

Fig.2 Buses occupying the total road width at the Blenheim Way bus halt

2.2.5 Parsonage Road also has very limited space for cyclists in the section from the Wimblehurst Road junction to the proposed Parsonage Road gate. (Fig.3) Cyclists on either side of the closed barriers have to cope with cars accelerating away from the crossing focused only on the road immediately ahead of them, especially if there has been an extended delay at the crossing.

Fig. 3 Parsonage Road lane width

2.3 Servicing

2.3.1 As is the case with the Phase 3 Application by Muse (DC/25/0415) the only reference to vehicles servicing the site is to the use of refuse collection vehicles. No reference is made to the way in which supermarket delivery vans and other services will access and traverse the site, and what the impact will be on the cars leaving and entering the site. As residents purchase dwellings there will also be removal lorries on the site.

2.4 Residential trip generation and distribution

2.4.1 The data on trip generation has been developed from the TRICS Consortium database, of which West Sussex County Council is a member. There are eight Fundamental Principles of Good Practice for the use of TRICS data.

- To provide clarity of methodology
- To understand ranges and estimates
- To realise the value of relevance in selections
- To explain selection reasoning
- To exercise good practice in auditing
- To avoid falling into traps
- To avoid incorrect influencing of results
- To ensure compatibility and consistency

2.4.2 There are currently 9,500 site traffic surveys on the site. This raises two questions.

1. Why are there only seven (four since the Covid pandemic) that are similar to the Phase 1 and Phase 2 sites?

2. How confident can we be that the results from just these seven sites provide a valid data set for subsequent trip distribution?

2.4.3 There is also no consideration of whether the sites selected have two or more exit points as this would increase the rate at which vehicles could leave the sites.

2.4.4 It is also a point of concern that there are frequent references in the Transport Assessment to data provided in the 2018 Application (DC/18/2687). Using this data as a benchmark is unsound and unhelpful. The 2018 data were forecasts, not actuals and much has changed in the last seven years

2.4.5 The trip generation rate, along with the trip distribution, is essential data in determining the extent to which the road network will be impacted by the site. It is very disappointing that there is so little analysis of the data.

2.4.6 It is also disappointing that there are no upper and lower confidence bands applied to the data, indicating the extent to which the sites selected might not directly match the site parameters of the Phase 1 and Phase 2 sites.

2.4.7 As with the Transport Assessment for Phase 3 (DC/25/0415) there is no discussion about the extent to which queues may form at the exit to the site in the morning peak, which could cause delays to drivers seeking to meet school registration deadlines.

2.4.8 The Trip Distribution analysis (**6.1 et seq**) is based on census data from 2011 which is now a) 14 years old and b) pre-Covid. There is no consideration in the report about the extent to which using 2011 data is valid, and what the confidence range is in reporting trip distribution on this basis. The Waitrose/John Lewis superstore opened in 2015 and the Bohunt School opened in 2023.

2.4.9 Of the nine sites selected, five were undertaken before the Covid pandemic which caused major shifts in working practices. This has been noted in a recent (5 March 2025) assessment by the Department of Transport entitled Impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on flow weighting for congestion data. In particular there are significant variations in peak times and variations in daily traffic flows.

2.4.10 The forecast is that only one vehicle in four is going to leave the site in order to drive into Horsham to take advantage of the shops and services in the town and the Marks & Spencer, Aldi, Waitrose and Sainsburys supermarkets. Is this a reasonable forecast? There is a significant amount of traffic to and from these locations in the early afternoon prior to children being collected from schools.

2.4.11 The section on residential trip generation (**5.8 et seq**) makes the assumption that the peak periods are 0800 – 0900 and 17.00 – 1800. This assumption does not take into account either the need for children to be at school by 8.30 – 08.45 (with no flexibility given for late arrival) and for residents to drive out of Horsham for employment in Crawley and especially Gatwick Airport. In addition, there will be an afternoon peak around 14.45 to 15.45 as children need to be collected from schools.

2.4.12 For example, the Holbrook School web site states that “Children enter the school building from 8:35am to start their morning learning activity. Gates are locked at 8:45am, when class registers are taken. Morning registration takes place between

8:35am - 8:45am. Registration closes at 9:00am. Children who arrive after 8:45am, will need to go to the school office, with their parent, to sign in."

2.4.13 This is why it is so important for parents not to be delayed through congestion at the mini-roundabout or leaving the developments in Wimblehurst and Parsonage Road.

2.4.14 There is invariably a line of 20-25 cars parked in North Heath Lane near the Holbrook Primary School exit from 14.45 to 15.15 as parents pick up children. This gives an indication of the volume of traffic both going to and coming from the school in the course of the day.

2.4.15 In this respect the distances to local facilities **(Table 1)** are misleading and incomplete. Although North Heath Community Primary School is within walking distance, Holbrook Primary School (20 minutes) and Bohunt (42 minutes) are not. Missing from this table is that the only doctor's surgery in the area is located in Bartholomew Way, which is a 28 minute walk (Google estimate) from the site.

2.4.16 In addition no account is taken in Table 1 of whether cycling is a viable option. Residents are unlikely to cycle to the Tesco store in Redkiln Way or the Budgens convenience store in Coltsfood Drive (also missing from the table) and then carry heavy bags of shopping back to their accommodation. Cycling to the surgery might not be an option for residents who wish to see a doctor or undergo tests.

2.4.17 Overall it is difficult to have any confidence in the data presented in the Transport Assessment as the modelling does not reflect the likely traffic routes out of the Wimblehurst Road site. The Transport Assessment text overall indicates that little attention has been given to the current flows of traffic around the area, and how these may change (for example, as the Mowbray residential and business developments expand) over the next 5-10 years.

2.4.18 For the purposes of this analysis of the Transport Assessment we therefore have no option but to accept the data presented.

"Given that the 2011 Census dataset was used as part of the outline application, and that this dataset would continue to be the one utilised within this assessment, the previously agreed trip distributions have been maintained and used within this assessment. A summary of the distribution on the network is provided below:

- 44% to turn left out of the site (heading southwest-bound)

  21% turning right and heading northbound on the B2237 [i.e. to the A24]

  23% turning left and heading southbound on the B2237 [i.e. to Horsham]

- 56% would travel right out of the site (heading northeast-bound).

43% to travel north at the Wimblehurst Road/Parsonage Road/North Heath Lane roundabout

13% to travel eastbound on Parsonage Road."

2.5 Access arrangements

Wimblehurst Road access

2.5.1 The Transport Assessment notes **(7.1)**

"The existing access is circa 13m wide at the point at which the footway crosses, making it a large junction to facilitate pedestrian movements. The existing northern radius measures circa 9m whilst the southern radius measures circa 10m. Whilst the former site may have required access for larger vehicles, and subsequently justified the existing geometries, it is felt that the proposed residential development would not require the current arrangement and the whole junction can be tightened. As such, whilst the southern radius is to remain as existing, the northern radius is proposed to be reduced to 6m, which subsequently narrows the junction to circa 9m in the vicinity of the footway crossing location. This helps to prioritise pedestrian movements in line with WSCC transport policies."

2.5.2 The suppositions made in this statement are questionable. No large vehicles ever used this access but were always directed to the Parsonage Road access. The reasons for the 10m radius were two-fold.

- Cars turning right from the central refuge needed space to complete the manoeuver.
- Cars approaching from Parsonage Road could move into the large radius bell mouth and gradually lose speed. With the much smaller radius proposed by the developers a car wishing to turn left into the Wimblehurst gate would have to brake quite significantly and this could result in a rear-end collision by a following car.

Fig 4 The bell mouth access from Wimblehurst Road

2.5.3 Based on drone video footage a car takes just under 2 seconds at 20 mph from the point it is visible by a driver leaving the site, and less for a driver entering the site, though in the latter case the driver will have more visibility of the approaching car. The stopping distance at 20mph is three car lengths. There would just about be enough space to brake safely but only in dry weather conditions. If the road is wet then there is not enough room for the car to come to a safe halt.

2.5.4 The second factor is how the junction is going to be presented to a driver approaching the junction along Parsonage Road, especially those with no local knowledge. Unambiguous information on the immediate potential dangers as drivers prepare to bear left at the junction will be an essential element in reducing the risk of collisions and injury.

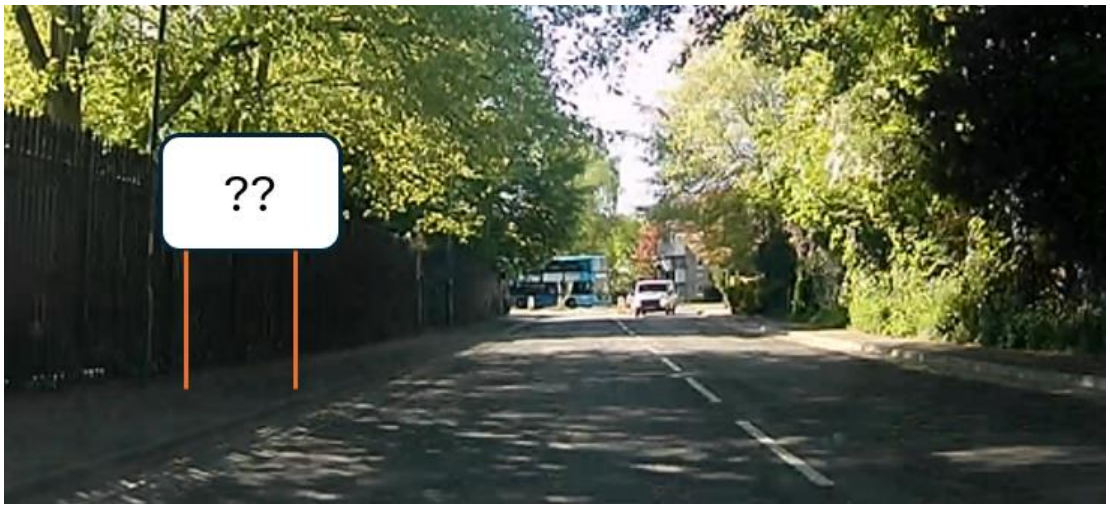

Fig.5 Possible road sign position in Parsonage Road

2.5.5 The Transport Assessment also notes **(7.3)** "that the access formerly benefitted from a right turn lane, however the white lining has been withdrawn and the lane no longer visible on the ground. As part of the outline application, it was proposed that the lining be reinstated to serve the site, something that this application also seeks to deliver. This will also help with the capacity of the junction and reduce the obstruction of vehicles queuing to turn right into the site on the flow of traffic travelling northbound on Wimblehurst Road. The site access design is included in Appendix I."

2.5.6 In Fig 6 the scale drawing in Appendix I has been overlaid on a photograph of the junction.

Fig. 6 Junction schematic from Appendix I

2.5.7 The schematic only shows the initial path from the ghost lane into the Wimblehurst gate. There are no arrows representing traffic approaching from the mini-roundabout or from traffic exiting the site. The reality is much more complex and potentially dangerous.

2.5.8 No comment is made on potential obstructions to traffic travelling southbound. The relevant schematic of the ghost lane is shown in Fig. 5. Although the schematic has arrows for the northbound traffic there are none for the southbound traffic. The fact that there is traffic approaching from the nin-roundabout and out of the development is therefore not obvious. No reason is given as to why only traffic in a northbound direction is presented.

2.5.9 In Fig.7 on the next page a photomontage is presented which indicates the complex array of vehicle movements around the face of the bell mouth access.

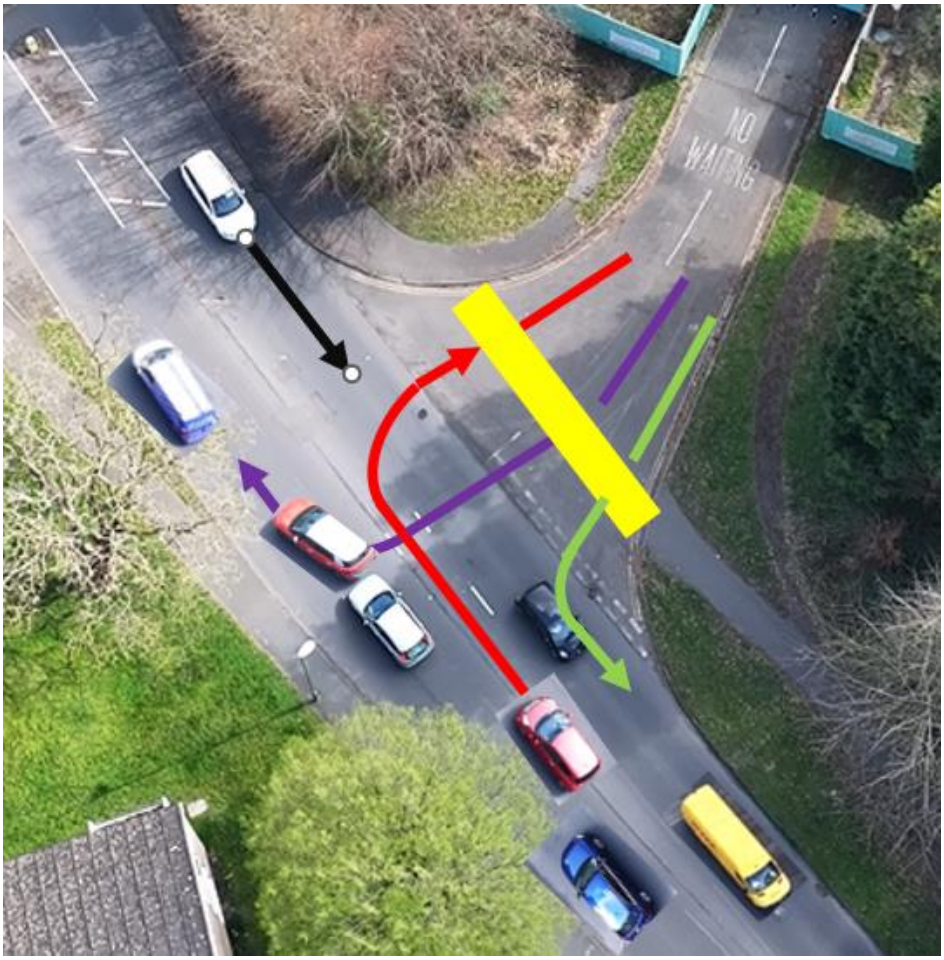

Fig.7 Traffic path analysis photomontage

2.5.9 The red car is in the ghost lane, planning to turn right into the entrance. However, the driver will have to give way to pedestrians on the Copenhagen crossing (yellow stripe). The white car approaching from the roundabout will not be able to see if there are pedestrians on the crossing and anticipate that the red car may not immediately be able to move off the road. It will not be clear to either of the two drivers who has precedence.

2.5.10 The driver of red car with a white roof needs to turn right (46% of exits will do so) and it has to find a slot in traffic approaching the mini-roundabout. Their vision of the oncoming traffic may be partially or totally obscured by the red car in the ghost lane.

2.5.11 The situation is made more challenging because as drivers approach the railway bridge the incline of Wimblehurst Road over the railway bridge obscures the traffic disposition at this junction. Although not the responsibility of the developers it is

difficult to see how this ghost lane arrangement will be presented on a road sign to approaching traffic in sufficient time for a driver to begin to move into the ghost lane. There is also a potential issue with a driver focusing on the direction sign and not noticing traffic emerging from Richmond Road.

2.5.12 No comment is made in the Road Safety Audit about the conflicts on the traffic paths.

Fig.8 The approach to the junction taken at driver eye-level

2.5.13 At most there will be room for two cars in the ghost lane. This is because the width of the road immediately after the railway bridge is inadequate to immediately provide three lanes for traffic. If an approaching driver wishes to turn right into the site but there is no room in the ghost lane their only option is to travel on to the mini-roundabout and execute a potentially dangerous U-turn to enter the site from the opposite direction.

2.5.14 There is also the issue of how this junction is going to be presented in a road sign on the approach to the junction given that car drivers do not have a view of the junction area and the state of congestion because of the incline over the railway bridge. (Fig 8 above)

2.5.15 The overview of traffic paths and conflicts in Fig. 6 above omits the need to accommodate cyclists in Wimblehurst Road, which the developers state is a priority to deliver. In Fig. 9 below the cycle paths are shown in a dark blue dotted line. Going towards the mini-roundabout they may be squeezed for space by vehicles (especially buses and commercial traffic) that have to move over close to the kerb in order to give clearance to the ghost lane.

2.5.16 Cycling away from the mini-roundabout cyclists have traffic approaching them (out of vision) from both Parsonage Road and North Heath Lane and as they approach

the Wimblehurst Road access they are faced with traffic moving across in both directions.

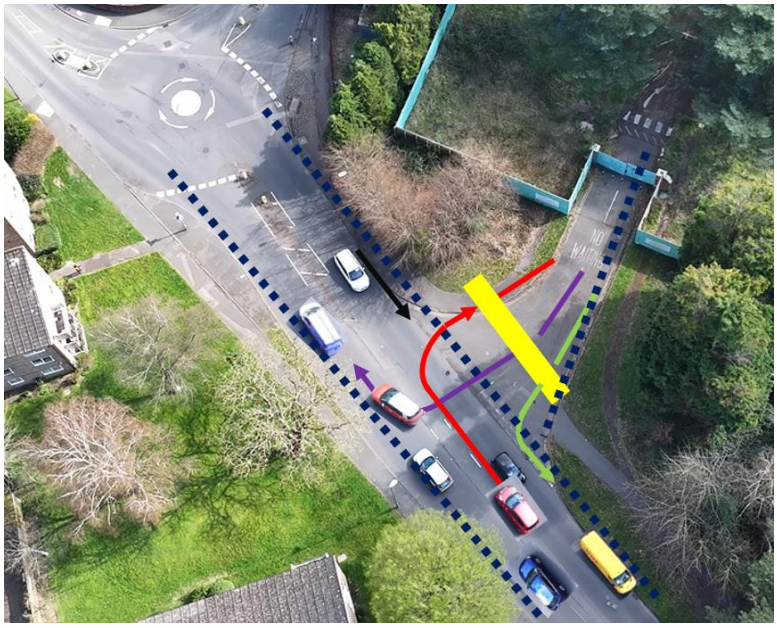

Fig. 9 Cycle paths (dotted blue) in Wimblehurst Road

2.5.17 All this is taking place in this small area of road.

Fig. 10 The area of road at the bell mout

2.5.18 Traffic heading towards this junction tends to bunch together as they slow down on the approach. Gaps for traffic to exit, or enter, the site will have to wait until this stream of cars has passed through. This is especially the case where traffic has been delayed at the railway crossing and the cars in the southbound queue are offered an empty road ahead of them.

Fig.11 Cars streaming towards the junction from the railway crossing

Richmond Road and Gordon Road junctions

2.5.19 Richmond Road, together with Gordon Road and a northerly section of Wimblehurst Road form are boundary roads to the Richmond Road Conservation Area. For this reason, it is disappointing that no reference is made to the potential impact of the development on traffic management along these roads.

2.5.20 Richmond Road is an important thoroughfare for traffic heading for, and returning from, the Hospital, Collyers, the Pavilions in the Park recreation centre, the railway station and eastern area of Horsham. It is also used by vehicles wishing to travel to the north of Horsham along North Heath Lane Lane as it avoids using two sets of traffic lights on North Parade.

2.5.21 Richmond Road is used as a car park by pupils at Collyers College (Fig.10), with the outcome that in effect the road is reduced to a single carriageway. Driving north it is not possible to see the potential gaps among the parked cars that might enable drivers to give way to oncoming traffic.

Fig. 12 Richmond Road being used as a car park

2.5.22 It is also used, with great difficulty, as a bus route (Fig. 11)

Fig.14 Lane occupancy in Richmond Road by a Metro bus

2.5.23 This makes it impossible to use as a cycle route as there is inadequate clearance between the parked cars and the oncoming traffic. Although there are Access Protection Lines on the road there are often issues with cars parked without

appreciating the width needed for a car to be driven safely out of one of the houses in this section of the road.

2.5.24 It is already a challenge for drivers to enter Wimblehurst Road at both the Gordon Road and Richmond Road junctions. The Gordon Road junction has an asymmetric geometry making it very difficult for vehicles to either cross into Ashleigh Road or turn into Wimblehurst Road. This junction traverse will become even more challenging and potentially dangerous with the increased volume of traffic generated by the development, as indicated in the analysis of the traffic at the Wimblehurst Road and North Parade junction.

Fig. 15 Gordon Road/Wimblehurst Road/Ashleigh Road junction

2.5.25 Emerging from the Richmond Road junction with Wimblehurst Road is even more challenging. It is clearly not appreciated by the developers that Wimblehurst Road turns slightly to the right after the railway bridge. This means that drivers wishing to turn right have to move over the notional edge of the road in order to assess the speed of traffic approaching from the mini-roundabout.

Fig. 16 Sight line from Richmond Road

2.5.26 The yellow sight line shows that the bridge parapet means that it is not possible for a driver to judge the extent of traffic coming from the development without moving across the notional edge of the junction.

2.5.27 The photograph below shows a common situation where the red car is over the lines marking the junction. In addition, the van has turned right into Richmond Road but because of the second car is forced to use the pavement to complete the maneouver

Fig. 17 Congestion at the Richmond Road junction

2.5.28 The Application proposes that a pedestrian priority traverse is installed at this junction. The design is shown below in which the schematic from Appendix I has been overlaid on a drone photograph.

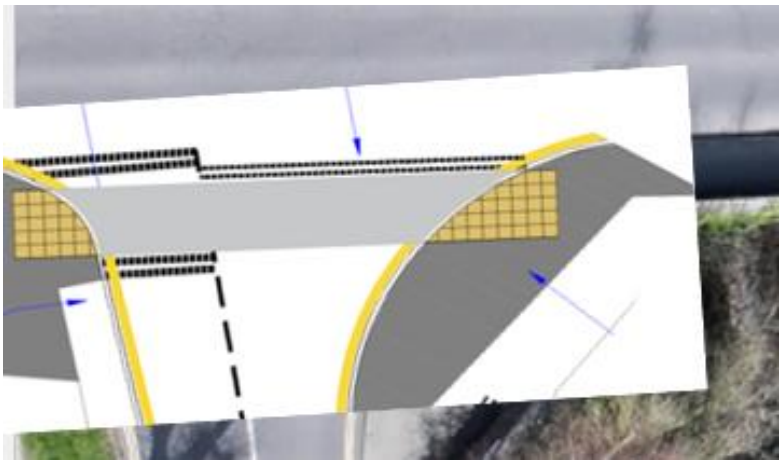

Fig. 18 Proposed pedestrian crossing at Richmond Road

2.5.29 This is not a solution to the safety of pedestrians. The vast majority of pedestrians walking over the railway bridge towards the Richmond Road junction are planning to walk down Richmond Road itself. There is no reason for them to walk on down Wimblehurst Road other than to access one of the houses.

2.5.30 These pedestrians take a short cut across the road to the opposite side as there is no pavement on the northern kerb. A pedestrian can be seen in Fig. 19.

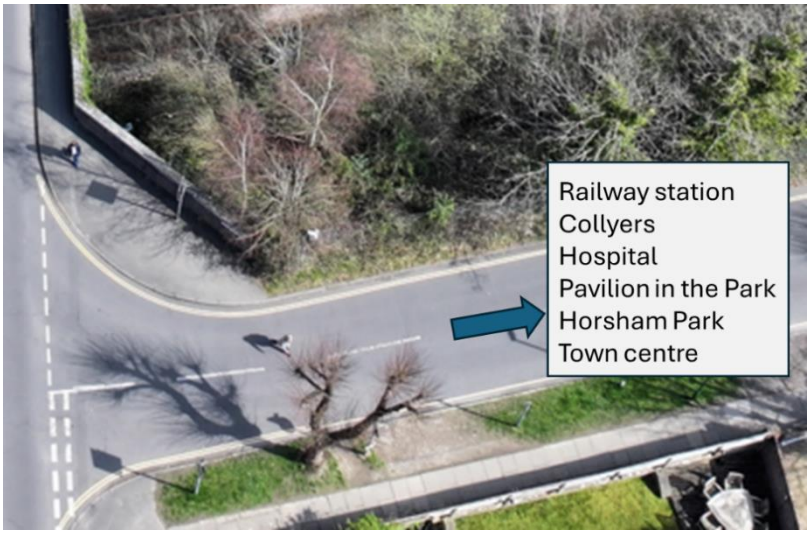

Fig. 19 Pedestrian route across Richmond Road.

2.5.31 If there are one or more cars waiting to exit into Wimblehurst Road in either direction a pedestrian can see traffic slowly approaching and walk behind the stationary car with a high degree of safety. There are of course cars coming around the corner from the railway bridge but the corner is very tight and that gives just enough extra time to be aware of pedestrians crossing the road at an angle.

2.5.32 The line of sight means that a driver has virtually no (perhaps 1-2 seconds) visibility of traffic emerging from the Wimblehurst Road access point, and a car approaching from the development access has too little time to brake should a car emerge from behind the bridge parapet.

2.5.33 The proposal to provide a pedestrian crossing could result in a car approaching the Richmond Road junction and having to brake suddenly when they see a pedestrian using the proposed crossing. The car following behind will be unsighted with regard to the crossing and a rear-end collision may be the outcome.

2.6 Driver, pedestrian and cyclist safety

2.6.1 There is a statement in the Transport Assessment **(10.3)** which states

"A review of Personal Injury Accident data for the most recently available five-year period identified no existing trends or patterns regarding the design of the existing highway network in terms of a highway safety concern and this is not expected to change as a result of the proposed development."

2.6.2 This is a quite remarkable statement. The developers are in total going to add over 500 cars and well over 1000 residents into the area around the mini-roundabout. The Transport Assessment notes that this roundabout is operating above capacity in the morning peak, and the Road Safety Audits for both DC/25/0415 and DC/25/0629 highlight some concerns about road safety.

2.6.3 We note that in the Transport Assessment there is no consideration of recommending the introduction of a 20mph speed limit in the area. Instead the developers have taken the approach of using pedestrians to incentivise drivers to slow down at the junctions.

3.0 Water, Drainage and Environmental Considerations

3.1 Overview

This proposed Residential Development, by Lovells for approx 206 dwellings, although less proposed dwellings than in the former application (DC/18/2687), is still a major development and very high density housing for its surrounding area.

It must also be considered that another application for 244 dwellings (DC/25/0415), adjacent to this proposal on the former Novartis site, has been submitted by Muse and although a separate application they both share the same land, drainage network and environmental issues.

Water neutrality continues to impact Horsham District and surrounding areas.

This proposal is adjacent to the Richmond Road Conservation Area and there will be increased demand on the water and drainage networks in this area, especially alongside the adjacent proposal (DC/25/0415).

The Novartis site was decommissioned in 2014 and many historical land reports have been prepared at different stages. All historical land reports refer to the 'whole' of the Novartis site and all recommend further future investigation, especially for end residential use, as significant contaminates have been identified which are a risk to human health.

There is also the question of risk control if the site is to be developed.

3.2 Water Supply

3.2.1 Water Neutrality

Water Neutrality is defined as development that takes place which does not increase the rate of abstraction for drinking water supplies above existing levels. The Environment Agency Water Stressed Area Classification has identified Horsham District as an area of serious water stress.

The 2021 Position Statement from Natural England, states that water extraction for drinking water supplies is having a negative impact on wildlife sites in the Arun Valley. The Statement also advises that any new development that takes place must not add to this negative impact and any development in Sussex North Water supply zone must demonstrate water neutrality. All proposals that consume water are potentially impacted by the statement.

3.2.2 HDC Water Neutrality and Planning Applications was updated on the HDC web site on 16/1/25 and it states:

1. The condition relates to a development that has previously been screened out from requiring water.

2. The condition relates to a development that has already demonstrated water neutrality.

3. The condition relates to matters required to be agreed at pre-occupation stage only or:

4. The condition does not run to the heart of the permission i.e it is not a condition precedent.

3.2.3 There is considerable case law on what constitutes a 'conditions' precedent, but broadly speaking we would consider this to be conditions relating to matters such as land contamination, underground services, finished floor levels, drainage, biodiversity mitigation.

3.2.4 Lovell are currently proposing to deliver a mixture of homes; market price, and 35% as affordable housing. Therefore relying on a mixture of solutions to reach water neutrality through efficient design i.e flow restriction technology and offsetting against housing association stock by retrofitting, and SNOWS (see 3.3.1).

It is unclear at this time how this will be achieved. A Water Neutrality Statement has been prepared by Waterstone Design for the wider Former Novartis Site and was submitted in support of this proposal (DC/25/0629).

3.2.5 We understand that HDC believe the existing water usage of the site is Nil as the existing buildings have not been used for over 3 years. Lovell are hoping to challenge this as they feel they are being unfairly penalised for a change in circumstance since the outline planning (DC/18/2687) was submitted in 2018, when Water Neutrality was not a consideration. We would challenge Lovell that this is the current situation and although outline planning had been granted, no work had started at the site.

3.2.6 Waterstone Design have also completed an in-depth review of rainwater harvesting, but have found due to limited space available to the dwellings and their footprint, along with significant presence of roots from the mature trees across the development it is not deemed feasible to include full rainwater harvesting to the Phase 1 development.

(Ref Waterstone 5.1.2). Greywater harvesting creates a similar problem (Waterstone 5.2).

3.2.7 The preferred delivery solution is SNOWS (see 3.3.1).

3.3 Offsetting, Borehole Investigation and Sussex North Offsetting Water Scheme (SNOWS)

3.3.1 Sussex North Offsetting Water Scheme (SNOWS) is another way of offsetting water via credits through the forthcoming Local Authority offsetting scheme and would be secured through a S106 agreement following an appropriate assessment in consultation with Natural England.

The primary role of SNOWS is to ensure that increased water demand generated by new developments does not exceed water savings generated by Southern Water in their next Water Resources Management Plan. (WRMP)

The scheme will rely on developers requesting access to SNOWS at the application stage, at which point the application will be prioritised against current available capacity in the scheme. If there is sufficient capacity to meet the developers needs, the applicant will be able to score their access to SNOWS.

If application is granted and the SNOWS access charge is paid in full, SNOWS will confirm the application has been signed at the available water capacity. If there is insufficient capacity the applicant may need a different solution or await further capacity becoming available.

3.3.1 We would also query whether retrofitting Housing Association Stock should only be achieved against the affordable housing portion of the application and not against existing private Lovell housing stock. It is still unclear how offsetting will be achieved until ownership of all properties has been ascertained.

3.3.2 HDC will require all third party owners to enter into legal agreement to ensure offsetting measures are evidenced as having been installed prior to first occupation and are retained in perpetuity thereafter.

3.3.3 Offsetting cannot be carried out on third party land that does not take its water from the North West Sussex Supply Zone.

3.4 Questions

a. Who will manage the various water schemes to this site, where some housing is private market and some affordable housing?

b. Will there be be any shared-ownership properties?

c. Will all the housing be Leasehold and under Management schemes to achieve this?

d. Will a 'Conditions' precedent be in place for this site due to site contamination?

3.5 Drainage

3.5.1 As a major development of approximately 206 dwellings the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) would need to be consulted on drainage.

3.5.2 West Sussex are the LLFA for this area and commented on 14th April 2025 in response to the adjacent application (DC/25/0415) that 'they at present object to the proposal until they receive confirmation that there is an acceptable method of discharge of surface water prior to considering the application further and require the applicant to demonstrate confirmation from Southern Water.

This application shares the same land site and therefore a similar response would be expected.

3.5.2 The developers have identified that they will be using the SuDS System of drainage on site due to the unsuitability of ground within the site.

3.5.3 SuDS is a sustainable drainage system designed to manage surface water locally, as close to source as possible to mimic natural drainage and encourage infiltration, attenuation and passive treatment and usually piped into the drainage network.

3.5.4 Due to poor land quality the use of SuDS will without doubt increase capacity of ground water entering the drainage system which is shared by established neighbouring residences.

3.6. Richmond Road Conservation Area (RRCA)

The proposed site is adjacent to RRCA. The properties in this Conservation Area are mainly Edwardian and Victorian and are connected to the original Victorian drainage system, which also runs through the proposed site and it is understood from reports that most drainage will connect into the Wimblehurst Road drains and sewers.

There is great concern that such an increase of demand on the system will result in failure of the infrastructure. In recent years there has been collapse of underground pipework resulting in collapse of local road structure due to leakage.

There has also been an increase of rising water tables in this Conservation Area, resulting in remedial tanking of low-level rooms and sump pumps fitted into basements.

There are also reports of decreased water pressure since the density of housing in the area has increased.

3.7. Horsham Park Pond

Horsham Park Pond was designed as an 'Attenuation Pond' to collect water from around Horsham to prevent flooding and received discharged from 5 known sewers, including those on the Novartis site. Limited capacity in the network downstream is a contributory case to localised flooding in Horsham. There is also risk of contaminated water being carried via the drainage network.

In their report Arch Associates recommend an assessment of the potential risk to Horsham Pond including inspection of drains as well as laboratory testing of the quality of the drains as they enter and leave the proposed site.

(Ref: Arch Associates Ground Investigation Part 3 Appendix 4 - 34 Geo Environmental Conclusions)

3.8 Environmental Considerations

3.8.1 Prior to the decommissioning of the Novartis site and the land considered for re-development, Reports were commissioned to survey the land quality.

Reports carried out include:

a. Enviros 2006 Desk Study

b. Enviros 2008 Intrusive Land Survey.

c. Jacobs 2008 Demolition Land Study

d. SKM 2013 Phase 2 Land Quality Investigation

e. Jacobs 2014 Further Land Quality Investigation

f. KDC 2016 Land Quality Interim Report

3.8.2 All reports identified contaminates in ground which cause risk to human health.

3.8.3 in 2021 West Sussex County Council (WSCC) commissioned Arch Associates to undertake a further land report on the proposal DC/18/2687. LEAP carried out the survey. Due to the shared land on the former Novartis site this report would be also be relevant to DC/25/0415, the adjacent proposal by Muse and this proposal DC/25/0629.

3.8.6 Arch Associates Risk Classification, carried out by LEAP, also states that some potentially contaminated land liabilities/geotechnical restraints have been identified at the property that require further assessment including intrusive ground investigations and potential risk posed to human health from on-site is

considered to be low/moderate high. Their overall risk assessment in relation to the proposed development considered moderate/high.

(Ref: Arch Associates 2021 Risk Classification).

3.8.7 Benzopyrene and Petroleum Hydro Carbons (PHC) at concentrations that posed a risk to residential users have been identified and arsenic and lead were also found at concentrations above Generic Assessment Criteria (GAC) for residential land users.

Asbestos was found in 'made ground soils' (various infills used to infill demolition) along with ground gases, carbon monoxide and methane. These could cause risk to future residential and commercial users, including construction workers.

Risk was also identified to Horsham Pond via surface water drainage. Surface water drains that run through the proposed site connect to Horsham Pond.

'As a conservative assessment, this risk assessment considered all potential contaminant linkages including ingestion of soil, ingestion of soil attached to plants as well as via plant uptake, inhalation of indoor and outdoor vapour of dust tracked back into the house and finally ingestion of water carried by plastic pipes through contaminated ground'.

'Contaminants may impact human health through direct ingestion, inhalation, skin contact and/or plant uptake pathways that would present in a residential setting. Ground workers are at risk as a result of the above.'

'The use of protective water supply infrastructure may be required by the water supplier if water services are to be placed in the made ground soils in site.'

(Ref: Appendix 4 - Ground Investigation (Part 3) Geo-Environmental Appraisal).

(Ref: Phase 3 site investigation report -LEAP- Residual Contamination).

3.8.8 WSCC have appointed Atkins Ltd to review the historical reports for the site, in particular the LEAP report carried out in 2021.

In conclusion they state:

'The comparison undertaken of the LEAP report to historical reports suggests that the LEAP report is in general accordance with the findings of the previously undertaken investigations, with no major discrepancies identified.'

It is noted, however, that the LEAP investigation did not cover the full site covered by the historical investigations, notably the Northern and Southern sections and therefore specific discrepancies might have been missed.

'Notably the LEAP investigation did not undertake any testing north and south of the retained building where substantial contamination was reported in historical reports'.

(Ref: Atkins Conclusions and recommendations)

3.9 Questions

a. When will further land investigations take place, as recommended by all surveys, for a residential end use?

b. What are the risks to surrounding residential areas both long term and during construction?

c. How will risk to Horsham Park Pond be monitored?

d. Is it appropriate to grant Outline Planning Permission with such questions being raised?

4. Trees and Landscaping

Fig. 1 Aerial view of the Boulevard

4.1 Tree conservation – objection to the application to 'replace' the existing Atlas cedar trees

4.1.1 The Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment (carried out by Haydens Consultants in January 2025) shows that there are currently 44 trees on site, including the 9 Atlas cedar trees that have had TPOs since 1990.

4.1.2 This document shows that 32 of the trees are all to be felled, to 'facilitate construction of residential dwellings'.

4.1.3 The Tree Survey document shows the health of the trees using the BS5837:20121 grading categories of A, B, C or U; only 2 x cedars are categorised as U, due to fungus, whereas all the other 7 are categorised as B or C. Therefore, the developers want to fell 7 perfectly healthy cedar trees, which the Tree Survey document states have a minimum life span of 20 - 40+ years.

4.1.4 It is interesting that the Royal Horticultural Society cites that cedar trees are 'low maintenance' and 'require no pruning'.

4.1.5 It is also interesting that the WSCC 'Design and Access Statement' from 2018 states 'the most significant trees on the site, are the mature blue cedar. These are of great stature up to 18m in height and evergreen, providing strong all-year-round visual amenity. Accordingly, these were identified as category 'A' of the BS5837:20121 tree grading criteria and also protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).'

4.1.6 The WSCC 'Design and Access Statement (2018) also states that 'many of the cedar trees ...may need to have some crown lifting to allow for access and development. Some removal of any dead limbs will also be required'.

4.1.7 It is therefore unclear how, by January 2025, these trees - that are slow-growing and low maintenance - have now been downgraded to category B, C or U? We would request a second, independent, Tree Survey to be carried out to give a second opinion on the grading of the cedar trees.

4.1.8 The HDC Screening Assessment (Ref: EIA/24/0007) dated 7/1/25, stated that 'The proposal includes the removal of these trees, some of which are still healthy. A full justification for the removal of these trees would be required for any application.'

4.1.9 There does not seem, however, to be any justification for the removal of these trees in any of the documents submitted, other than 'to facilitate construction of residential dwellings'; the Tree Survey document states, in reference to the cedars, that 'consideration should be given to the proximity of any proposed development and the potential risks to persons and property in the immediate vicinity'; from this one would assume the advice is therefore not to build too near the trees? It would seem, however, they simply do not now 'fit' with the architects' vision for the site and are clearly in the way. Rather than building further away, they are deemed necessary to be felled. This is not a justification for their removal, and questions why we have TPOs in the first place?

4.2 The role of mature trees in the carbon and water cycles

4.2.1 The trees are obviously evergreen, which means they play a significant role in both the carbon and water cycles all year round; the developers (Lovells) state they will replace them with 'high quality trees', but the BNG Assessment document lists the trees that will be 'created', and the majority of these are deciduous ones.

4.2.2 One of the most critical environmental services provided by mature cedar trees is carbon sequestration: as these trees grow, they absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and release oxygen in return, thereby contributing to the mitigation of climate change, a stipulation of HDC Climate Action Strategy and the NPPF.

4.2.3 As urban trees, they play a vital role in off-setting the carbon released from traffic etc., thereby contributing to the well-being of people.

4.2.4 Although young trees absorb CO_2 at a faster rate as they grow, these cedars are probably nearly 100 years old, and so will store much more carbon in their wood system, which is not just their large branches and trunks, but also their extensive underground root system.

4.2.5 These mature cedar trees will also be highly effective in managing urban water resources. Their extensive root systems create channels, and this deep infiltration process allows rainwater to percolate through the soil layers and replenish groundwater reserves, reducing flood risk in the local area.

4.2.6 Their dense canopies also play a crucial role in intercepting rainwater, reducing the amount of precipitation that reaches the ground as surface runoff, especially during heavy rainstorms.

4.2.7 Newly-planted young trees will not play as significant a role in managing urban water resources.

4.3 Other benefits of these mature trees

4.3.1 Atlas cedars are classed as 'endangered' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which added the species to its Red List of Threatened Species in 2013. Cedrus atlantica is currently listed as Endangered under IUCN criteria A2cd. The Forestry Commission - the government department responsible for protecting, expanding and promoting the sustainable management of woodlands in the UK - not only lists Atlas cedar trees as endangered but says the species could have the potential for wider use as the climate warms. The Commission's agency, Forest Research, also considers Atlas cedars 'a valuable addition' to species for lowland planting in southern Britain. These trees must therefore be protected, not felled.

4.3.2 The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024 state that veteran trees are classed as 'irreplaceable habitats' if they are 'mature trees' with 'a large girth, depending on or relative to species, site and management history'; these cedars fit this description, although the Application document has ticked 'no' to the question 'are there any irreplaceable habitats' – why has 'no' been ticked?

4.3.3 They provide a habitat for numerous wildlife, contributing to urban biodiversity, such as bats and tawny owls; the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, dated January 2025, states on p21-22 that 6 of the cedar trees were found to have Potential Roosting Features (PRF) for bats, and this document recommends that Further Assessment is Required (FAR) for 3 of them – has this been done? Bats are a protected species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

4.3.4 Aesthetic appeal: they have enhanced the visual attractiveness of the local urban landscape for decades, as noted by North Horsham Parish Council in 2018 in a document titled 'Culturally significant, historical and heritage assets in North Horsham Parish', which listed the 'Cedar trees on the former Novartis site that runs from the Wimblehurst Road Entrance to the protected art deco building on Parsonage Road'.

4.3.5 The WSCC Design and Access Statement for Horsham Enterprise Park (2018) also stated under 'Heritage': 'Along with its avenue of blue cedar trees, the building provides a striking and recognisable feature for the site, and one which provides a strong sense of place and identity for the area. Therefore it is important that these key features are retained within the new development'.

4.3.6 An article in 'Manufacturing Chemist, dated 7 January 2016, stated 'under the agreement with Novartis…the avenue of cedar trees leading to its door will also be protected'.

4.3.7 All 9 cedar trees were therefore clearly intended to be retained by WSCC, with all possible land use scenarios allowing 'for all the TPOs on site', and the 'retained avenue of cedar trees providing a valuable central point for future development'.

4.3.8 Why, therefore, are the developers going against the original desire of WSCC, who own the site, to retain these trees? And why have they now decided they need to be felled, whereas in the application by Lovells that was granted in 2018 DC/18/2687 they planned to retain them?

4.3.9 The Application request is for planning permission for 'the Replacement of the existing cedar trees at the site'. However, despite all drawings/sketches showing trees along the Boulevard, the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment document, dated 21/3/2025, shows on p32 a map, and there are no trees depicted for the Boulevard,

only ‘introduced shrub’, ‘vegetated garden’ and ‘rain garden’. Is this an error in the map creation, or will there actually be no ‘replacement of the cedar trees’ at all?

4.4 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

4.2.1 Since 12/2/24 it is a legal requirement for new developments to have a 10% biodiversity gain; on the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment document it states that a value of 25.02 Habitat Units (HU) baseline pre-development score has been given, of which 16.18 HU are from urban trees on site.

4.2.2 According to this document, however, the site will deliver a score of just 7.29 Habitat Units, therefore a net loss of 70.88%, despite creating a 'Woodland Walk' (which will encompass the whole site perimeter, so totalling 1.2km), and planting trees to replace the cedars.

4.2.3 Only 11 trees will be retained, totalling 3.42 HU, and – although 80 trees will be planted – they will create just 1.1 HU.

4.2.4 This illustrates how great is the current biodiversity of these mature cedar trees, and the impact on biodiversity if they were to be felled.

4.2.5 An 'off-site compensation' will be sought to rectify the 70.88% loss and therefore meet Trading Rules; when the Phase 3 Muse site biodiversity loss of 34.63% is taken into consideration as well (DC/25/0415), the biodiversity loss for the whole site is significant.

4.2.6 Both the BNG Assessment and the ‘Planning and Affordable Housing’ documents state that 'final details of the off-site compensation will be submitted to the LPA upon receiving planning permission' – it is disappointing that this information does not need to be obtained before planning permission is granted, rather than afterwards. What assurances will there be that this will happen, and what are the consequences if an off-site compensation provider cannot be secured?

4.2.7 Both HDC Planning Advice, and the NPPF, state that ‘if significant harm to biodiversity cannot be avoided, mitigated, or as a last resort compensated, and if the latter cannot be provided, then ‘planning permission should be refused’; this should therefore apply to the healthy cedar trees, which have been protected by law since 1990.

5.0 Privacy, Light and Noise

5.1 There will be a significant increase in noise arising from the traffic crossing the Parsonage Road railway crossing. Increased traffic using the Wimblehurst Road/North Heath Lane/Parsonage Road mini-roundabout will also cause traffic congestion and increased pollution.

6.0 Loss of General Amenity

6.1 The proposed high density housing will impact on quality of life for residents living on the site and for residents living in nearby locations. This is in terms of increased traffic, pollution and noise.

6.2 The lack of supporting infrastructure such as school places and healthcare facilities will also impact on quality of life for residents.

6.3 Even though 326 car parking spaces are proposed for the Parsonage Road area of the site, and over 570 spaces for the entire site, it is extremely likely that there will not be adequate parking on site which will encourage residents of the site and their visitors to park in nearby roads causing severe congestion.

6.4 The narrow roads within the Richmond Road Conservation Area cannot cope with increased traffic and students at Collyers Sixth Form College often park in Richmond Road and other surrounding roads causing difficulty for vehicles and for pedestrians crossing the road.

6.5 Cycling is advocated within the plans for all three Phases of the site development to help cope with the increased traffic. However, the very narrow roads within the Richmond Road Conservation Area (including Gordon Road, Richmond Road Wimblehurst Road and part of Hurst Road) will make cycling unsafe.

6.6 The sewerage system within the Richmond Road Conservation Area was installed when the houses were built in the Victorian/Edwardian era. The existing pressure on this system is already causing collapse of the road surface in Richmond Road and several repairs have already had to be done recently. Will it be able to cope with the increased pressure from the entire site development?

6.7 We have evidence of increased flooding in the cellars of houses in the Richmond Road Conservation Area which has meant that sump pumps have had to be installed in these properties. The increased pressure on the drainage and sewer system from the development will exacerbate this.

6.8 There is written, recorded and photographic evidence that there are protected species of Peregrine Falcons on the former Novartis site. Why is it then noted on the documentation on the Planning Portal that there are no protected species on site?

6.9 A letter submitted by Gatwick Airport Correspondence, dated 2nd April, 2025 for the Muse development stated that a Bird Hazard Management Plan will need to be in place which manages roofs on the development to minimise their attractiveness to birds which could endanger the safe movement of aircraft and the operation of Gatwick Airport. How will this function with the safety of the protected Peregrine Falcons living on the site?