

From: Planning@horsham.gov.uk
Sent: 21 January 2026 00:05
To: Planning
Subject: Comments for Planning Application DC/25/2057

Categories: Comments Received

Comments summary

Dear Sir/Madam,

Planning Application comments have been made. A summary of the comments is provided below.

Comments were submitted at 21/01/2026 12:05 AM.

Application Summary

Address:	Land North of Little Slaughterford Chapel Road Barns Green West Sussex
Proposal:	Proposed development of 68 dwellings with vehicular and pedestrian accesses, public open space, hard and soft landscaping and associated works including supporting foul and surface water drainage works, and works to existing culverted watercourse on site.
Case Officer:	Alice Johnson

[Click for further information](#)

Customer Details

Address:	Valewood Valewood Lane Barns Green
----------	------------------------------------

Comments Details

Commenter Type:	Member of the Public
Stance:	Customer objects to the Planning Application
Reasons for comment:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Highway Access and Parking- Loss of General Amenity- Other- Overdevelopment- Trees and Landscaping
Comments:	Dear Planning Officer, OBJECTION: Application DC/25/2057 Land North of Little Slaughterford, Chapel Road, Barns Green 68 Dwellings - Miller Homes I am writing to object to this application in the strongest possible terms. I have lived in Barns Green for 16 years and have witnessed first-hand the cumulative strain that recent development has placed on our village infrastructure. I have reviewed the applicant's submissions carefully and discussed the planning issues with a professional in the field to

ensure my concerns are properly framed.

I would be grateful if this letter could be placed before the Planning Committee in full.

A PRELIMINARY POINT: THIS APPLICATION CANNOT YET BE DETERMINED

Southern Water's response dated 13 January 2026 confirms they require 21 days to model network capacity. Their assessment is due on 3 February - just three days before the consultation closes on 6 February. Given the sewage problems I describe below, it would be premature - and arguably unlawful - to determine this application before Southern Water has confirmed whether the network can cope. I ask that no committee date is set until this critical information is available.

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN: THE COMMUNITY HAS ALREADY SPOKEN

Our Neighbourhood Plan was approved at referendum on 4 September 2025 and made on 8 October 2025. This wasn't some abstract bureaucratic exercise - the residents voted, and the Plan reflects years of community consultation about where development should and shouldn't go.

The Plan allocates specific sites for housing. This field at Chapel Road was not among them. That was a deliberate choice, not an oversight.

The applicant's Planning Statement tries to dismiss this by claiming the Neighbourhood Plan contains "no policies which prevent development." With respect, this misses the point entirely. The Plan identifies where the community accepts growth; this site was consciously excluded. If speculative applications can simply bypass neighbourhood plans, what was the point of the whole exercise?

NPPF paragraph 14 exists precisely to protect communities in this situation. It states that where a neighbourhood plan is less than five years old and allocates sites to meet housing need, the adverse impact of conflicting development "is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits." Our Plan ticks both boxes.

The Government's own Planning and Infrastructure Bill guidance (September 2025) states that decisions about what to build and where "should be shaped by local communities." This application ignores that principle completely.

THE APPLICANT ADMITS THIS CONFLICTS WITH THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

At paragraph 7.5 of their Planning Statement, Miller Homes concedes something rather striking:

"Being set outside of the built-up area boundary and not essential to this countryside location, the proposal would be in conflict with policies 2, 3, 4 and 26 of the HDPF."

So even the applicant accepts this doesn't comply with the adopted Local Plan. Their entire case rests on the "tilted balance" because Horsham lacks a five-year housing land supply.

But the tilted balance isn't a free pass. NPPF paragraph 11(d)(i) makes clear it doesn't apply where Framework policies indicate development should be restricted - including for habitats sites (this requires HRA for water neutrality), irreplaceable habitats like ancient woodland (present on the boundary), and flood risk (documented locally). Paragraph 14's neighbourhood plan protection operates separately on top of this.

WATER NEUTRALITY: IS THIS SITE EVEN ELIGIBLE?

The application relies on the Sussex North Water Certification Scheme (SNWCS) to demonstrate water neutrality. Without this, the Habitats Regulations Assessment fails, and the application must be refused.

Here's the problem. The SNWCS User Guide states that non-qualifying development includes "housing development outside settlement boundaries on unallocated sites."

When the applicant prepared this submission, they claimed eligibility because the site was allocated as BGR1 in the draft Local Plan. But that draft Plan has now been withdrawn. It

carries no weight whatsoever. And the made Neighbourhood Plan doesn't allocate this site either.

So, is this now "housing development outside settlement boundaries on an unallocated site"? If so, SNWCS certification isn't available, water neutrality cannot be achieved, and the application fails at the first hurdle.

I would urge the Council to seek urgent clarification from the SNWCS team before proceeding any further.

SEWAGE: A SYSTEM ALREADY IN CRISIS

I don't need to tell the Council about Barns Green's sewage problems - your own committee reports have documented them. Southern Water's Event Duration Monitoring data shows that in 2022, our village experienced 43 sewage overflow events totalling 411 hours. That's 17 days of raw sewage discharge in a single year.

The applicant proposes connecting 68 homes to a DN175 sewer in Chapel Road. That's a pipe just 175mm in diameter - about the width of a dinner plate - to serve a system that already can't cope.

What's more, the foul drainage strategy completely ignores:

- The 32 homes at Sumners Fields that have recently connected
- The 50+ homes allocated elsewhere in the Neighbourhood Plan that will also need capacity
- The documented history of overflow events

Southern Water hasn't yet confirmed whether capacity exists. Given what we know, I'd be astonished if it does without significant infrastructure investment that nobody has committed to fund.

The February 2025 WildFish report "No Capacity, No Development" found nearly 30,000 homes nationally are blocked due to inadequate wastewater infrastructure. Barns Green should be added to that list until the network is upgraded.

ELECTRICITY: THE GRID CAN'T COPE EITHER

The Energy Statement confirms all 68 homes will use Air Source Heat Pumps for heating - a significant electrical load. Yet the documents contain no consultation with UK Power Networks and no assessment of grid capacity.

I understand that the recent Sumners Fields development requires a backup diesel generator because the local network cannot reliably supply those homes. If that's true for 32 houses, how can we possibly add another 68 with electric heating?

I request that the Council obtains a formal response from UK Power Networks before this application is determined.

TRANSPORT: THE NUMBERS DON'T ADD UP

The Transport Statement relies heavily on a "Vision Scenario" assuming significant modal shift away from private cars. In a rural village with almost non-existent public transport, this is fantasy.

The applicant's own data shows 81% of local residents drive to work. Christ's Hospital station is 3.7km away - too far for most people to walk or cycle regularly. And the bus service?

The Transport Statement's own timetable reveals:

- Monday: 4 buses
- Tuesday: 8 buses
- Wednesday: 2 buses (at 07:00 and 16:57 only)
- Thursday: 8 buses
- Friday: 4 buses
- Evenings/weekends: Nothing

Two buses on a Wednesday. No evening services at all. This is not a location where

sustainable transport is a credible alternative to the car, and the Transport Statement's optimistic assumptions shouldn't be given any weight.

More fundamentally, NPPF paragraph 116 requires assessment of "residual cumulative impacts" on the road network. The applicant has only modelled the site access junction, dismissing wider impacts as "negligible." This ignores the 32 homes at Sumners Fields, the 50+ homes allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan, and the combined effect on the Chapel Road/Two Mile Ash Road junction. The cumulative traffic impact simply hasn't been assessed.

ANCIENT WOODLAND: IRREPLACEABLE AND AT RISK

The western boundary adjoins Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (reference ANCWO0122269). NPPF paragraph 186(c) is unambiguous: development causing loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats "should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons."

The applicant proposes a 15-metre buffer - the bare minimum. But Natural England's Standing Advice makes clear this should be larger where sensitive species are present (dormice have been recorded), where there are drainage sensitivities, or where increased recreational pressure is anticipated. All three apply here.

What concerns me most is the proposal to route a footpath through this buffer zone. The Arboricultural Assessment justifies this by noting there's an existing agricultural access point. But an occasional tractor is fundamentally different from a permanent path serving 150+ residents, their children, and their dogs.

Natural England's guidance states buffer zones should comprise "semi-natural habitats." A surfaced, maintained footpath is nothing of the sort. This path will create a desire line straight into the ancient woodland, with all the disturbance, compaction, and degradation that entails.

The Government has confirmed the Planning and Infrastructure Bill "would not have the effect of reducing the level of environmental protection." There's no Environmental Delivery Plan for ancient woodland in this area, so full NPPF protection applies.

CUMULATIVE IMPACT: THE VILLAGE HAS TAKEN ITS SHARE

Barns Green has already accommodated substantial growth:

1. Sumners Fields - 32 homes, recently completed, a few hundred yards from this site
2. Neighbourhood Plan allocations - 50+ additional homes at sites the community have accepted

Adding 68 more would increase the village by something approaching 40% in the space of a decade. At what point does cumulative impact become unacceptable?

The September 2025 refusal of 70 homes at Leeholme, County Durham is instructive. Despite an officer recommendation to approve, the committee refused on cumulative impact grounds, finding the development would "overwhelm the village's traditional character." The parallels with Barns Green are obvious.

VILLAGE CHARACTER AND HERITAGE

The Neighbourhood Plan's Landscape Character Assessment - a document the applicant relies on elsewhere - describes the fields north and west of the village as "important small pastoral fields" that "provide important green gaps that contribute to a settlement with rural character and provides a transition to the wider countryside."

That's precisely what this field does. It's the green buffer between the village centre and open countryside.

Building here would:

- Destroy this green gap entirely
- Harm the setting of listed buildings including Little Slaughterford, Bennetts, and the Queen's Head
- Surround the pub - a vital community asset - with housing

██████████ the pub's landlord, has publicly stated that the Queen's Head's appeal lies in its

location "on the edge of the village, adjoining open fields" and that this development would have "a significant impact on my business."

The field also hosts the annual Classic Car Show (raising tens of thousands for charity) and Run Barns Green (supporting St Catherine's Hospice). These community events would be lost forever.

OVERDEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE

One final point. Even the withdrawn draft Local Plan only allocated this site for 50 homes. The applicant is proposing 68 - a 36% increase with no justification. If this site were ever considered appropriate (which I dispute), 68 homes would represent clear overdevelopment.

CONCLUSION

I recognise Horsham faces pressure to deliver housing, and I'm not opposed to all development. Our community accepted growth through the Neighbourhood Plan process and identified sites where it could be accommodated sustainably. This isn't one of them.

The application should be refused because:

1. Procedure: Southern Water's capacity assessment isn't available - determination would be premature
2. Neighbourhood Plan: The site isn't allocated; NPPF paragraph 14 protection applies
3. Water neutrality: SNWCS eligibility is questionable following Local Plan withdrawal
4. Policy conflict: The applicant concedes conflict with HDPF policies 2, 3, 4 and 26
5. Sewage: 43 overflow events / 411 hours in 2022; capacity unconfirmed
6. Electricity: No grid assessment despite all-electric heating; Sumners Fields already needs generators
7. Transport: Unrealistic modal shift assumptions; only 2 buses on Wednesdays; cumulative impact not assessed
8. Ancient woodland: Footpath through buffer contradicts Natural England guidance
9. Cumulative impact: Village has already absorbed significant growth
10. Character: Loss of "important green gap"; harm to heritage assets and community facilities

The tilted balance, even if engaged, does not override these constraints. The adverse impacts clearly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

I would welcome the opportunity to address the Planning Committee should this application proceed to that stage.

Yours faithfully,

[REDACTED]
cc: Itchingfield Parish Council Cllr [REDACTED] - Chairman

Kind regards

Telephone:

Email: planning@horsham.gov.uk



Horsham
District
Council

