

## **Statement from Storrington & Washington ward Cllr Beard re DC/25/1356 Crosswinds**

As a Storrington & Washington ward councillor, it is clear to me that Heath Common is one of the great jewels in Horsham District Council's crown. Its distinctive character, tranquillity and informal lanes are not accidental; they are the result of long-standing planning restraint, community stewardship and a shared understanding that this is a place to be protected, not gradually eroded.

The Heath Common Design Statement exists precisely because of these special qualities. It represents years of careful work by residents and the Council to articulate what makes Heath Common unique and why incremental change poses such a risk. It is not an abstract document, but a clear expression of local character, shaped by experience and supported by planning history and policy.

On 17 January 2017, the HDC Planning South Committee refused an application to build two five bedroom houses on this same site, citing in the motion to refuse that 'The proposed development would represent an overdevelopment of the site which would cause harm to the special character of this part of Hampers Lane, contrary to Policies 25, 32 and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework' and that 'The proposed development would increase the highway movements associated with the site, causing additional stress on local highway infrastructure, contrary to Policy 39 of the Horsham District Planning Framework.'

The minutes of that meeting crucially reveal that 'It was suggested that the area could be designated as a Residential Area of Special Character (RASC) as part of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan.' Please note, that Storrington, Sullington & Washington Neighbourhood Plan is now made and should be respected, and, instead of a designation of a RASC, the Heath Common Design Statement was adopted as an HDC Supplementary Planning Document in July 2018.

Members may be aware that an earlier appeal at Crosswinds was allowed in December 2017. However, and *this is critical to your decision making*, that decision pre-dated the adoption of the Heath Common Design Statement as an HDC Supplementary Planning Document in July 2018. Nevertheless, even at the time, the Inspector acknowledged that emerging local character guidance could not be afforded significant weight by then existing planning guidance. The Heath Common Design Statement was specifically created to fill that precise gap and now provides adopted, detailed policy guidance to protect Heath Common from exactly the kind of incremental erosion you are being asked to consider.

Once the character of Heath Common is lost, it cannot be recovered. Approving developments that intensify use, subdivide plots and increase pressure on narrow lanes risks setting a pattern that undermines the Design Statement and the Neighbourhood Plan, not just here, but across the wider Heath Common area. This is how special places are changed not by one dramatic decision, but by a series of small, seemingly modest approvals.

As councillors, we have a responsibility to future residents as well as current ones. Respecting the Heath Common Design Statement is not about resisting all change; it is about ensuring that change is genuinely sympathetic, proportionate and rooted in an understanding

of place. I do not believe that test has been met in this case, and for that reason I support refusal of this application.

This conclusion is firmly supported by policy. The proposal conflicts with the Heath Common Design Statement SPD, Horsham District Planning Framework Policies 32, 33 and 40, and the Storrington, Sullington & Washington Neighbourhood Plan Policy 14. It also fails to meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework, in particular paragraphs 115 and 117 on safe and suitable access and paragraph 135 on development being sympathetic to local character and helping to establish or maintain a strong sense of place.

I urge you to refuse this application on these grounds.

Cllr Emma Beard 19 January 2026