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Via email only

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Dear Matthew

NETWORK RAIL CONSULTATION RESPONSE TO DC/26/0366 – LAND NORTH WEST OF SOUTHWATER

These representations are submitted to Horsham District Council ('the Council') by Network Rail Infrastructure Limited ('Network Rail') to DC/26/0366 ('the planning application'). Network Rail (NR) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the planning application.

NR is the statutory undertaker for maintaining and operating railway infrastructure of England, Scotland, and Wales. As statutory undertaker, Network Rail is under license from the DfT and Transport Scotland (TS) and regulated by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) to maintain and enhance the operational railway and its assets, ensuring the provision of a safe operational railway. As a matter of course, proponents of sites which are close to the railway boundary or sites which could affect the railway asset directly are required to engage with our Asset Protection and Optimisation team (ASPRO).

Having reviewed the details contained within the planning application, NR have the following comments to make.

The planning application is located on land to the north west of Southwater and includes:

- the demolition of existing buildings and the construction of residential dwellings (including affordable housing) (Use Classes C2 and C3);
- a mixed-use neighbourhood centre (Use Classes E and F);
- education facilities (Use Class F1(a));
- business and employment floorspace (Use Classes B2, B8 and E(g));
- redevelopment of existing agricultural buildings including construction of a building for community use (Use Classes E and F2);
- improvements to public rights of way; sports pitches; gypsy and traveller pitches/plots; public open space; landscaping, and associated infrastructure

The proposed development is submitted in outline with all matters reserved except for primary access to the highway.

Rail Impacts

The main planning application site ('the Site') is located around 1.8km from Christ's Hospital Railway Station (the Station'). A smaller parcel, known as the 'North Site', is located adjacent to the Station car park. It is noted that the proposed station car parking no longer forms part of the proposals. NR recognises that the planning application is proposing enhanced walking and cycling access to the station. The submitted Transport Assessment also indicates a contribution to improve cycle parking at the station. These are welcomed however it is noted also that Active Travel England (ATE), in their latest consultation response dated 10 July 2026, have requested further information.

The Station has two stopping trains per hour to London Victoria and to Bognor Regis. In March 2025, the station had a total of 168,878 entries and exits with growth of 17% from the previous year (2023/24).

The station is classified as a step-free category B3 station, meaning there is some step-free access at the station. This includes level access to Platform 2 (for trains towards the coast) from the station car park. However, to Platform 1 (London-bound) there is only a stepped access to the platform. There are no lifts or any step free access between Platforms 1 and 2. This constrains the ability for passengers with mobility issues, pushchairs or luggage to access Platform 1.

The applicant's Transport Assessment Annex B – Mode Share reports the Method of Travel to Work as stated in the 2011 Census. It is acknowledged that reliance on the 2021 Census is limited because of the COVID-19 pandemic and increased working from home. However, post COVID-19 commuter and business flows have changed significantly with people now travelling into their workplace on average 3 times per week. As such, those using the train (5.1% in 2011) is likely to have increased since. This is reflected by the year-on-year increase since 2021, including the 17% growth between 2023 and 2025.

NR had previously set out through recent iterations of the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) that enhancements were required to meet additional demand at the station car parking due to its small size (53 spaces). The most recent car park data demonstrates that there is on average a 46% utilization rate across the week, with days where usage is higher (Wednesday and Thursday show an average of 70% full, Friday, Saturday and Sunday is an average of 18%). The applicant indicates at paragraph 7.119 of the planning statement that the site will generate 87 additional cars using the station car park. Providing this usage is spread throughout the week then it is possible additional cars could be accommodated, noting that on average there are 24 spaces available. As stated above, it is noted that the planning application no longer proposes expanding the station car park. NR encourages the applicant to maximise sustainable transport improvements to reduce the number of car journeys made.

As part of the sustainable transport improvements, additional cycle parking at the station is necessary alongside improvements to accessibility at the station. Noting the deficiencies at the station, NR considers it justified that a contribution to improve accessibility at the station be provided. The station is a priority 2 (1 being highest) for short term interventions to improve accessibility.

The average UK household has 2.35 residents (ONS 2024). The working age population is 62.9% (2021 Census). As a result, each household will have an average of 1.47 people of



working age. For the site of 1000 dwellings, this would generate 1,470 workers across the development. If it is to be assumed an 5.2% modal share for rail, 77 people will use the train service to travel to work however this should be treated as an absolute minimum with usage likely to be higher. As a result, there will be a net increase of at least 462 journeys per week. (Number of people X return trips X 3 times per week). Given the proximity of the site to Christs Hospital station, it is assumed rail trips from the site will be made there compared to Horsham station. Across a year this would result in 24,024 additional journeys at the station. This is a 14.22% increase in customer journeys compared to the latest data available (2024/25).

The total cost of delivering a full step free access scheme at the station would be £6m. NR considers that a contribution from the planning application towards the station of £853,200 would be justified based on the expected increase in usage as above. This would fund step free access to Platform 1 and be put towards step free access between both platforms. The contribution is necessary to mitigate the impact of the planning application, is therefore directly related by dealing with the expected increased use from the site and fair and reasonable based on the size of the site and its impacts. The Government has been clear that to receive the full funding for step-free access schemes, third party funding must make up a significant proportion of the total cost.

I trust the above clearly sets out NR's requirements and how the development will be required to contribute towards improving the rail network. Please do let me know if further information is required or if a meeting to discuss would be beneficial.

Yours Sincerely

Craig Hatton

Senior Town Planner
Network Rail Infrastructure Limited