28 January 2026

Tracey Annear
The Planning Inspectorate
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol
BS1 6PN

SLR Project No.: 433.066661.00001

Appeal Reference No.: APP/Z3825/W/25/3375975

Dear Ms Annear,

RE: Land North of Cowfold Road, Coolham, West Sussex

Thank you for providing a copy of the Council's appeal statement, and the associated third-party representations. We have reviewed the Council's statement and the public comments carefully and our final response on the matters raised are detailed in this letter.

Appeal Statement of Horsham District Council

1. As a point of correction, it should be noted that the description of the appeal proposal in the first paragraph of the Council's statement is incorrect. The appeal is not in relation to the conversion of a barn to a dwelling, but rather, relates to the proposed development of 9no dwellings with associated access.

Reason for Refusal 1 (Site Sustainability)

2. The Council asserts that the site is not accessible to the village unless users cross the A272. However, it should be noted that there is not a highways objection to the proposed scheme from the LHA (neither from a technical or safety perspective, nor from a sustainability perspective). In response to a request from the LHA, the appeal scheme incorporates off-site highways improvements to key crossing points (as shown on plan reference 2407079-02) thereby ensuring safe places for pedestrians to cross the road to access the local pub (circa 2-minute walk), the local school (circa 3-minute walk) and the village hall (which includes a children's nursery – circa 5-minute walk). The road that residents would be required to cross is subject to a 20mph speed limit between the site and these village services and has good visibility. The allegation that the pedestrian provision to village services is inadequate and renders the site inaccessible or unsustainable is unfounded. It is also of note that existing residents of the properties in Home Farm currently need to cross the road to access the village, and as identified in the

Transport Statement, there has been no record of personal injury collision incidents within the vicinity of the site in the last 5 years.

3. The Council questions the frequency of bus services within the village. The Council's Statement only refers to one of the bus services available in the village; we would refer the Inspector to the appellant's original Transport Statement (Table 3.1) which provides details of other bus services which would be available to future occupants.

4. The frequency of bus provision is typical of a village location. The Council's approach fails to have regard to paragraph 110 of the NPPF which notes that '*opportunities to maximise sustainable travel solutions will vary between urban and rural areas'* which advises that the level of sustainability for smaller development sites such as the appeal scheme is not the same as for larger urban extensions. On this matter, the Inspector for a 99-unit appeal scheme in Alfold, Waverley[1] discusses the distinction between a location itself being 'sustainable', and how the needs of a development can be met in a 'sustainable manner'.

   Paragraph 32 of the Alfold decision notes that:

   > *'There is no local or national policy requiring the sustainable transport modes available to future residents to be as attractive as the private car. Instead, what is required is a "genuine choice of transport modes"* [NPPF 110]. *There is no local or national policy which requires the majority of residents to use sustainable alternatives to the private car'*.

   Paragraph 33 goes on to say:

   > *'Instead, local and national policy assesses the sustainability of the transport offer in the context of the location and asks whether appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport have been taken up. If, given the location, they have been, then the proposal is policy compliant'*.

5. Within the context of the appeal site and the scale of the appeal proposal, it is considered that the combination of the ability to walk to local village facilities (school, pub and village hall/children's nursery) together with bus services (route 64 and 74) providing non-car means of access to nearby settlements (including Horsham Town) ensure that the appropriate and available opportunities to promote sustainable transport have been maximised within the context of this location, and that the proposed development would not be wholly reliant on private car.

6. The Council questions the sustainability of Coolham as a settlement and therefore its appropriateness for growth. However, this position does not accord with the proposal by the Council to designate Coolham as a 'Secondary Settlement' in the emerging Local Plan. The emerging Plan (para 4.32) states that Secondary Settlements were identified *"to allow for some very small-scale organic growth within these settlements, to help retain the vitality and viability of the existing services or facilities in the future",* (in the case of Coolham this includes the school). As such, it is our view that the modest growth of 9no. homes proposed by the appeal scheme is appropriate to achieve the Council's aims of achieving appropriate organic growth to sustain villages like Coolham.

7. The Council's statement states that the appeal site has not been included in the proposed Secondary Settlement boundary for Coolham because it acts as a 'transitional area' and

[1] APP/R3650/W/21/3278196, 11 January 2022

that it's development would '*diminish the quality and importance the separation makes in defining the settlement edge'*. As the Inspector will note from the plans and when visiting the appeal site, the site sits between existing built form, including the playing fields of the local school to the west and other residential development to the east. As such, the appeal site does not define the outer edge of the settlement. The development of the site would have the effect of conjoining the two proposed settlement edges to create a natural infill and would not result in the outward extension of the village into uncontained open countryside. This position is supported by the Council's own Landscape Consultant who states, *'whilst not within the BUAB, the site would not be perceived as extending into the wider countryside'*. We are of the view that the proposal accords fully with the requirements of Policy Ship HD1 of the Shipley Neighbourhood Plan which supports development that infills gaps, is within the continuity of existing buildings, and does not result in the outward extension of villages.

8. The government recognises the importance and power of small and medium scale sites to deliver the identified housing needs of an area, with paragraph 73 of the NPPF stating that '*small and medium sized sites […] are essential for Small and Medium Enterprise housebuilders to deliver new homes and are often built out relatively quickly'*. The appeal site is being promoted by Devine Homes, a local house builder with a track record of delivering high quality housing developments in the Horsham district and across Sussex and Surrey. Once permitted, the site is expected to be built out within 2 years and occupations to follow thereafter, thereby affording 9 families the opportunity to occupy a suitable home.

9. With regard to the local school (William Penn Primary School) which is located directly to the west of the appeal site; this school is a 0.5 form entry (FE) with a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 15 meaning it admits 15 children in each of the 7no. year groups (105 children in total). The latest evidence on the WSCC website (see Appendix 1) regarding school places offered for September 2025 shows that of the 15 places available in Reception year, 13 places were offered which satisfied all the expressed preferences. The data shows that at present, the school only has 83 children on its roll, meaning that it has 22 places available. This shows that the school is not at capacity and even suggests that the modest growth of the village is important to ensure the school remains viable in the future.

10. The 5no. appeal decisions included within the Council's statement are not considered to be relevant or comparable in context to the appeal scheme. Three of the decisions were dismissed on issues mainly relating to matters not relevant to those being considered in the case of this appeal (water neutrality and heritage); and the other two were sites located in completely different contexts with different (far reduced) sustainability merits. As such we do not consider the appeal decisions quoted are useful to this appeal and would suggest that no weight is afforded to these examples.

11. The Council has concluded its argument on this matter by stating that the appeal scheme would undermine the current and emerging spatial strategy, and that the benefit of additional housing would not outweigh the harm arising. Apart from saying that the proposal is contrary to the adopted and emerging spatial strategy outlined in Policies 2, 3 and 4 of the HDPF, the Council is not clear about precisely why this conflict amounts to an adverse impact and offers no technical reasoning behind this claim.

12. The NPPF is clear in paragraph 11d that where relevant policies are out of date, permission should be granted, unless it can be shown that identified impacts would significantly outweigh the identified benefits (this is the 'tilted balance'). We are of the view that the Council's Statement (penultimate paragraph in 'Conclusions') still applies the wrong test, and instead of outlining why the proposal results in adverse impacts which significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, it has again balanced its judgement on a view that the 'modest' benefits of 9no homes does not outweigh the harm. This is not the tilted balance.

13. In our view, the harm arising in this case is limited only to a conflict with an out-of-date policy position, which in any case, is justified through the application of other material considerations including the acute housing land supply position. There are no technical impacts resulting from the proposal that could be described as 'adverse', nor any impacts that would be so significant as to outweigh the benefits of 9no new homes.

Reason for Refusal 2 (Design, Form and Appearance)

14. The Council contends that due to its build pattern the appeal proposal would be a *'formalised and urban'* form of development that would '*detract from the informal rural character of the site and surroundings'* which fails to '*protect, conserve or enhance the landscape character of the area'*.

15. It is unclear where this judgement has come from, as the Council's Landscape consultant did not object to the scheme, but rather acknowledged that there is capacity to accommodate development within the site owing to the surrounding context. The Landscape comments did not take issue with the quantum of units proposed nor the density or layout of the site. Whilst some detailed design suggestions were made by the Landscape consultant, no suggestion was made in the Landscape comments that the proposal would result in any adverse harm to the landscape character of the wider area.

The Landscape comments say:

> *'Whilst not within the BUAB, the site would not be perceived as extending into the wider countryside. This reduces the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposed development'.*

16. Given the support for the proposal from the Council's own landscape advisor, it is unclear why the Council has included RfR2 and refused the scheme on matters relating to design, form and appearance. Whilst the appeal proposal will inevitably change the character of the site, the site has been designed to take cues from the neighbouring farmstead character, and the location of the proposal is very well screened from public views, with a backdrop of built form. As such, the effects on the landscape and village character of the village and its surrounds will not be adverse, and this is not a reason that would '*significantly and demonstrably'* outweigh the benefits of new housing.

Third Party Representations

17. It is noted that 6 public representations have been received in relation to this appeal, from 4 different addresses. The majority of the representations relate to matters that our submissions have already addressed.

18. With regard to the matter raised relating to flood risk at the northwestern corner of the site, we would re-iterate that the appeal scheme has been informed by a detailed Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy (prepared by Motion) which can be reviewed as part of this appeal submission. The FRA and Drainage Strategy clarifies that the appeal site is located wholly within Flood Zone 1 (low risk of flooding) with the EA mapping showing the north-west corner as having some areas at low risk of surface water flooding. The Drainage Strategy details how the proposed on-site attenuation basins (x2) and underground storage will ensure surface water flows are discharged at appropriate (greenfield) rates and will not increase flood risk elsewhere as required by NPPF 178.

19. Whilst we sympathise with the flooding problems experienced by the representee, the appeal scheme is not required to fix existing off-site flooding issues. Rather, the proposal must demonstrate that it will not increase flood risk elsewhere, and the method for this is outlined in the submitted FRA and Drainage Strategy. The FRA and Drainage Strategy has been scrutinised by both the Council's Drainage Engineer and the LLFA, and no objection has been raised subject to a condition for drainage details to be submitted. Condition 4 has been drafted to that effect which we have no objection to.

List of Suggested Conditions

20. We are content with the list of conditions proposed by the Council, save for Condition 5 which requires the submission and approval of parking layout within the site. The submitted plans already show parking provision (both garages and surface bays) therefore we suggest this condition is re-worded to only require the provision of parking as per the approved plans. Suggested wording below:

Condition 5 – suggested wording

Pre-Occupation Condition: No dwelling hereby permitted shall be occupied until provision for car parking associated with that dwelling is provided in accordance with the approved details. The areas of land so provided shall thereafter be retained for the parking of vehicles.

Reason: To ensure that adequate and satisfactory provision is made for the parking of vehicles clear of all highways in accordance with Policy 40 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015)

Summary

21. The Council notes in its conclusion that the benefits arising from the scheme (i.e. the delivery of housing) are 'modest'. Whilst we would agree that the number of homes

proposed (9no.) can be described as a modest number (appropriate to its location); the weight that should be afforded to the delivery of these homes is nevertheless a benefit of significant weight in the planning balance of this appeal and as a public benefit.

22. There is no doubt that the benefits that would result from the appeal scheme are significant, and there are no adverse impacts that have been identified by the Council or others that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the delivery of these benefits. As such, having regard to the relevant planning policies context including direction from the NPPF and other material considerations; it is considered that the planning balance lies in favour of the proposal, and it is respectively requested that this appeal is allowed.

23. A summary of the benefits of the scheme is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of Benefits

Social Benefits	The provision of a mix of **9no. dwellings** in a sustainable location, to add to the much-needed housing stock in the district, representing a very substantial benefit in the context of the Council's housing supply and delivery position.
	The provision of a suitable **mix of house** types and sizes (including bungalows) to accord with identified local needs representing a very substantial benefit in the context of the pressing need for housing of all types and sizes.
	Public open space provision and retention and enhancement of existing landscape features for the enjoyment of incoming and existing residents, as well as private outdoor amenity space for each dwelling.
	Provision of n**ew homes in the heart of the village**, enabling new residents to support the vitality of existing local facilities such as the primary school and village pub, and enjoying convenient connections to the wider strategic highways network.
Economic Benefits	The generation of **employment** related to construction.
	New Homes Bonus **payments**, Council Tax, and CIL receipts.
	Contributions to the local economy by future residents.
Environmental Benefits	Retention and enhancement of existing mature **planting** along the site boundaries in order to retain the verdant character of the site and to protect wider landscape views.
	Provision of **ecological enhancement** measures, including mitigation measures to prevent harm to sensitive habitats and to achieve at least 10% Biodiversity Net Gain.
	Protection from flooding for the lifetime of the development by utilising sustainable drainage systems which also provide ecological and landscape benefits.
	Careful **landscape design** to produce a development of the highest quality, ensuring it respects the local area.
	Design of the homes to meet and exceed current **environmental standards**, including adopting a fabric first approach and the use of

Social Benefits	The provision of a mix of **9no. dwellings** in a sustainable location, to add to the much-needed housing stock in the district, representing a very substantial benefit in the context of the Council's housing supply and delivery position.
	The provision of a suitable **mix of house** types and sizes (including bungalows) to accord with identified local needs representing a very substantial benefit in the context of the pressing need for housing of all types and sizes.
	Public open space provision and retention and enhancement of existing landscape features for the enjoyment of incoming and existing residents, as well as private outdoor amenity space for each dwelling.
	Provision of n**ew homes in the heart of the village**, enabling new residents to support the vitality of existing local facilities such as the primary school and village pub, and enjoying convenient connections to the wider strategic highways network.
	sustainable energy technologies including EV car charging at each dwelling.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Angela Moore MRTPI
Associate Planner – Environment & Social Impact Assessment

SLR Consulting Limited

APPENDIX 1

West Sussex County Council: Starting School 2026

Apply online: www.westsussex.gov.uk/admissions

west sussex county council

Information for Parents

Starting School September 2026

How to apply for a school place

Apply online by 15 January 2026



Name of School Headteacher Postal Address Telephone Number E-Mail Address Website DfE Number	School Type, Age Range, Supplementary Information Form (SIF) (If yes see Appendix 2)	Expected number on roll Sept. 2025	Published Admission Number 2026/27	Number of preferences expressed before the deadline for September 2025	Number of places offered at allocation date (16 April 2025) for Sept. 2025	How places were allocated for September 2025 (See over subscription criteria for details)	Criteria and distance (in metres) of the last place offered at allocation (16 April 2025) for oversubscribed schools
Burgess Hill **Sheddingdean Community Primary** Mrs H Riley Petworth Drive Burgess Hill RH15 8JT (01444) 246532 office@sheddingdean.co.uk www.sheddingdeanschool.org.uk 2235	Community 4-11 NO SIF	209	30	33	30	Children with an EHCP – 0 Criteria 1 – 0 Criteria 2 - 0 Criteria 3 - 0 Criteria 4 - 6 Criteria 5 - 10 Criteria 6 - 3 Criteria 7 - 0 Criteria 8 - 11	Criteria: 8 Distance: 1484.27
Burgess Hill **St Wilfrid's Catholic Primary** Mrs N McCarthy School Close Queen Elizabeth Avenue Burgess Hill RH15 9RJ (01444) 235254 office@stwilfridsbh.org.uk www.st-wilfrids-burgesshill.w-sussex.sch.uk 3357	Academy 4-11 YES SIF	430	60	60	60	See Appendix 1 North	See Appendix 1 North
Colgate Primary Mrs R Winn Blackhouse Road Colgate Horsham RH13 6HS (01293) 851254 office@colgateprimary.org.uk www.colgate.w-sussex.sch.uk 2015	Community 4-11 NO SIF	126	20	23	20	Children with an EHCP – 0 Criteria 1 – 0 Criteria 2 - 0 Criteria 3 - 0 Criteria 4 - 3 Criteria 5 - 4 Criteria 6 - 5 Criteria 7 - 0 Criteria 8 - 8	Criteria: 8 Distance: 2681.54
Coolham **William Penn Primary** Mr C Brookes Brooks Green Road Coolham Horsham, RH13 8GR (01403) 741274 office@williampenn.co.uk www.williampenn.co.uk 3042	Voluntary Controlled 4-11 NO SIF	83	15	13	13	All applicants who requested this school were offered a place.	N/A