

From: Planning@horsham.gov.uk <Planning@horsham.gov.uk>
Sent: 14 April 2026 12:27:54 UTC+01:00
To: "Planning" <planning@horsham.gov.uk>
Subject: **Comments for Planning Application DC/26/0366
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 14/04/2026 12:27 PM.

Application Summary

Address: Land North West of Southwater

Proposal: Outline planning application, with all matters reserved (except for primary access to the highway) for a phased development comprising: the demolition of existing buildings and the construction of up to 1,000 residential dwellings (including affordable housing) (Use Class C3); up to 80 specialist accommodation units (Use Class C2); 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

Case Officer: Matthew Porter

[Click for further information](#)

Customer Details

Address: 56 Chessall Avenue Southwater Horsham

Comments Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Reasons for comment:

- Design
- Highway Access and Parking
- Loss of General Amenity
- Other
- Overdevelopment
- Privacy Light and Noise
- Trees and Landscaping

Comments:

I am objecting to the Berkeley Homes proposal to build 1,000 homes on farmland northwest of Southwater for the following reasons (and more)...

Neighbourhood Plan:

Southwater residents voted in a democratic referendum in June 2021 to approve a Neighbourhood Plan that set a clear and legally binding limit on new housing in the village - between 420 and 460 homes. That was agreed through a proper community-led process. Berkeley Homes is now proposing more than double that number - 1,000 homes. This is not a slight overshoot. It is a 117% breach of the limit that residents themselves set.

National planning rules state clearly that where a proposal conflicts with the current and in-date Neighbourhood Plan, planning permission should not normally be granted. The Southwater Neighbourhood Plan is recent, legally adopted, and carries full weight. Berkeley Homes has provided no independent evidence to justify overriding a community plan that was voted for by local people just five years ago. Housing planners may state that the plan is "out of date" being 5 years old but an online petition against this proposal has already attracted over 3000 signatories so the community sentiment back in 2021 is still current. I ask that the Berkeley Homes 1,000-home proposal be refused because it directly and fundamentally conflicts with the adopted Southwater Neighbourhood Plan on the number of homes allowed.

Flooding: I currently live in a Berkeley Homes house built on the cow field and mine and my neighbours gardens all along our street significantly flood several times a year. We've had numerous trees in our own garden 'drown' and die because they are waterlogged. The majority of our garden is unusable for several months of the year and I know our neighbours suffer the same. Adding more houses directly around my home further increases the risk of flooding and could potentially make our houses uninsurable in the future. Bonfire Hill is impassable when it floods, as is King Edward Close in Christs Hospital. The grass under the old oak tree sits on Chessall Avenue is frequently submerged in floodwater. The entire site sits on Weald Clay - a soil type officially classified by the Environment Agency as having almost no ability to absorb water. This is the fundamental hydrological character of this land. It is not a marginal issue that can be engineered away. On Weald Clay, standard drainage solutions - soakaways, permeable paving, infiltration trenches - simply do not work and our garden is living proof of this. Berkeley Homes would have to rely entirely on large above-ground storage

ponds, underground tanks, and carefully managed outflows to local streams and ditches. The soak-away ponds already built on the estate are always dry while our gardens flood. They simply don't work. At the scale of 1,000 homes, with thousands of roofs, roads and driveways replacing farmland, this is an enormous engineering challenge. Planning rules now require drainage systems to cope with a 40% increase in rainfall intensity to account for climate change. The 2025 drought - the worst in 132 years - demonstrates this is not a theoretical risk. Berkeley Homes has not provided an independently verified drainage strategy that proves this is achievable.

Gardens on the Blakes Farm estate nearby have flooded repeatedly over many years - direct evidence of what happens when this clay soil is built over without adequate drainage.

Amenities: it is already almost impossible to get a doctors appointment and my dentist is out of the county. Further houses and residents is simply going to add to this. The A24 is already heavily congested as are the roads around the village. We simply do not have the infrastructure for 1000 more houses and potentially 3000+ people.

Water

Water scarcity is a real, unresolved infrastructure constraint - and the removal of the formal water neutrality planning condition has not changed the physical facts on the ground. In October 2025, Horsham District Council announced that the 'water neutrality' requirement - which had paused large housing developments in this area for several years - had been lifted. This has been used to suggest the water supply problem is solved. It is not. Removing a planning rule does not create more water. It simply removes the formal mechanism that required the problem to be addressed before building proceeded. The Sussex North Water Supply Zone, which serves Southwater, is a designated water-stressed area. Southern Water has itself confirmed that cumulative housing growth in this zone creates risks to its ability to sustainably manage groundwater abstraction at Hardham. The physical constraint has not gone away - it has been administratively set aside. The 2025 drought was the worst in over 130 years. Hosepipe bans were imposed. The Environment Agency confirmed England needed a full winter of above-average rainfall to recover - which did not materialise. England already faces a projected water deficit of nearly 5 billion litres per day by 2050, with Sussex among the worst-affected regions. We also have direct local evidence that the water supply for Southwater is already under strain. On the Broadacres estate - a development on the same side of the village - we had to remove water-saving flow restrictors from our taps and showers because we were not getting enough water pressure or volume for basic daily needs. This is happening now, before 1,000 more homes are added. In addition, Horsham District Council's own water demand monitoring is misaligned with Southern Water's published consumption figures by 21%. This means the official planning

calculations used to argue that water supply is adequate are themselves unreliable.

Woodland and wildlife

Living directly opposite the fields and woodland of the proposed site, I frequently see and hear bats, owls, deer, foxes and a varied amount of birds from Linnets to Redwings and Goldcrests. This area is a haven for the wildlife that call it home and to destroy it would be catastrophic. Have we learnt nothing over the last decade? Climate change is a real threat, over population and human intervention is killing our wildlife and destroying habitats, majestic trees, flora, fauna and ancient woodland to replace it with a concrete jungle and a few man made 'ponds'. We simply cannot sit back and allow this to happen. We owe it to our wildlife and our countryside to protect them.

Courtland Wood and Smith's Copse also sit immediately alongside the proposed development site. Both are designated ancient woodlands - habitats that have existed continuously for over 400 years.

Under national planning law, ancient woodland has near-absolute protection. It cannot be recreated. It cannot be compensated for by planting trees elsewhere. Once damaged, it is gone. The risk is not limited to direct physical encroachment. The massive drainage engineering that would be required on this Weald Clay site - large attenuation ponds, underground storage tanks, and controlled drainage channels - would change the movement of water through the soil across

a wide area around the site. Changes to groundwater levels and soil moisture can damage and kill ancient woodland trees through their root systems without any physical entry into the woodland. Berkeley Homes has not provided any independent assessment of this specific hydrological risk to

Courtland Wood and Smith's Copse. A developer's own consultant report is not sufficient for a risk that is permanent and irreversible.

These extra houses will also mean our village will effectively become a town, linking us to Christ's Hospital and removing all our beautiful countryside. I use the Downlink every week both by bike and on foot and to see the abundance of flora and fauna is beneficial to our mental health. Did Covid teach us nothing? We need to keep these open spaces, fields, trees, wildlife, plants and nature and we need it in abundance. If these houses are built, we've lost that forever. We look out onto such a beautiful landscape and skyline. Soaring buzzards and kites, hovering kestrels, cows and deer. All of this will be gone, never to return. In its place will be rows and rows of houses, cars, pollution and noise. At night all you can hear are the foxes and owls. All that will be gone. Berkeleys can't even sell the houses they've already built here. The destruction, noise and dust created from more houses going up will also impact heavily on the residents too.

I also do not believe there is a genuine need for local houses actually within Southwater where employment is limited. Where housing is intended to accommodate residents displaced from

other municipalities, it is essential that those homes are in places with good access to employment, schools, services and public transport. Southwater currently lacks all of these at the scale this development would demand. Placing displaced residents in a location where they cannot access work, education or services without a car does not constitute a housing solution - it creates a dormitory settlement. It is also notable that Berkeley Homes has previously marketed properties in Southwater to overseas investors. This raises a legitimate question about whether meeting local housing need is genuinely the purpose of this scheme, or whether it is primarily a commercial proposition for an investor market.

In 2021, Southwater residents voted to set our housing contribution to Horsham District at approximately 420 to 460 homes. That figure was arrived at carefully, based on what the village's infrastructure could support. Since that vote, two large developments have been approved that already far exceed this figure. Broadacres (around 350 homes) is under construction. The Horsham Golf Club site (around 800 homes) has planning permission. Together, that is already 1,150 homes - two and a half times the figure residents voted for.

Berkeley Homes now wants to add another 1,000 on top - bringing the total to over 2,150 new homes. That is nearly five times the Neighbourhood Plan figure. That would represent a 62.9% increase on top of what is already in the pipeline. There is no planning principle that requires a single village to absorb this level of growth. Housing need exists across Horsham District and should be distributed across many locations - not concentrated on a village that has already done more than its fair share. The principle that brownfield land - previously developed sites - should be built on before greenfield farmland is a core planning principle. It protects the countryside, reduces the infrastructure cost of new development, and puts homes closer to existing services and employment. The former Novartis pharmaceutical factory site in North Horsham is a ready example. It already has planning permission for 244 affordable homes, granted in October 2025. It is closer to Horsham town centre, rail services, and the district's main employment areas. It requires no new road infrastructure to be genuinely sustainable.

West Sussex County Council is currently investing in bus and cycling improvements along the A264, A281 and Horsham-Crawley-Gatwick corridor. These investments make development along those corridors genuinely sustainable. None of this investment reaches Southwater.

Horsham District Council's own December 2024 Brownfield Register makes the position plain. Across the entire district, HDC has identified just 18 brownfield sites with a combined capacity of approximately 827 dwellings, covering around 20.98 hectares. That total includes sites already under construction, sites with lapsed permissions, and sites that have been in the pipeline for

years without progressing. The largest single site -the former Novartis site in North Horsham, with permission for 300 dwellings - remains unbuilt. Several other sites with permissions granted as far back as 2014 have still not been implemented. Berkeley Homes is seeking permission for 1,000 homes on a single greenfield site. That is more homes than the entire brownfield land supply HDC has been able to identify across the whole district. Before approving the destruction of 141 hectares of open farmland at Southwater, the Council must demonstrate that its brownfield pipeline has been fully explored, actively promoted, and genuinely exhausted. There is no evidence that this has been done. Granting permission for large-scale greenfield release at Southwater while brownfield sites across the district sit unbuilt and unprogressed is not consistent with the brownfield-first principle that lies at the heart of national planning policy. Please leave what little we have left of our countryside and wildlife for future generations to enjoy and respect.

Kind regards

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**Horsham
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