

From: Planning@horsham.gov.uk
Sent: 17 March 2026 21:14
To: Planning
Subject: Comments for Planning Application DC/26/0266

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 17/03/2026 9:14 PM.

Application Summary

Address:	Thakeham Mushrooms Storrington Road Thakeham Pulborough West Sussex RH20 3DY
Proposal:	Demolition of existing buildings and the redevelopment of the site to provide 150 dwellings, including affordable housing, land for the community land trust, works to public right of way and associated landscaping, open space and infrastructure.
Case Officer:	Sam Whitehouse

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Customer Details

Address:	14 Massey Close Thakeham Pulborough
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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:	Re: Objection to planning application DC/26/0266 - Land West of Storrington Road / Former Mushroom Farm, Thakeham I object to this application in the strongest possible terms. This proposal is being presented as though reducing the number of homes from the previously refused 247 to 150 somehow solves the problem. It does not. The central problem was never just the number. The central problem is that this is the wrong site, in the wrong place, for development on this scale. That is not just my view. It is the conclusion already reached on this land. Bellway's previous

application on the same site, DC/24/0021, was refused and the appeal was dismissed on 13 June 2025. The Inspector did not reject that scheme on some narrow technicality. The Inspector found that the proposal was not sustainably located, that Thakeham's residents rely heavily on private vehicles, that there is only one bus service a day in each direction, and that the 247-home proposal was "grossly out of scale" with Thakeham and its limited existing functionality. The Inspector also found there to be at least one sequentially preferable alternative site in flood risk terms. □

Planning Inspectorate +4

That appeal decision is highly material. It is not something Bellway can sidestep simply by cutting the number down and trying again. The same site constraints remain. The same village remains. The same weak transport base remains. The same fundamental issue remains: Thakeham is a small village, not a location capable of absorbing repeated estate-scale expansion without serious harm. Horsham District Council itself publicly said, after winning the appeal, that the site was not sustainably located for that scale of growth and highlighted the village's limited facilities and distance to key services. □

Horsham District Council +1

The legal starting point is the development plan. The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that where an application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan, including a neighbourhood plan that forms part of that plan, planning permission should not usually be granted. □

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That matters here because the application is not just in tension with local policy. It conflicts with it.

The Thakeham Neighbourhood Plan is part of the development plan. Its vision is explicit: future development should maintain the character of the parish through appropriate building styles, low densities and open green spaces in order to mitigate its impact. □

Horsham District Council

The Plan also identifies the village's weaknesses in plain terms: poor public transport connections, poor cycling and walking links, reducing landscape quality, poorly maintained infrastructure including roads, power and water networks, and the fact that sunken lanes form part of the B2139 and road widening is constrained. □

Horsham District Council +1

Those points go directly to the suitability of this proposal. They are not background commentary. They are precisely why another substantial development here is inappropriate. It is also important to be clear about what the Thakeham Neighbourhood Plan actually says about this site. Policy Thakeham3, covering the "Horticultural Land off Storrington Road" or "Mushroom Site", does not allocate it for housing. It says that, provided all reasonable efforts have been made to secure agricultural and horticultural use, redevelopment for certain other uses would be permitted, namely recreational use, solar, or light industrial/commercial/tourism use within the existing developed area, with the remainder returned to open agricultural use. Housing is not what that policy envisages. □

Horsham District Council

That point is routinely blurred by promoters of this site, but the wording matters. The neighbourhood plan did not identify this land as the next obvious housing estate. Quite the opposite.

The Horsham District Planning Framework points the same way. Policy 26 protects the countryside. Policy 32 requires high quality development based on a clear understanding of the local physical, social, economic, environmental and policy context. Policy 40 requires development to be appropriate to the scale of the transport infrastructure and to support sustainable transport choices. □

Horsham District Council +2

This application fails across all three.

On transport, the problem is obvious and longstanding. This is not a settlement where people can realistically live day to day without the car. The Inspector has already said so. The idea that another 150 homes can be comfortably absorbed here is divorced from the reality of how Thakeham functions. The road network is already constrained. Storrington Road is narrow in places, includes difficult geometry, and sits within the wider context of a village whose own neighbourhood plan recognises physical limits on road widening. □

Planning Inspectorate +2

That is before getting into demolition and construction traffic.

This site is not a clean field-edge build. It involves demolition of substantial existing buildings and then years of intensive construction. That means HGVs, muck-away, delivery traffic,

contractor movements, dust, noise, reversing alarms, vibration and disruption. The Parish Council's own traffic-calming work shows that local traffic and safety are already live issues in the village. □

thakehamparish.gov.uk

That does not mean every development must be refused because roads are imperfect. It does mean that when a village is already acknowledged to have constrained roads, poor transport links and limited non-car alternatives, another 150-home scheme with major demolition and build-out impacts cannot simply be waved through on the basis of generic transport modelling. The flood risk issue is equally serious.

Massey Close already has flooding concerns. Residents have seen what has happened at Abingworth Meadows and are entitled to be sceptical of assurances that drainage will all be fine this time. The application refers to changes in levels and to elevating parts of the site, yet it does not appear to give neighbouring residents the kind of precise, intelligible explanation they need: how much land will be raised; where water will go in ordinary rainfall; what happens in exceedance events; how runoff will be contained during construction; what attenuation will actually be installed; how long-term maintenance will be secured; and how runoff onto existing homes and gardens will be prevented.

Those are not side questions. They are the whole question.

The NPPF requires a sequential, risk-based approach and says development should not be permitted where there are reasonably available sites in areas with a lower risk of flooding. It also requires decision-makers to ensure flood risk is not increased elsewhere. □

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Again, this is not theoretical. The Inspector has already found, for this site, that there was at least one other sequentially preferable site and that the previous scheme conflicted with national policy in flood risk terms. □

Planning Inspectorate

So Bellway is not approaching this with a clean record. They are approaching it from a position where the same site has already failed at appeal on flood-risk policy grounds. In those circumstances, the Council should require absolute clarity and not broad reassurance. If the effect of the scheme is to raise land behind Massey Close and push built form hard up against an existing residential edge, then the burden is on the applicant to prove, with proper engineering evidence, that existing residents will not bear the consequences. Anything less is not good enough.

The direct impact on Massey Close is, in my view, one of the most damning parts of this application.

A separation of around 2 to 2.5 metres between rear boundaries is not a serious buffer. It is a token gesture. On flat land it would already be poor. If the site levels are raised, it becomes worse. It means a greater sense of enclosure, more overlooking, more visual dominance and a greater loss of privacy. It also means that whatever little separation currently exists on plan is even less meaningful in real life.

The Council should not look at this in abstract site-layout terms. It should ask a simple question: if this were being proposed behind officers' or councillors' own gardens, with uncertain level changes and years of demolition immediately beyond the fence line, would anyone seriously describe that as acceptable neighbour treatment?

National policy requires a high standard of amenity for existing and future users. □

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This does not achieve that.

There is also the issue of loss of light and outlook. You have explained that evening summer sunlight will be affected. That is entirely credible if built development is placed immediately behind existing homes on raised land. Even where no single technical daylight standard is triggered, planning judgment still has to be exercised. A scheme can be oppressive and unreasonable even if an applicant's consultant avoids a formal breach on paper. Policy is not a game of limbo.

And this leads to another point that I do not think Bellway has answered properly: why is there not a proper landscape buffer to Massey Close?

The site is large. The layout is a choice. If the applicant has land available for open space elsewhere, it cannot seriously argue that pressing development right up against Massey Close was the only option. If anything, the existence of green space elsewhere exposes the weakness of the design approach. A proper landscaped stand-off could have been provided to protect existing residents from noise, dust, overlooking and visual dominance. It was not. That is not an inevitability of the site. It is a design decision, and a poor one.

The demolition phase raises a separate and very serious issue: asbestos and contamination

risk.

You have said the buildings contain asbestos and are roughly 30 metres from homes. If that is right, then the application should not be allowed to drift forward on vague promises of "management". Where demolition close to occupied housing is proposed, the Council should know exactly what is in those buildings, how removal will be sequenced, what monitoring will take place, how dust will be suppressed, what air-quality controls will be used, what emergency procedures exist if contamination escapes, and how residents immediately adjoining the site will be protected in practice.

The NPPF is clear that where a site is affected by contamination or land stability issues, responsibility for securing a safe development rests with the developer and/or landowner, and that decisions should take account of the likely effects, including cumulative effects, of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment. □

GOV.UK

So this is not something that can be dismissed as "construction detail for later". The proximity of the demolition to existing occupied homes makes it material now.

The same is true of dust and air quality. If the applicant's own air quality work identifies medium and high risk areas for dust, then the Council should not accept generic boilerplate mitigation as though that settles the matter. When homes sit very close to the site boundary, the issue is not whether some mitigation wording exists. The issue is whether the impacts are genuinely capable of being reduced to an acceptable level. On the information described, that is far from clear. □

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Ecology is another area where this application looks worryingly soft.

Dormice and bats are not optional extras in planning. They are protected species. If they are using buildings or habitats on or around the site, the Council must be satisfied that the survey position is robust, current and complete before granting permission. The same applies to black redstart, which you say you have recorded on the site over a period of years. That species is not something that should be casually missed if the baseline work has been done properly. The danger here is not just ecological harm. It is legal error. If relevant protected species evidence exists and has not been properly captured or assessed, then the Council risks determining the application on an incomplete ecological baseline. That is bad planning and bad law.

The neighbourhood plan also places clear weight on conserving and protecting the parish's natural environment, habitats and wildlife biodiversity. □

Horsham District Council

So there is a direct policy route here as well as the legal species protection route.

Another point that deserves far more scrutiny is the so-called "community benefit" of land being handed to the Community Land Trust.

At present, that sounds more like a talking point than a secured planning benefit. Bellway's own consultation material says land would be transferred to the Community Land Trust "for the benefit of the local community", with examples including affordable housing, community retail space or some other community use. That is not certainty. That is a menu. □

Bellway Storrington Road

If the use is undefined, if there is no binding restriction on housing, if the trigger and terms are unclear, and if future development remains possible, then that "gift" should be given little or no planning weight. It is not enough for a developer to hint at a possible community use and invite everyone to imagine the best version of it. Planning weight attaches to secured, defined benefits, not to vague promises.

That point becomes even more important when looked at against the history of this site and the wider Bellway landholding. There is public material showing Bellway promoting both the mushroom site itself and a wider landholding. □

Horsham Planning Policy Consultations +1

So the concern about future phases is not paranoid. It is grounded. If 150 homes are now being put forward on part of the land, with another parcel dressed up as a future "community" opportunity without clear legal restriction, then it is perfectly rational to ask whether this is simply phase one by another name.

That concern is reinforced, not reduced, by Bellway's consultation conduct.

The Parish Council notice for the public consultation shows the event was on 14 January 2026.

□

thakehamparish.gov.uk

On your account, residents of Massey Close did not receive letters, despite claims that letters were delivered more widely, and Bellway then failed to follow through on a promised meeting

before submitting the application. Poor consultation is not normally a standalone refusal reason in itself, but it is highly relevant when an applicant later suggests that local concerns have been listened to and addressed. On what you describe, that plainly did not happen.

And that matters because the residents most directly affected by the scheme appear to have been the ones least meaningfully engaged.

I also think there is a wider cumulative impact point here that should be made harder than most objectors make it.

Bellway is not proposing this site in a vacuum. Thakeham has already absorbed major change. The Inspector noted that Abingworth Meadows extended the settlement materially, by around a further 200 dwellings, and that other elements proposed there had not all fully come forward. □
Planning Inspectorate

So the Council is not being asked whether Thakeham can absorb one isolated change. It is being asked whether, after substantial recent growth and ongoing local concern, another major scheme on adjacent land should now be permitted despite clear local infrastructure weakness, weak transport sustainability and unresolved flooding anxiety. The cumulative answer should be no.

This is where Bellway will try to hide behind the housing land supply position. They will say Horsham needs homes, that the Council's supply position is weak, and that this site can help. The Inspector was fully aware of that context in 2025 and still dismissed the appeal. The Inspector expressly concluded that there were no considerations of sufficient weight to justify departing from the development plan. □
Planning Inspectorate

That is a devastating point against this application.

Because once a recent Inspector has looked at this exact site, in this exact village, against this exact housing pressure backdrop, and still said no, Bellway is left with a real problem: it now has to prove that this new version has genuinely overcome the underlying reasons why the site failed.

On the material described, it has not.

It has not fixed the sustainability problem.

It has not fixed the transport reality.

It has not fixed the flood-risk concern.

It has not shown proper protection for Massey Close.

It has not demonstrated a serious demolition/asbestos strategy at application stage.

It has not provided confidence on ecology.

It has not secured the supposed community benefits with enough certainty.

And it has not answered the legitimate concern that this is simply the start of a wider phased development strategy.

For all of those reasons, this application should be refused.

The most honest way to describe this proposal is that it is a smaller version of the wrong idea.

The number has changed. The planning problems have not.

I therefore ask Horsham District Council to refuse planning permission.

Yours faithfully,
[Redacted Signature]

Kind regards

Telephone:

Email: planning@horsham.gov.uk



**Horsham
District
Council**



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