

The following comments respond to specific statements made within Thakeham Parish Council's consultation response on DC/26/0945. They are intended to assist the Local Planning Authority by identifying where assertions are unsupported by evidence, where conclusions are based on assumptions rather than the submitted application documents, and where matters raised are not material planning considerations

Supporting Documentation:

Appendix A – Water running past Springett Close towards Strawberry Close residents.

Appendix B – Questions over the current condition of the swale bank.

Appendix C – Privacy/overlooking caused by the raised bank.

Appendix D – Purchasers expectations regarding management of the Buffer Zone.

Appendix E – A viable alternative route exists.

Appendix F – Even supporters of the planning application oppose public access.

3.2 The curve of the land that contains the swale is divided so that the ownership of the land containing the scheme to the north (adjacent to the properties in Springett Close) is owned and maintained by the residents to whose properties the scheme is designed to protect and not at the expense of the non-Springett Close residents in Thakeham Parish.

Comment: I find this recommendation difficult to understand and unclear. The flood mitigation scheme was not implemented solely for the benefit of properties within Springett Close. It also provides protection to properties within Strawberry Close (Appendix A), many of which experienced significant flooding during the winter of 2024/25, in some cases to a greater extent than properties in Springett Close.

Furthermore, the suggestion that only those properties immediately adjoining the swale should be responsible for its maintenance appears arbitrary and is inconsistent with the way infrastructure across the wider Abingworth Meadows development is managed. Residents collectively contribute towards the maintenance of shared estate infrastructure, including features that do not directly benefit every individual property.

This recommendation appears to single out a small group of residents for a different funding arrangement without any clear planning justification or explanation as to why the established principle of shared estate infrastructure should not apply in this instance.

Introducing a different approach solely for the swale would create an inconsistent and potentially unfair precedent. **In any event, the future allocation of maintenance costs is not a material planning consideration and should not influence the determination of this application.**

3.4 That said transfer of a boundary inside the Buffer Zone is clearly mapped out by deed, covenant and with the aid of Bellway engineers as to not endanger the bank of the southern side of the Swale. TPC notes that after conversations with Bellway site team engineers had mentioned webbing/matting had been used to stabilise the banks and we would not be willing to make a guess on where is best.

Comment: TPC state that, following discussions with Bellway engineers, webbing or matting has been used to stabilise the swale banks. However, no evidence has been provided to demonstrate that such stabilisation measures have been installed or to confirm their specification or effectiveness.

Furthermore, Appendix B contains recent photographs showing significant longitudinal cracking along the crest of the swale bank adjacent to the proposed Public Right of Way. Whilst I am not qualified to conclude that the bank has failed, the visible cracking raises legitimate questions regarding the condition and long-term stability of the drainage feature.

Who would be responsible for funding any future repairs should the swale banks deteriorate due to foot traffic? Would it be TPC or the residents who bear the costs due to TPC's PROW scheme? Given the differing views expressed regarding ownership and maintenance responsibilities elsewhere within the consultation responses, this further demonstrates that the long-term management arrangements remain unclear.

3.5 TPC is disappointed as we had previously agreed with HDC and Bellway Homes across numerous site visits and meetings that a boundary would be submitted within an application (see above 3.3i and ii). TPC had agreed in 2025 that we would accommodate a Swale system/trench in the Buffer Zone to help residents flooding problems as long as the Buffer Zone would be divided up accordingly and this has not come forward on an application, even though previously agreed.

Comment: TPC state that agreements were reached with Horsham District Council and Bellway Homes across numerous site visits and meetings, and that it had been agreed the Buffer Zone would be divided accordingly. These are presented as statements of fact; however, no evidence has been provided to support these assertions.

I would therefore respectfully request that TPC provide copies of the relevant meeting minutes, correspondence, plans or other documentary evidence which support these statements, so that all interested parties and the Local Planning Authority can properly understand the basis of these comments.

3.7 Furthermore, residents in Springett Close have objected to privacy issues and presented pictures of people (themselves) at the fence line looking over.

Appendix C contains photographs illustrating the overlooking concerns referred to by residents.

3.8 The council contend that this is primarily due to the high raised bank of the Swale that is adjacent to the southern fence line of the properties. This was not on the original application and site levels were lower.

Comment: TPC acknowledge that the raised swale bank adjacent to Springett Close "was not on the original application and site levels were lower". This is a significant admission, as it recognises that the relationship between the Buffer Zone and neighbouring residential properties has materially changed from that originally approved.

This supports residents' concerns that the increased land levels have resulted in greater overlooking and a loss of privacy compared with the original scheme.

Whilst TPC express the view that a future hedge will address these concerns, no evidence has been provided within the application to demonstrate that the proposed landscaping will adequately mitigate the acknowledged change in levels or the resulting impact on residential amenity.

3.9 However, upon viewing the plans, TPC notes that there is supposed to be a privacy hedge line running along the top of the bank which will grow to protect residents from people looking in on their gardens and to stop people getting that close, so they can. We believe this will suffice upon proper implementation.

Comment: TPC refer to a "privacy hedge line"; however, I can find no reference within the approved plans or supporting documentation where this landscaping is specifically identified or designated as a *privacy hedge*. If such a feature is being relied upon to mitigate the acknowledged overlooking concerns, I respectfully request that TPC identify the relevant drawing or document that supports this assertion.

Furthermore, TPC themselves acknowledge elsewhere in their response that the Buffer Zone has fallen into a state of disrepair, with planting having failed and areas not being maintained as intended. This raises legitimate concerns regarding the long-term establishment of any proposed hedge.

It should also be recognised that some of the species planted within the Buffer Zone, including holly, are relatively slow growing. Depending on the variety and growing conditions, it can take many years for such planting to reach the height of neighbouring boundary fences (8ft). Until such time, the acknowledged overlooking caused by the raised swale bank would remain largely unmitigated.

In my view, it is therefore unreasonable to assume that future planting alone will adequately address the current impact on residential privacy without evidence, an agreed maintenance regime and timescales demonstrating when effective screening will actually be achieved.

Furthermore, TPC state that the proposed hedge "will... stop people getting that close". **This appears to be an assumption rather than a conclusion supported by the application.**

The submitted plans contain no evidence that the proposed planting is intended to act as a physical barrier preventing access, nor do they demonstrate how this would be achieved or maintained over the lifetime of the development. Landscaping should not be assumed to function as an access control measure without supporting evidence.

3.10 TPC contend that the full site of the Abingworth Field Estate has multiple footpaths and PROWs running throughout. Many of these butt up against properties and are often in frequent use. These include areas such as Strawberry Close, Pavillion Close and others. The proposed plans show no footpaths and no proximity access to residents in Springett Close as other properties have within the site and inclusion of the hedge line and a large Swale that runs the course of the Buffer Zone acts as a buffer to keep people away from the housing line.

Comment: I do not agree that comparisons with other Public Rights of Way across the Abingworth Meadows development are appropriate.

Many of the properties referred to by TPC were purchased with the Public Right of Way forming part of the approved layout from the outset. Purchasers therefore made an informed decision based on the relationship between their property and the surrounding public spaces.

By contrast, residents of Springett Close purchased their properties on the basis of a different relationship with the Buffer Zone (**Appendix D**). TPC themselves acknowledge earlier in their response that the raised swale bank "was not on the original application and site levels were lower". The current proposal therefore creates circumstances that differ materially from those originally envisaged.

Furthermore, the examples referred to by TPC are not directly comparable. I am not aware of any other Public Right of Way within the development where users are positioned on a significantly raised embankment immediately adjacent to neighbouring residential gardens, creating the same potential overlooking and privacy concerns.

Finally, TPC state that the hedge line and swale "acts as a buffer to keep people away from the housing line". This appears to be an assumption rather than a conclusion supported by evidence within the planning application. No assessment has been provided demonstrating that the proposed landscaping will function as an access control measure or prevent members of the public approaching the boundary over the lifetime of the development.

4.0 TPC also heard resident concerns regarding the safety of the site. It was also pointed out by residents and councillors that there are hundreds of metres of culverts throughout the site that are not protected by fence – some at a greater depth than the swale in the current proposal.

4.1 To date, there has been no evidence of accident or incident within the area regarding the current culvert systems.

I do not consider this to be a persuasive comparison. The absence of recorded incidents elsewhere on the estate does not demonstrate that the current proposal presents no risk, nor does it justify the absence of appropriate safety measures.

TPC also acknowledge elsewhere in their response that the raised swale bank differs from the original approved scheme. The safety implications of this feature should therefore be assessed on its own merits rather than by comparison with unrelated drainage features elsewhere on the estate.

If public access is intended, the application should clearly demonstrate how public safety will be managed and identify who will be responsible should an incident occur or the swale banks deteriorate. Given the uncertainty surrounding future ownership and maintenance responsibilities throughout the consultation response, these matters should be clearly defined before the application is determined.

5.0 It was mentioned by some residents that the Buffer Zone not be open to the public and/or be transferred to a management company owned by the residents in the future. This is not part of the application but TPC are against this proposition for the following reasons;

5.0a Firstly, the proposal will see the entire area fenced off and kept as private land. Therefore, it loses its 'Public Amenity Space' consideration which would be a detriment to the rest of the wider community who were supposed to benefit from the space as part of the original planning consent

TPC state that the wider community was "supposed to benefit from the space as part of the original planning consent", however no reference is provided to the approved plans or planning conditions demonstrating that unrestricted public access to this Buffer Zone formed part of the original permission. If this assertion is relied upon, the relevant approved drawing, condition or planning document should be identified.

Furthermore, the land has materially changed since the original planning consent. As TPC acknowledge elsewhere in their response, the raised swale bank was not part of the original application and site levels were previously lower. The area no longer functions solely as a Buffer Zone but also as an operational flood mitigation swale. It is therefore inappropriate to rely on assumptions about its original intended use without recognising its materially changed function and purpose.

The purpose of a Buffer Zone is to provide separation between residential development and surrounding land. Preserving that function does not prevent the wider community from benefiting from the extensive Public Rights of Way and Public Open Space already provided throughout the development.

Furthermore, alternative access options were presented to TPC. The ridgeline route at the top of the field, identified as an existing 'track' on the Horsham District Council planning portal (Appendix E), would provide a more suitable route to the allotments. It avoids the operational flood mitigation swale, significantly reduces the impact on neighbouring residents and achieves the same objective with considerably fewer planning, safety and residential concerns.

5.0b Furthermore, by shutting this area down, the residents of Thakeham Parish could expect a rise of 5%-6% in their precept to cover the costs of maintaining land that they receive no benefit over – in essence paying to protect a dozen properties.

TPC state that residents of Thakeham Parish "could expect a rise of 5–6% in their precept" if the Buffer Zone were not transferred. However, no evidence or financial assessment has been provided to support this claim.

As I understand it, the operational drainage swale would remain the responsibility of the estate management company. If this is correct, the Parish Council's maintenance obligations would be limited to the surrounding landscaped areas rather than the swale itself. It is therefore unclear how TPC have concluded that this would require a 5–6% increase in the parish precept.

Based on TPC's current published Band D parish precept of [REDACTED], a 5–6% increase would generate approximately [REDACTED] across the parish. TPC are therefore requested to provide the calculations, assumptions and evidence supporting this figure, including the anticipated maintenance activities, frequency of works and estimated annual costs.

Given that the area is intended to be managed largely as a natural landscape, with routine grounds maintenance only, the suggested cost appears disproportionate without supporting evidence.

In any event, the potential impact on the parish precept is a financial matter rather than a material planning consideration and should not influence the determination of this application.

5.0c If, on the other hand, the entirety of the scheme was transferred to private ownership, then not only would the public loose out – but existing residents of the estate would see a huge uplift in their maintenance fees to look after the land.

TPC state that residents "would see a huge uplift in their maintenance fees" should the land be transferred into private ownership. However, no evidence, cost assessment or financial modelling has been provided to support this assumption.

The use of the term "**huge uplift**" is subjective and unsupported. If TPC intend to rely on this statement, they should provide the calculations, assumptions and evidence demonstrating the anticipated increase in maintenance charges, including the estimated annual cost of maintaining the land, excluding the operational drainage swale, as residents already bear these costs through the existing estate management arrangements.

Without supporting evidence, this assertion remains speculative and should be afforded little weight. Furthermore, the potential cost of future maintenance is a financial matter rather than a material planning consideration and should not influence the determination of this application.

5.0ci There may be numerous objections from certain residents as to the planning proposals – but these are from a minority area of the estate and reports and recommendations put forward do not have the full support of the existing residents who would be affected.

TPC state that the reports and recommendations put forward "do not have the full support of the existing residents who would be affected". However, this assertion is not supported by the consultation responses.

The consultation responses include representations from existing residents elsewhere on the estate who support the retrospective flood mitigation swale whilst expressly opposing public access through the Buffer Zone (Appendix F), recommending that the area be protected by locked gates and retained for nature. This demonstrates that support for the operational drainage swale does not equate to support for a Public Right of Way.

TPC have therefore provided no evidence to support their assertion regarding the level of resident support for their recommendations. Instead, the consultation responses demonstrate a range of views, including support for the swale but opposition to public access through the Buffer Zone.

5.1 A sample of these came to the planning meeting above and made it known to the council that views expressed on behalf of the residents are not actually fully representative of the residents living within the estate.

TPC state that the views expressed on behalf of residents are "not actually fully representative of the residents living within the estate". However, planning applications are not determined by the level of support or opposition across an entire development (otherwise Phase 3 Bellway homes would have never been built). The Local Planning Authority must assess the planning impacts on those who are materially affected by the proposal.

In this case, the principal impacts of the proposed Public Right of Way including overlooking, privacy, residential amenity, safeguarding and security would fall primarily on the residents whose properties

directly adjoin the Buffer Zone. The views of those directly affected should therefore carry particular weight when assessing these planning impacts.

6.1 TPC wish to see via planning consent/covenant or other legal means, the gate at the end of the area known as the 'Hammerhead' become the ownership of TPC with full access rights

Comment: TPC wish to secure ownership and access rights over the gate through planning consent, covenant or other legal mechanism. However, the hammerhead forms part of the private Phase 3 estate and was presented to purchasers as part of the private residential estate layout. It was not identified as a Parish Council access point, maintenance corridor or gateway to the Buffer Zone or any future Public Right of Way.

The gate was introduced after purchasers relied upon the approved planning drawings, estate layout and purchasing information. The original arrangement maintained separation between Springett Close and the Buffer Zone through post-and-rail fencing with stock-proof wire and did not include a gate or access point.

TPC have provided no planning justification or evidence demonstrating why ownership or control of the gate should transfer to the Parish Council or why such arrangements are necessary to facilitate the retrospective flood mitigation works.

Any future proposals relating to ownership of the gate, access rights or a connection to the Public Right of Way are separate matters and should not be secured through this retrospective planning application.

6.5a In line with the previous transfer of the roads within the Abingworth Estate, the existing covenants of no residents parking on roads, will be extended to this area in light of the Hammerhead being required for vehicle turning.

Comment: TPC state that the hammerhead is required for vehicle turning. However, no evidence has been provided to support this assertion. No highways assessment, swept-path analysis, vehicle tracking exercise or operational assessment has been submitted demonstrating that the hammerhead must be preserved for turning manoeuvres.

Residents are not aware of refuse collection vehicles, maintenance vehicles or other routine service vehicles using the hammerhead for turning purposes, and no evidence has been produced to demonstrate such a requirement.

The proposal to extend parking restrictions appears to rely upon an unsupported assumption that the hammerhead must operate as a turning facility. If this forms part of TPC's recommendation, the evidence supporting that conclusion should be provided.

Furthermore, any proposed parking restrictions or changes to the operational use of the hammerhead are unrelated to the retrospective approval of the flood mitigation works and fall outside the scope of this application.

6.5b Therefore, the access gate (under TPC secured control) would not impede or run the risk of damaging any vehicles in the area.

Comment: This statement relies upon the unsupported assumption that the hammerhead must remain available for vehicle turning and access. As no evidence has been provided to demonstrate that such a requirement exists, the conclusion is not substantiated.

Residents' concerns extend beyond the risk of vehicle damage. The principal issues relate to the introduction of an unnecessary access point through the private estate, the loss of privacy and security, and the potential creation of a future route between Springett Close and the Buffer Zone.

These matters are separate from the operation of the approved flood mitigation scheme and should not influence the determination of this retrospective planning application.

6.11 TPC have no objection to working with and supplying access through the gate, to approved contractors, that the management company would hire.

Comment: TPC state that they would facilitate access through the gate for contractors appointed by the management company. This reinforces residents' concerns that the gate is intended to provide an ongoing access point through the private residential estate.

However, no operational evidence has been provided demonstrating why such access must be taken through the Springett Close hammerhead rather than by alternative means.

The existence of future maintenance obligations does not, in itself, justify the creation or retention of a permanent access point that was not shown within the approved planning documents or purchasing information relied upon by residents.

Any future access arrangements should therefore be considered separately from the retrospective approval of the flood mitigation works.

6.12 TPC will also cover the costs of the maintenance of the gate and post work to the sides of the gate.

TPC state that they would meet the costs of maintaining the gate and associated fencing.

Whether TPC or another party funds the maintenance of the gate is not the material planning issue. The relevant planning consideration is whether the gate and associated access arrangements are justified as part of this retrospective planning application.

TPC have provided no evidence demonstrating that the gate is necessary for the operation, maintenance or long-term management of the approved flood mitigation scheme. Accordingly, the proposed maintenance arrangements do not justify the inclusion of the gate or associated access proposals within this application.

7.0 Therefore, in conclusion, TPC has No Objection to the application subject to the division of the Buffer Zone land as previously agreed between the developer and local authorities (TPC & HDC) with resident responsibilities managing the swale and TPC maintaining the corridor from East to West whilst having access through the appropriate gate.

TPC conclude that ownership of the Buffer Zone (excluding the swale) should transfer to the Parish Council. However, this recommendation is inconsistent with the Site Management Plan provided to purchasers, which identifies the Buffer Zone as a **Private Area** managed by the management/maintenance company (Appendix D), with only the allotment area identified as being managed by the Parish Council.

This formed part of the information provided to purchasers and informed their reasonable expectations regarding the future management of the surrounding land. If TPC rely on subsequent agreements to support an alternative ownership arrangement, the relevant agreement, approved planning document or legal mechanism should be identified.

Residents support the retrospective flood mitigation works, including the swale and associated SuDS measures. However, many residents continue to object to the proposed gate, public access through the Buffer Zone, any future connection to a Public Right of Way, changes to the Springett Close hammerhead, and any transfer of ownership or control to TPC.

These matters are separate from the operation of the flood mitigation scheme and are not required to enable the retrospective approval of the swale itself. If they are intended to form part of the future proposals for the site, they should be considered through the appropriate planning process, supported by the relevant evidence and consultation, rather than being assumed through this retrospective planning application.

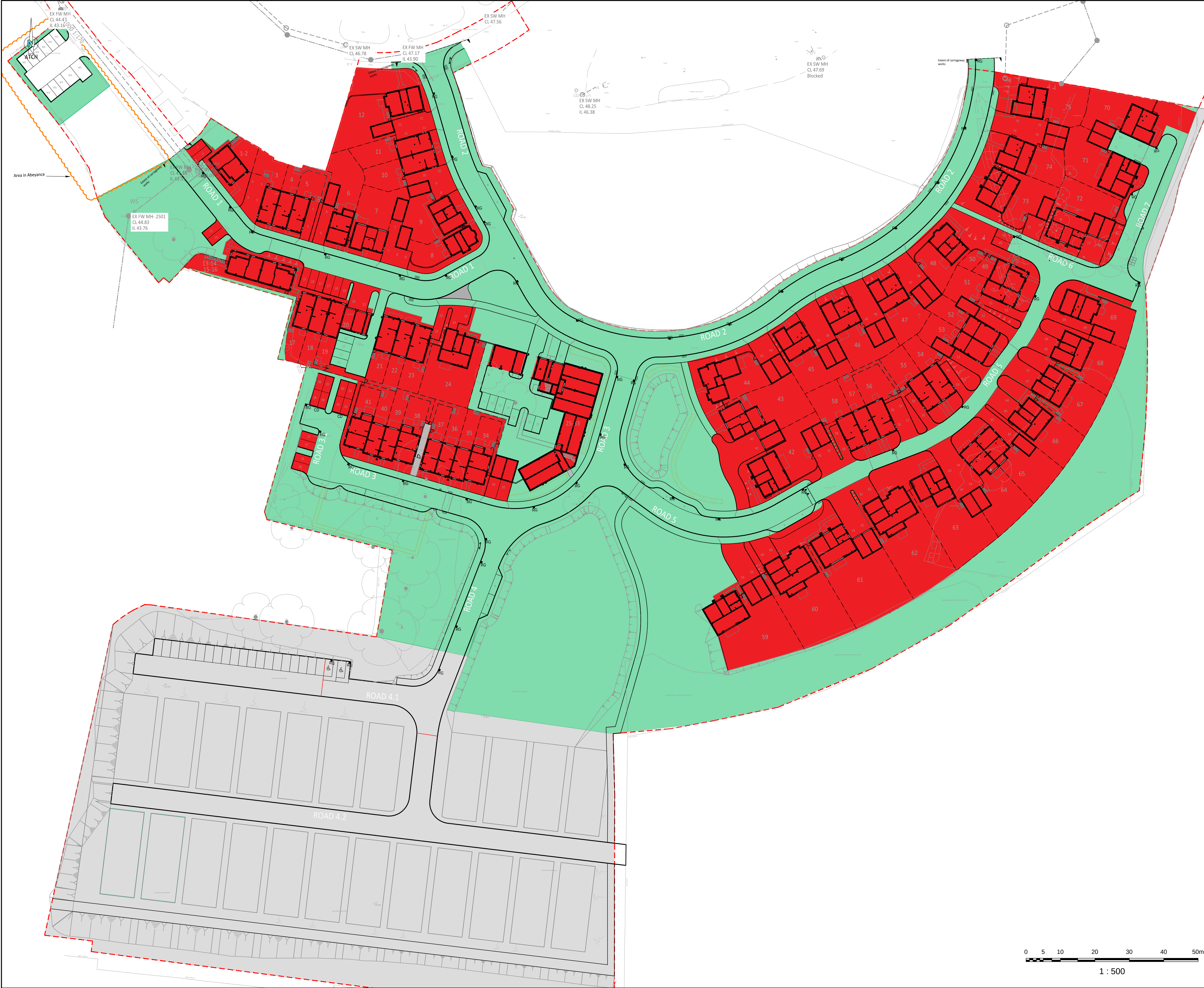
Final Comment:

Finally, many residents attended the Parish Council Planning Committee meeting where this application was discussed. My understanding from that meeting was that the Parish Council intended not to object to the application whilst recording the concerns raised by residents regarding privacy and safety. However, having reviewed the submitted consultation response, I do not feel it accurately reflects the spirit of those discussions. Rather than simply recording the concerns raised, the response seeks to dismiss many of them without supporting evidence. Whilst I appreciate the minutes have not yet been published, I felt it important to make you aware of this.









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**Health & Safety Note**

The details on this drawing have been prepared on the assumption that a competent contractor will be carrying out the works. If the contractor(s) considers that there is insufficient Health and Safety information on this drawing, this should immediately be brought to the attention of the designer.

LEGEND

-  Private Conveyed Land
-  Private Area
(Managed by management/maintenance company)
-  Allotment Area
(Managed by Parish Council)
-  Bellway Homes/Orbit Title Boundary

C2	16/10/23	Updated as per Bellway Homes Comments	KA/KM/AA
C1	22/12/21	Construction Issue	KA/AA/AT
P1	30/09/21	Preliminary Issue	KA/AA/JAT
Rev	Date	Description	Rev / Check / App'd

A1 - Approved/Stage Complete



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Client: **Bellway Homes Limited**

Job: **Abingworth Nursery, Thakeham**

Title: **Site Management Plan**

Classification: FI 60_20	 Certified 1400 1400 2015 Quality Management	 Certified 1400 1400 2015 Quality Management
Scale @ A1: 1:500		

Project: Originator - Volume/Sheet - Level/Location - Type - Discipline - Number
K42022-ATCN-XX-ZZ-DR-Z-4059

Revision:
C2

Thakeham Parish Council's response to DC/26/0945:

Proposal; Variation of condition 1 of previously approved application reference C/22/0773 (Variation of Condition 1 of previously approved application DC/19/1707 (Revised layout for Phase 3 of the Abingworth Meadows development (Original application ref: C/10/1314) to provide for 75 dwellings including 26 affordable dwellings and community studio workshops). Amendment to design and layout of houses at plots 42-75) to reflect an additional swale within the landscaping (Retrospective).

Site; Abingworth Nurseries Storrington Road Thakeham West Sussex

1.0 Thakeham Parish Council (TPC), has NO OBJECTION to the application subject to Conditions (see below).

2.1 TPC met on Tuesday 7th July to discuss the application in our Planning Committee meeting.

2.2 TPC agree that the Parish was supposed to be the recipient of all the land highlighted in Yellow on the Site Overview document.

2.3 TPC agree that there have been some amendments made to original plans since the above, but acknowledge that all changes were yet to be decided by a final application to be submitted which we have here.

2.4 All discussions that TPC had with the developer (Bellway Homes), the LPA (Horsham District Council) and various residents groups since its inception have been in good faith and primarily in response to concerns raised at the relevant times – by relevant parties.

2.5 TPC believed that any changes proposed and accepted during these times were believed to have been cascaded properly and appropriately to all parties.

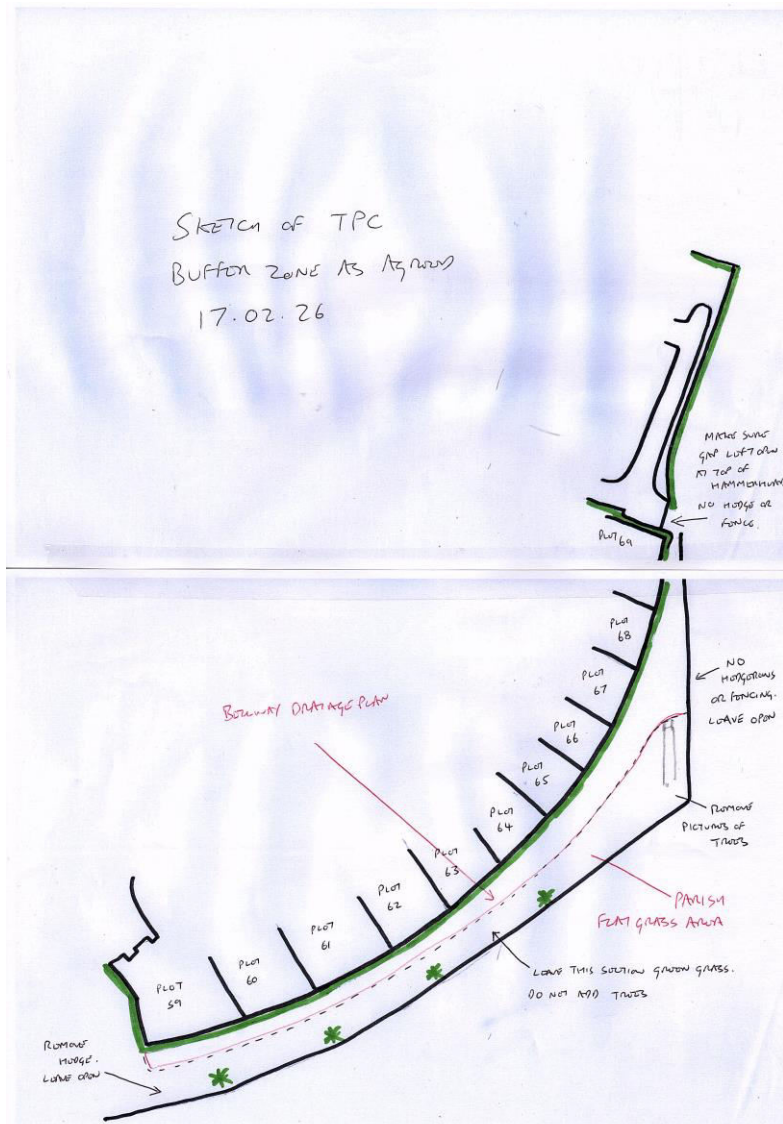
3.0 TPC supports and acknowledges the support from residents within Thakeham for the scheme that is protecting the houses from Flooding. That is the Swale, trench and drainage mitigation works that have been undertaken on the site since November 2024 as this positively helps the residents of Springett Close and Strawberry Close after the events in the winter of 24/25. Identified in document(s) Sheet 6 BELL23356-11.

3.1 TPC have no Objection to the land known as the Buffer Zone being transferred to the Parish as public amenity greenspace (Sheets 5 & 6 BELL23356-11) with the following conditions;

3.2 The curve of the land that contains the swale is divided so that the ownership of the land containing the scheme to the north (adjacent to the properties in Springett Close) is owned and maintained by the residents to whose properties the scheme is designed to protect and not at the expense of the non-Springett Close residents in Thakeham Parish.

And

3.3 The land on the southern side of the curve, that is adjacent to the farmer's field in the south and to the PROW (THA/2487/1) on the East is transferred to Parish Ownership (please see below).



3.3i

3.3ii TPC acknowledge the crudity of the sketch, but would like the LPA to acknowledge that this sketch was to be the blueprint for the revised landscaping plans submitted within this application after agreements in principle with Bellway Homes, HDC and TPC after sites visits and meetings on 17th February 2026.

3.4 That said transfer of a boundary inside the Buffer Zone is clearly mapped out by deed, covenant and with the aid of Bellway engineers as to not endanger the bank of the southern side of the Swale. TPC notes that after conversations with Bellway site team engineers had mentioned webbing/matting had been used to stabilise the banks and we would not be willing to make a guess on where is best.

3.5 TPC is disappointed as we had previously agreed with HDC and Bellway Homes across numerous site visits and meetings that a boundary would be submitted within an application (see above 3.3i and ii). TPC had agreed in 2025 that we would accommodate a Swale system/trench in the Buffer Zone to help residents flooding problems as long as the

Buffer Zone would be divided up accordingly and this has not come forward on an application, even though previously agreed.

3.6 TPC have no objection to the landscaping as long as Bellway do not leave the site until the planting solution presented – had been properly established.

It was brought to the council's attention that the Buffer Zone land in has fallen into a state of disrepair. This has led to concerns regarding privacy and what we will be left with. Some trees have yet to be planted and others have died due to a lack of care.

3.7 Furthermore, residents in Springett Close have objected to privacy issues and presented pictures of people (themselves) at the fence line looking over.

3.8 The council contend that this is primarily due to the high raised bank of the Swale that is adjacent to the southern fence line of the properties. This was not on the original application and site levels were lower.

3.9 However, upon viewing the plans, TPC notes that there is supposed to be a privacy hedge line running along the top of the bank which will grow to protect residents from people looking in on their gardens and to stop people getting that close, so they can. We believe this will suffice upon proper implementation.

3.10 TPC contend that the full site of the Abingworth Field Estate has multiple footpaths and PROWs running throughout. Many of these butt up against properties and are often in frequent use. These include areas such as Strawberry Close, Pavillion Close and others. The proposed plans show no footpaths and no proximity access to residents in Springett Close as other properties have within the site and inclusion of the hedge line and a large Swale that runs the course of the Buffer Zone acts as a buffer to keep people away from the housing line.

3.11 TPC have also submitted, at the end of this document, a letter sent out to all residents by Bellway Homes informing them of this very transfer and that this had been the intention throughout the process. The letter was necessitated due to a lack of communication and mis-information to new residents of the Abingworth site from various Bellway Homes departments as to the agreements in principles arranged with themselves and HDC and TPC – that now form part of this current (and hopefully final) application.

4.0 TPC also heard resident concerns regarding the safety of the site. It was also pointed out by residents and councillors that there are hundreds of metres of culverts throughout the site that are not protected by fence – some at a greater depth than the swale in the current proposal.

4.0i The picture below was taken when the rains were heavy – but is used to illustrate no fencing to the left where PROW THA/3780/1 runs through the estate (approximately 290 metres).



4.1 To date, there has been no evidence of accident or incident within the area regarding the current culvert systems.

4.2 However, as part of TPC No Objection, we would request that a fence, consisting of a post and rail (which is commonplace in Thakeham) could be erected along the proposed boundary in the middle of the Buffer Zone curve, around the Swale.

4.3 This fence can serve two purposes;

4.3a Firstly, to alleviate any resident concerns regarding safety and;

4.3b secondly; to clearly show and evidence ownership and responsibility.

4.4 This fence and its location and purpose could be added as condition of the landscaping approval.

5.0 It was mentioned by some residents that the Buffer Zone not be open to the public and/or be transferred to a management company owned by the residents in the future. This is not part of the application but TPC are against this proposition for the following reasons;

5.0a Firstly, the proposal will see the entire area fenced off and kept as private land. Therefore, it loses its 'Public Amenity Space' consideration which would be a detriment to the rest of the wider community who were supposed to benefit from the space as part of the original planning consent.

5.0b Furthermore, by shutting this area down, the residents of Thakeham Parish could expect a rise of 5%-6% in their precept to cover the costs of maintaining land that they receive no benefit over – in essence paying to protect a dozen properties.

5.0c If, on the other hand, the entirety of the scheme was transferred to private ownership, then not only would the public loose out – but existing residents of the estate would see a huge uplift in their maintenance fees to look after the land.

5.0ci There may be numerous objections from certain residents as to the planning proposals – but these are from a minority area of the estate and reports and recommendations put forward do not have the full support of the existing residents who would be affected.

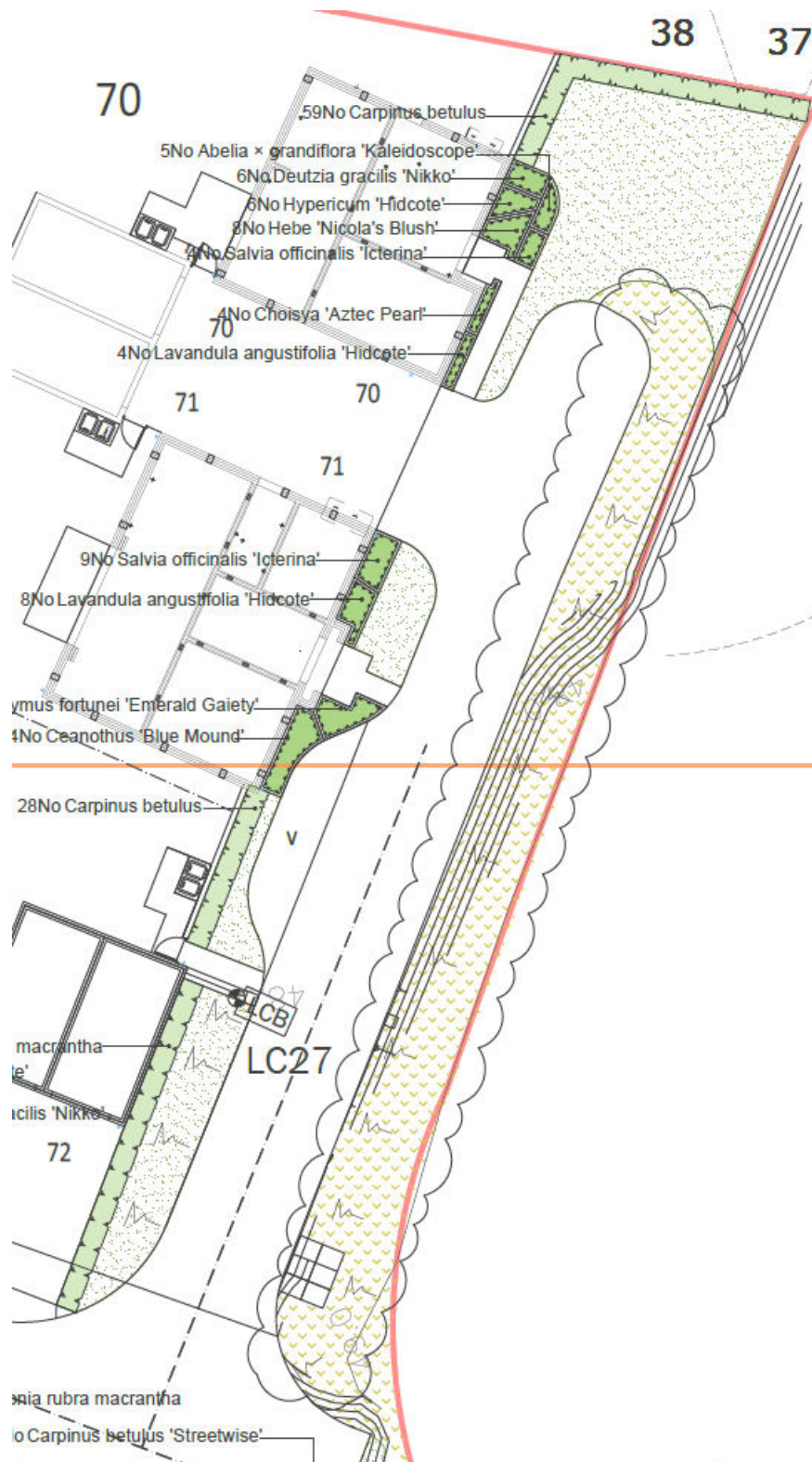
5.1 A sample of these came to the planning meeting above and made it known to the council that views expressed on behalf of the residents are not actually fully representative of the residents living within the estate.

5.1a Therefore, without a full referendum of every household, TPC cannot recommend any form of alternative ownership other than what was agreed upon in principle at the outset of planning for the estate and the variations that have come forward since then (in consultation with some resident groups), that the ownership of the Buffer Zone (less Swale) is transferred to the Parish as per the original objectives of Public Amenity Space – with no other conditions attached.

6.0 TPC have No Objections to the proposed layout of plans on document Sheet 4 BELL23356-11 other than to comment that;

6.1 TPC wish to see via planning consent/covenant or other legal means, the gate at the end of the area known as the 'Hammerhead' become the ownership of TPC with full access rights.

6.2 Previous landscaping concerns have been shared and consulted with TPC as part of the process where there was no hedge or fence and the site was fully open to the public from the PROW and the gradient was less to demonstrate this.



6.3

6.4 This was agreed in principle with the developer and HDC and some residents as TPC wish to have access to the Buffer Zone for maintenance responsibilities and in order for HDC Environmental Services to access a Dog Waste Bin that is to be positioned at some point in the future after a request from residents experiencing issues with fouling and waste being thrown over fences along footpaths in and around the site.

6.5 TPC is keen to point out the following;

6.5a In line with the previous transfer of the roads within the Abingworth Estate, the existing covenants of no residents parking on roads, will be extended to this area in light of the Hammerhead being required for vehicle turning.

6.5b Therefore, the access gate (under TPC secured control) would not impede or run the risk of damaging any vehicles in the area.

6.6 On the existing site overview plan, the Council was to receive the land in Yellow. This land strip runs alongside the Eastern side of the estate.

6.7 The submitted plans show a revised layout of housing, fencing and hedging. Delineating a new boundary of the estate that does not run up adjacent to the PROW (THA).

6.8 There is a gap of approximately 1-2 metres in width in places that sits between the proposed fence/hedge boundary and the actual site boundary.

6.9



6.9a Within this strip is a drainage system and various existing bramble hedging and shrubbery.

6.10 TPC contend that as this strip sits within a proposed boundary and the PROW – there will be a requirement for access for maintenance.

6.11 TPC have no objection to working with and supplying access through the gate, to approved contractors, that the management company would hire.

6.12 TPC will also cover the costs of the maintenance of the gate and post work to the sides of the gate.

7.0 Therefore, in conclusion, TPC has No Objection to the application subject to the division of the Buffer Zone land as previously agreed between the developer and local authorities (TPC & HDC) with resident responsibilities managing the swale and TPC maintaining the corridor from East to West whilst having access through the appropriate gate.

7.1 Should any aspect of these conditions vary or change during this process, then Thakeham Parish Council reserve the right to alter their decision and responsibilities in accordance with previously held discussions between the developers, ourselves and HDC..

11 March 2026

Dear Resident,

We write to you regarding the installation of the flood mitigation scheme and associated works within the designated buffer zone located behind the rear gardens of Springett Close properties along the eastern boundary.

Since the inception of the swale design, several questions and concerns have been raised by residents at various stages of the process. We appreciate the engagement shown and fully understand the importance of providing clarity regarding both the purpose of the scheme and the long-term condition of this area.

As these designs were developed and works commenced following most property occupations, rather than during the original design and build phase, the presence of construction activity and changes within part of the original development configuration understandably prompted concern.

As many of the issues raised follow similar themes, we would like to address them directly to ensure full transparency and clarity.

Drainage Works and Tree Removal

As works progressed and homes became occupied, it became apparent that excess surface water was entering the development from adjacent land during periods of heavy, sustained rainfall and storm events. This matter was not foreseen within the original planning design once identified, however, a solution was sought to ensure that this additional surface water would be intercepted and directed away from the houses and gardens within both the Bellway Homes development and the neighbouring properties at Strawberry Close.

Following extensive consultation with Horsham District Council, Thakeham Parish Council, local affected residents and the Lead Local Flood Authority for West Sussex, various options were considered. The final design was subsequently agreed and implemented as the most appropriate and proportionate solution.

Upon setting out the swale within the buffer zone, it was regrettably identified that several trees would require removal to facilitate the works. These included trees located directly within the swale footprint, those in close proximity whose root systems would have been adversely affected by excavation works, and those which posed a risk to the long-term

functionality of the swale and weir system through leaf fall and overhanging branches. These removals were necessary to ensure the durability, operational effectiveness and manageable maintenance requirements of the scheme.

Ownership Status

The land within the designated buffer zone is currently under the ownership of Bellway Homes. Upon completion of the works, the ownership and maintenance responsibility for the swale and weir system will transfer to the appointed management company.

The remaining areas within the buffer zone are proposed to be transferred to the Parish Council, alongside the allotments.

The buffer zone, as with the wider communal areas of the development, is not designated as private land. Therefore, no access restrictions are currently proposed.

Ground Levels

Concerns have been raised regarding finished ground levels. We can confirm that the ground levels have been installed in accordance with the agreed design.

In relation to concerns regarding potential water retention between certain fence lines and the edge of the swale, high water-tolerant hedging has been installed in these locations to assist with surface water management and ground stability.

Additionally, several residents have raised concerns regarding fence post stability following the works. We can confirm that these matters will be addressed where necessary. Affected residents will be contacted individually to confirm scope and timeframes.

Boundary Treatment Adjoining the PROW Footpath

There are no plans to remove or replace the existing chain link fence along this boundary, and much of the current boundary treatment will remain in place.

We have, however, received a request from Thakeham Parish Council to introduce a small opening within our fencing adjacent to No. 22 Springett Close to allow for the maintenance and emptying of the proposed dog waste bin located along the Public Right of Way (PROW) footpath. Bellway formed the gap in the fence at the request of the Parish Council.

There is currently no public right of access restrictions proposed for the development, whether from the PROW footpath or via the pavements leading into the development from Abingworth Crescent.

Landscaping

With the tree and shrub planting completed we intend to return to complete the remaining seeding works once weather conditions improve sufficiently to allow proper establishment. Residents will be notified in advance of our return to site.

Design Elements Post Transfer

As part of the swale design process, our consultants were instructed to undertake a formal risk assessment. The findings concluded, consistent with comparable systems within the local area, that permanent perimeter fencing to the swale and weir system was not required.

Notwithstanding this, some residents continued to express concerns regarding safety. As a precautionary and temporary measure, Bellway Homes installed fencing at either end of the buffer zone while the matter was reviewed and whilst the land remains under our ownership.

Concerns have also been raised regarding the potential installation of a footpath through the buffer zone and, more recently, the siting of dog waste bins. We would like to clarify that these elements do not form part of Bellway Homes' planning obligations, nor do we intend to undertake such installations.

Any queries relating to these matters should therefore be directed to Thakeham Parish Council. We regret that we are unable to provide further clarification on these particular items.

We trust that the above provides clarity regarding the purpose of the flood mitigation works and the current position in relation to the buffer zone.

Our intention throughout has been to implement a proportionate, technically appropriate solution to address an unforeseen drainage matter, while ensuring the long-term protection of properties within and adjacent to the development.

Should you have any further queries relating specifically to the works undertaken by Bellway Homes, please direct these in writing to the Customer Care team, and we will respond accordingly.

Yours sincerely

Thomas Beer
Regional Director – Southern Counties Division

From: Planning@horsham.gov.uk <Planning@horsham.gov.uk>
Sent: 08 July 2026 14:23:18 UTC+01:00
To: "Planning" <planning@horsham.gov.uk>
Subject: Comments for Planning Application DC/26/0945
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 08/07/2026 2:23 PM.

Application Summary

Address: Abingworth Nurseries Storrington Road Thakeham West Sussex

Proposal: Variation of condition 1 of previously approved application reference DC/22/0773 (Variation of Condition 1 of previously approved application DC/19/1707 (Revised layout for Phase 3 of the Abingworth Meadows development (Original application ref: DC/10/1314) to provide for 75 dwellings including 26 affordable dwellings and community studio workshops). Amendment to buffer strip to reflect an additional swale with landscaping (part retrospective).

Case Officer: Jason Hawkes

[Click for further information](#)

Customer Details

Address: 2Strawberry Close Thakeham Pulborough

Comments Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer made comments in support of the Planning Application

Reasons for comment: - Design

Comments: I support the application in principle, BUT WITH RESERVATIONS
! Recent winters with heavy rainfall have shown that the swale is vital for effective surface water management in Abingworth Meadows Phase 3 and for Phase 2 properties previously affected

by excessive rain .Thus, it is a necessary addition to the original plan. It is not attractive and requires further planting to stabilise the steep banks. The outflow pipe has probably been set too low and surely a silt trap is also required to prevent clogging and increased future maintenance costs ? There should be a CIL contribution from Bellway Homes paid to the future owner of this area, as annual maintenance will be required.

Public access through this area is clearly now not a sensible option, it should be protected by locked gates. The remaining buffer zone area should also be protected for nature, as was the original intent.

I am aware of and sympathetic to the privacy issues raised by some Phase 3 residents, but am not directly impacted by them .

Kind regards

Telephone:

Email: planning@horsham.gov.uk



**Horsham
District
Council**

Horsham District Council, Albery House, Springfield Road, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 2GB
Telephone: 01403 215100 (calls may be recorded) www.horsham.gov.uk Chief Executive: Jane E aton