

From: Planning@horsham.gov.uk <Planning@horsham.gov.uk>
Sent: 16 March 2026 15:38:12 UTC+00:00
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 16/03/2026 3:38 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 residential dwellings (including affordable housing) (Use Classes C2 and C3); a mixed-use neighbourhood centre (Use Classes E and F); education facilities (Use Class F1(a)); business and employment floorspace (Use Classes B2, B8 and E(g)); redevelopment of existing agricultural buildings including construction of a building for community use (Use Classes E and F2); improvements to public rights of way; sports pitches; gypsy and traveller pitches/plots; public open space; landscaping, and associated infrastructure.

Case Officer: Matthew Porter

[Click for further information](#)

Customer Details

Address: 4 Courtlands Southwater Horsham

Comments Details

Commenter Type: Consultee

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Reasons for comment: - Trees and Landscaping

Comments:

I am objecting to the Berkeley Homes proposal to build 1,000 homes northwest of Southwater on the grounds that Weald Clay - the geology of the entire proposed site - creates serious structural risks to buildings through a process called shrink-swell subsidence and heave, compounding the already severe insurance and mortgage problems described above.

The British Geological Survey (BGS) specifically names Weald Clay as one of the highest shrink swell risk soils in Britain - alongside London Clay and Gault Clay. Shrink-swell is the process by which clay contracts and cracks in dry weather, then swells when wet. For buildings, this means foundations are repeatedly lifted, shifted, and cracked - damaging walls, floors, and drainage.

The BGS identifies this as the single costliest geohazard in Britain, at over £400 million in damage every year.

The insurance consequences are already severe and growing. In summer 2018, the ABI recorded over 10,000 subsidence claims worth £64 million in a single quarter - a 350% increase driven entirely by shrinkable clay drying out. In the first half of 2025 alone, insurers paid £153 million across around 9,000 households following a warm spring, averaging £17,264 per claim. Nationally, between 28,000 and 55,000 domestic subsidence claims are made annually, costing insurers up to £400 million a year. South-east England - including West Sussex - is the highest-risk region.

At this specific site the risk is compounded by the immediate proximity of Courtland Wood and Smith's Copse. Tree roots extract moisture from clay soils well beyond the woodland boundary, intensifying the shrinkage that damages foundations. Buildings close to large established trees on shrinkable clay face materially higher structural risk. Ancient woodland trees cannot simply be pruned to reduce this - root systems extend far beyond the canopy, and severe pruning risks killing trees that are legally irreplaceable.

Climate change is making this significantly worse. The BGS GeoClimateUKCP18 model forecasts substantially increased clay shrinkage risk across Sussex in 2025-2035 as droughts become more frequent. A home built here today faces a structural environment projected to deteriorate throughout its lifetime. A property with subsidence claims history faces higher premiums, tighter

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mortgage terms, and lower resale value - and insurers and

lenders are becoming increasingly unwilling to take on this risk at all. I ask that the Berkeley Homes 1,000-home proposal be refused until an independent structural and geotechnical assessment specifically addressing the shrink -swell risk of Weald Clay at this location. -including the influence of adjacent ancient woodland tree roots and projected climate impacts to 2070 - has been published and independently peer reviewed.

Kind regards

Telephone:

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