

From: Planning@horsham.gov.uk <Planning@horsham.gov.uk>
Sent: 01 April 2026 14:25:48 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 01/04/2026 2:25 PM.

Application Summary

Address: Land North West of Southwater

Proposal: Outline planning application, with all matters reserved (except for primary access to the high-way) 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

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Customer Details

Address: 14 Robin Close Southwater Horsham

Comments Details

Commenter Type: Member of the Public

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Reasons for comment:

- Highway Access and Parking
- Loss of General Amenity
- Other
- Overdevelopment

Comments: am objecting to the Berkeley Homes proposal to build 1,000 homes on farmland northwest of Southwater.

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.

No proper assessment has been made of the combined impact of all the growth Southwater is already absorbing.

Southwater is not starting from zero. Approximately 350 homes are already under construction at Broadacres. Around 800 more have planning permission at the Horsham Golf Club site. That is already around 1,150 new homes committed before Berkeley Homes has built a single house.

Adding 1,000 more brings the total to over 2,150 new homes - more than doubling the number of households in a village whose roads, schools, doctors' surgeries and sewage system were not built to cope with growth at this scale.

No one has carried out an assessment of what all this growth means for Southwater's infrastructure together. Berkeley Homes has assessed only its own proposal in isolation - ignoring the 1,150 homes already in the pipeline. That approach is not good enough.

The timescale of this development compounds the problem further. At Berkeley Homes' known build-out rate of 50-60 homes per year, and with a further estimated 200 units yet to be built

elsewhere, construction on this site would extend over 20 years. A planning authority is only legally obliged to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply - yet approving this application would effectively hand a single developer a 20-year land supply in this location. Locking up this land for two decades since one developer's build-out capacity is not a sound or proportionate use of the planning system.

When Berkeley Homes applied for 1,500 homes on this same site in 2022, Horsham planning officers concluded the cumulative infrastructure impact was one of the key reasons the application was unacceptable. That application was withdrawn in February 2023. The infrastructure position has got worse since then, not better - yet Berkeley Homes is now asking for 1,000 homes with no better evidence.

I am objecting to the Berkeley Homes proposal to build 1,000 homes northwest of Southwater on the grounds that 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. Residents on the recently built Berkeley Homes Broadacres estate - a development on the same side of the village - have had to remove water-saving flow restrictors from their taps and showers because they 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.

Also I object on the grounds that the sewage and wastewater system is already failing residents and Southern Water cannot be trusted to fix it.

Some Southwater Parish Council residents have been dealing with sewage overflow problems for years - problems that Southern Water has repeatedly failed to resolve. Adding 1,000 more homes to an already strained network, without a confirmed and funded upgrade, is irresponsible.

A serious new concern has emerged. Planning application DC/26/0366 reveals that foul sewage from the proposed development will be treated at Barns Green Wastewater Treatment Works. Southern Water's own documents (Flood Risk Assessment and Outline Drainage Strategy, 27/02/2026, para. 11.1.3; Annex H) confirm that while it intends to increase capacity at Barns Green, this will take at least 24 months - and potentially longer. Approving development now would place the Barns Green works under severe additional load before any upgrade is in place, with a real and predictable risk of sewage discharging into local watercourses.

Southern Water's track record offers no reassurance. In 2020 it pleaded guilty to 51 criminal offences of deliberately dumping untreated sewage, was fined £90 million, and was described by the Environment Agency as the worst case in its history. The company's financial conduct since then deepens the concern further. Ofwat has determined that Southern Water must invest sufficiently to require customer bills to rise by 44% by 2030 - a ruling Southern Water is actively appealing. That appeal speaks for itself: this is a private equity-run enterprise resisting the investment its regulator has deemed necessary, and there is no credible basis for assuming it will voluntarily fund the future-proofed infrastructure capacity that 1,000 new homes would require.

Planning permission must not be granted on the assumption that a company actively resisting investment will deliver the infrastructure needed. Southern Water must provide a formal, legally binding commitment to expand sewage treatment capacity before any development is permitted. The applicant's own drainage strategy - acknowledging a minimum 24-month upgrade timeline - makes this requirement unambiguous.

The NHS and healthcare infrastructure is already overwhelmed, and no plan exists to expand it.

Anyone who lives in Southwater knows how hard it is to get a GP appointment. The surgeries serving the village are already under serious pressure from the population that is already here - let alone the 1,150 new homes already approved and under construction. The situation is not simply one of physical capacity: the local surgery appears to have room to accommodate additional GPs but is currently unable to recruit them. Approving 1,000 more homes does nothing to solve a staffing crisis that the NHS itself has not been able to resolve. Access to NHS dentistry in the area is also severely constrained, with many residents unable to register with any NHS dentist at all.

Southwater is also geographically isolated from the main hospitals. As a result, ambulance response times for our area are among the worst in the whole of Sussex. Adding over 2,000 more homes will put even greater pressure on emergency response capacity.

NHS England has not confirmed that primary healthcare capacity exists or can be funded to serve the additional population from Berkeley Homes' proposal. There is no costed, legally secured plan for a new GP surgery or expansion of existing facilities. 'We will work with the NHS to address this' is not a plan - it is a hope.

Previous large Southwater developments came with promises of community infrastructure that did not materialise on time, or at all. Residents have already been let down once. Approving 1,000 more homes based on promises is not acceptable.

the wildlife impact surveys are incomplete, and Berkeley Homes is seeking to carry them out after approval rather than before - which is not permitted.

Planning law is clear: the impact on protected wildlife must be properly assessed before planning permission can be granted. It cannot be deferred to a later stage. This is not a technicality - it is a fundamental safeguard designed to prevent irreversible harm to wildlife being done first and assessed second.

There is established evidence of badgers and other wildlife using foraging routes across this land that have existed for generations. Badgers and their setts are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 - interfering with them without a licence is a criminal offence. The disruption caused by a 1,000-home development to these routes and habitats has not been adequately assessed.

Berkeley Homes has argued that full surveys should wait until after the allocation is confirmed. This approach is legally improper and should be rejected. It is designed to avoid scrutiny at the stage when it is most meaningful.

The scale of wildlife using this land - including but not limited to badgers - has not been assessed in any rigorous, independent way. This is a significant and unresolved gap in the evidence base.

the local road network is already at breaking point and this development will make it far worse.

The A24, which is the only realistic route in and out of Southwater for most journeys, is already at or beyond capacity at peak times. This is not residents' opinion - it is confirmed in Horsham District Council's own evidence base.

The Hop Oast roundabout, which would be one of the main access points for the Berkeley Homes development, is already at capacity according to the Council's own figures - and this is before a single Berkeley Homes home is built. Adding 1,000 new homes, alongside the 800 already approved at the Horsham Golf Club site, would bring 1,800 new car-dependent households through this single junction.

Adding 1000 homes will increase car dependency and increase the number of cars on local roads by approximately 1500 in the village which will add to the traffic attracted to the village for school drop off and pickup from villages outside Southwater. The problem will not simply be an increase of traffic due to houses but also due to the new school being promoted as part of the proposal.

When Berkeley Homes previously applied for 1,500 homes on the same site, West Sussex County Council Highways raised serious unresolved objections on traffic grounds. The application was withdrawn. Those concerns were never resolved - and the traffic position has got worse since then.

Adding traffic signals or road markings to an already-overloaded junction does not solve the problem. It delays it and makes it slightly more orderly. The underlying capacity is still exhausted and would create traffic bottlenecks within the village and on the A24 resulting in gridlock for new and existing residents.

If this goes ahead it will be devastating for me as over the years the village has expanded dramatically already but the infrastructure for the basics like Dr's & Dentist & also secondary school children provisions for children. We are also stuck in between two hospitals that are a considerable journey away that have a 24 Hour A&E which is & has been at breaking points for decades.

I think before any expansion around Southwater there need to be a big re think, or a cast iron agreement that we as residents will

gain much needed facilities for any future development. I appreciate that this will need to be from the Government &, or West Sussex County Council or the equivalent unitary authority it may be called in the future

It's not fair for the residents to have to cut back on water usage or receive a sub standard service as Southern Water can't cope with the demand already.

Southwater will lose it's identity as it will bleed into Horsham & Christs Hospital

Kind regards

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