

From: Planning@horsham.gov.uk <Planning@horsham.gov.uk>
Sent: 23 March 2026 11:23:01 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 23/03/2026 11:23 AM.

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

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Customer Details

Address: Braclea New Road Southwater

Comments Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Reasons for comment: - Overdevelopment

Comments:

Overdevelopment. I 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 just slightly more but it is a 117% breach of the limit that we as residents set. National planning rules state clearly that where a proposal conflicts with the current and in-date Neighbourhood Plan, planning permission should not usually be granted. The Southwater Neighbourhood Plan (SNP) 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 Housing planners may state that the plan is "out of date" being 5 years old but an online petition against this proposal has already attracted over 3400 signatures and demonstrates that community sentiment back in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. In addition, the SNP contains a specific and clear policy: Southwater must remain a single-centre village, with its shops, services and facilities focused around Lintott Square. This is not a minor preference; it is a core planning principle that we voted to adopt. Berkeley Homes' proposal includes a large new cluster of shops, community facilities, a primary school, and other services on the western edge of the village, therefore effectively creating a second village centre. This would split the village in two, diverting activity away from the existing centre and changing the fundamental character of Southwater. The proposal fails to consolidate the existing settlement of Southwater and would effectively create a split two-neighbourhood settlement instead of a coherent community. The proposal also extends development well beyond the village boundaries set in the SNP. Much of the proposed site is on land that the Plan specifically identifies as outside the permitted development area. A previous Berkeley Homes application for 1,500 homes on the same site (reference DC/22/1916) was withdrawn in February 2023 after Horsham District Council planning officers concluded it was unacceptable. These fundamental concerns have not been resolved; they have simply been repackaged. I ask that the Berkeley Homes 1,000-home proposal be refused because it violates Neighbourhood Plan policy SNP1.1(a) by creating a second village centre and extends beyond the village boundaries set in the adopted plan. Neighbourhood planning exists to give communities a genuine say over where and how their village grows. Southwater residents invested significant time and effort in creating a plan that was put to a referendum and passed in June 2021. That is the strongest form of community consent available under the planning system. In December 2025, Southwater Parish Council held an

extraordinary meeting and voted to begin a full review of the Neighbourhood Plan - in part because of the pressure being applied by this very proposal. That review is now underway and represents the proper democratic process for deciding Southwater's future. If Berkeley Homes is permitted to build 1,000 homes before that review is complete, the Neighbourhood Plan's housing limit is rendered completely pointless. It would send a clear message to every community in England that spending years producing a Neighbourhood Plan means nothing if a large developer simply lobbies hard enough. No material planning evidence has been put forward by Berkeley Homes or Horsham District Council to justify why the community's own plan should be overridden and clearly does not satisfy the social and housing needs of the local community. I ask that the Berkeley Homes 1,000-home proposal be refused, or at minimum deferred until the Southwater Neighbourhood Plan review is complete, so that the community's democratic voice is properly respected. I object further on the grounds that the site cannot be safely drained. 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. Berkeley Homes would have to rely entirely on large above-ground storage ponds, underground tanks, and carefully managed outflows to local streams and ditches. 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. It appears that 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 demonstrating direct evidence of what happens when this clay soil is built over without adequate drainage. I ask that the Berkeley Homes 1,000-home proposal be refused until an independent, specialist drainage engineer (with specific Weald Clay experience) has verified that flooding risk will not increase for existing residents or downstream watercourses. This overdevelopment will affect me directly as a Southwater resident because I took part in the SNP process as I feel strongly about how my village is protected from overdevelopment for the sake of the community.

Kind regards

Telephone:

Email: planning@horsham.gov.uk



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