

Planning Application Reference: DC/26/0266

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.
(AMENDMENTS INCLUDING AMENDED PLANS, SITE LOCATION PLAN AND RED LINE BOUNDARY)

1. Having read the Applicant's Planning Statement Addendum dated August 2026 (hereinafter the "**Addendum**"), I have no hesitation in maintaining my objection to the Applicant's current application for 150 dwellings (hereinafter the "**2026 Application**") in accordance with my representation submitted on 17th March 2026.
2. I therefore submit this further representation in response to the Addendum.

A. Previous Application

3. The same Applicant submitted its previous application for 247 dwellings in the identical Mushroom Site on 11th January 2024 under Application Number DC/24/0021 (hereinafter the "**2024 Application**").
4. The 2024 Application was refused by the Horsham District Council (hereinafter "**HDC**") on 31st July 2024 (hereinafter the "**Refusal Decision**").
5. The Applicant's appeal against the Refusal Decision under Appeal Ref: APP/Z3825/W/24/3350094 was dismissed on 13th June 2025 (hereinafter the "**Appeal Decision**") by H Nicholls, an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State (hereinafter the "**Inspector**").

B. Present Application

6. The Applicant submitted the afresh 2026 Application on 16th February 2026.
7. Although the current proposal of the 2026 Application has reduced the scale of development to 150 dwellings from 247 dwellings in the 2024 Application, it is suggested that:-
 - the principal question to be determined by HDC is whether those reductions and amendments actually overcome the specific harms identified by the Inspector in the Appeal Decision. (hereinafter the “Main Question”)

C. Inadequate Up-to-date Information

8. For HDC properly to determine the 2026 Application, there must be sufficient information to enable it to assess the relevant material planning considerations, including accessibility and sustainability. Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requires the authority to have regard to the development plan so far as material and to other material considerations.
9. Where the Applicant relies upon the accessibility and availability of facilities as part of its case on sustainability, sufficiently particularised and up-to-date information is necessary to enable HDC to properly assess the present 2026 Application.
10. In the 2024 Application, the Applicant has fairly provided information about the facilities and services within walking distance of the Mushroom Site which was material for the HDC to determine that application in question as set out in Table 2.1 and paragraph 2.19 of the Transport Assessment dated January 2024. Such information is reproduced below for ready reference:-

<u>Amenity</u>	<u>Distance (m)</u>
Thakeham Village Football Club	70
Recreation Ground	120
Thakeham Village Hall, Café and Store	450
Abingworth Meadows Cricket Ground	500
Abingworth Hall Hotel	700
Pub (White Lion Inn)	700
Church	1000
Pub (Five Bells Inn)	1200
Nisa Local	2000

11. However, in the current 2026 Application, the Applicant has failed to provide any updated information about that particular material information, namely the facilities and services within walking distance of the Mushroom Site.
12. Simply speaking, the Applicant relies on general assertions without providing sufficient particulars or up-to-date evidence concerning the facilities to support the sustainability of the proposed development:-

*“The proposal will introduce 150 new homes to the village. The proposal for residential development is considered accepted having regard to the village’s predominantly residential character, **its supportive facilities**, and the Council’s ongoing need to boost housing supply. It is also important to recognise that the character and function of Thakeham have evolved significantly over the past two decades. Through the delivery of residential developments, the village has transitioned from a small settlement with a predominantly agricultural focus to a larger and more sustainable community, **supported by some facilities that meet most of the day-to-day needs of residents.**” (emphasis added)*

Paragraph 48 of the Addendum

13. *Prima facie*, those alleged “supportive facilities” and “some facilities that meet most of the day-to-day needs of residents” are material to the planning decision and significant to HDC’s assessment of those facilities at the time of application.

14. As accessibility and sustainable travel are material considerations, the HDC needs sufficiently particularised and up-to-date evidence to assess accessibility but not merely a general assertion by the Applicant that those facilities exist.
15. I would like to take the opportunity to provide updated information about the facilities and services currently available in Thakeham to the HDC.
16. In fact since the Refusal Decision dated 31st July 2024 by HDC and the Appeal Decision dated 13th June 2025, there have been the following changes in relation to the facilities and services:-
- a. the construction of the allotment gardens seems to be finished; and
 - b. the pre-school has been converted to Thakeham Community Hub as a not-for-profit place for the community with a focus on events and services aimed at young families and children in particular.
17. Subject to the two changes identified, the Inspector's observations in the Appeal Decision remains materially relevant up to the current time of writing:-
- "12. There are **sports pitches** within Thakeham/Abingworth which host a number of club activities. **Allotment gardens** are also yet to be constructed. There is also a small **animal vet** practice operating from a unit adjacent to the café. A **pre-school** building sits to the south of the Abingworth Meadows development but has not operated recently and whether it will reopen is as yet, uncertain. **Workshops** which were proposed within the Abingworth Meadows development have not yet been developed due to a lack of demand and exploration of potential alternative uses are currently ongoing." (**emphasis added**)*
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18. As a matter of fact, the Applicant held a public consultation of the present application at the Thakeham Community Hub on 14th January 2026, i.e. only about a month before its formal submission of the 2026 Application.
19. The Applicant therefore had a recent opportunity, immediately before submission of its 2026 Application, to ascertain and describe the facilities

and services currently available within Thakeham. Against that background, a sufficiently particularised and up-to-date assessment of those facilities in the 2026 Application and the Addendum should have been presented for HDC's consideration but its absence is notable.

20. Due to limited availability of certain facilities and services in Thakeham, residents need to travel to neighbouring settlements for employment and for a range of facilities and services required for day-to-day living. These include, but are not limited to:-

- a. Schools;
- b. Healthcare facilities;
- c. Post office;
- d. Banking services; and
- e. Appropriate retail services such as supermarkets.

21. The geographical distribution of these facilities and services is therefore relevant to the assessment of the practical availability of sustainable modes of travel.

22. In essence, both the 2026 Application and the Addendum does not appear to provide sufficient particulars or up-to-date evidence enabling the HDC to assess the extent, accessibility and practical utility of the facilities relied upon by the Applicant.

D. Significant Increase in Scale of Development

23. The reduction of scale of development from the previous 247 dwellings in the 2024 Application to the current 150 dwellings is acknowledged.

24. In paragraph 4.9 of the Addendum, it is stated that:-

“On the basis of 2.4 people per household, the development would introduce approximately 360 additional residents.....”

25. However, a crucial factor, namely the increase in scale in relation to the

current number of dwellings as the baseline, is omitted.

26. In paragraph 27 of the Appeal Decision, the Inspector found that:-

“On the basis of combining the two approaches and including the recently completed dwellings in Phase 3 of Abingworth Meadows, the current baseline figure for numbers of dwellings in Thakeham is around 550 dwellings.....”

27. The significance of 150 dwellings cannot be assessed by the numerical reduction alone. It must be assessed against the settlement baseline and the qualitative planning considerations identified by the Inspector.

28. Reducing the proposal from 247 to 150 dwellings does not necessarily cure the planning harms identified by the Inspector. The relevant sub-question is whether, having regard to the approximately 550-dwelling baseline and the recent expansion of Thakeham, the reduction is sufficient to materially alter the planning assessment of the development’s scale and function. In this regard, it is submitted that the Inspector’s analysis remains sound and valid:-

“Relative to this baseline figure and as is clearly apparent from visiting the village, 247 dwellings would be a very significant increase in scale, particularly in the context of the scale of expansion that the village has already undergone in recent years.”

Paragraph 27 of the Appeal Decision

29. Although the Inspector was considering 247 dwellings, the underlying reasoning remains relevant because the current proposal would still add 150 dwellings to a settlement with a baseline of approximately 550 dwellings.

30. The HDC is urged to consider the 2026 Application to represent a very significant increase in the scale of development at Thakeham.

E. Private Vehicles To Be Continuously Relied Upon Heavily

31. It is worth emphasising that the inherent locational characteristics of the Mushroom Site cannot readily be altered by the proposed development, and those characteristics remain central to the Inspector's findings concerning the Site's relationship with existing facilities, sustainable modes of transport and reliance upon private vehicles.

32. It is the Applicant's own admission that:-

"It is recognised that residents will continue to access facilities and services in neighbouring settlements to meet some of their day-to-day needs, and that private vehicle use will remain necessary for certain journeys."

Paragraph 4.24 of the Addendum

33. The Applicant's statement nevertheless confirms that private vehicle use will remain necessary for certain journeys. This is consistent with the Inspector's finding in the Appeal Decision that the location would continue to give rise to significant reliance on private vehicles.

34. The measures proposed in paragraphs 4.20 to 4.25 under the heading of 'Transport and Access' of the Addendum are acknowledged, but they do not appear, on the evidence presently provided, to address the underlying characteristics identified by the Inspector. For instance:-

<u>Inspector's findings in Appeal Decision</u>	<u>Addendum</u>	<u>Whether the Inspector's Concern Not Overcome</u>
PROW improvements would not provide genuine sustainable travel choices (reference: paragraph 39 of Appeal Decision, reproduced in paragraph 34 hereinbelow)	Further PROW/ active-level measures (reference: paragraphs 4.20 to 4.25 of Addendum)	The underlying length, indirect nature, gradients, absence of lighting and rural safety characteristic identified by the Inspector remain

35. It is submitted that the Inspector's view remains sound and valid for the present 2026 Application:-

"39. However, even assuming no impediment to delivery of any part of the package of improvement works and related signage, my view is that a limited number of journeys would be made using these routes on foot or bicycle for purposeful journeys to work, to shops, leisure destinations or to school. The reasons for the lack of take up would be due to a combination of the journey times along lengthier, indirect routes; undulations along the routes which present a difficulty for some users; the absence of street lighting; and related safety concerns due to their largely rural contexts. In short, in my view, whilst a beneficial package of improvements, they would serve more readily as enhancements to the recreational offer for Thakeham residents rather than offering a genuine choice of useable sustainable travel options to minimise reliance on private vehicles." (emphasis added)

Paragraph 39 of the Appeal Decision

F. Relevancy of the Appeal Decision

36. In ***North Wiltshire District Council v Secretary of State for the Environment*** (1993) 65 P. & C.R. 137, the Court of Appeal held at 145 that decision-makers should have regard to consistency in decision-making and should not depart from previous decisions on the same site without good reason. In other words, like cases should generally be decided alike, unless there is a good reason to depart from the earlier decision:-

"One important reason why previous appeal decisions are capable of being material is that like cases should be decided in a like manner so that there is consistency in the appellate process.....like cases should be decided alike presupposes that the earlier case is alike and is not distinguishable in some relevant respect"

37. I am not aware of any successful challenge to the Appeal Decision which has altered or quashed the Inspector's findings as set out below-

*"I have found that the proposed scheme would **conflict with the spatial strategy** of the HDPF [Horsham District Planning Framework (adopted 2015)] and TNP [Thakeham Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2017)] in relation to its nature, **substantial scale and poor relationship to facilities and services**, particularly by **sustainable modes of travel**. The proposed facilities within the scheme, improvements to various PROWs [Public Right of Way], bus service improvements and associated travel plan measures could **not overcome the location disadvantages of the site or materially reduce the reliance on private vehicles**. I also find that there are sequentially preferable sites in flood risk terms, which is a further harm that weighs against the scheme." (**emphasis added**)*

Paragraph 65 of the Appeal Decision

38. Further, I have no knowledge of any material changes, apart from the two changes identified in paragraph 16 hereinabove, which materially alter the Inspector's conclusions concerning settlement scale, accessibility, sustainable transport and reliance upon private vehicles:-
- a. The Horsham District Planning Framework adopted in 2015 is still valid and in force;
 - b. The Thakeham Neighbourhood Plan adopted in 2017 is still valid and in force;
 - c. Thakeham remains classified as a small village;
 - d. There is no evidence identified in the 2026 Application and the Addendum of any material improvement in the range and accessibility of facilities and services sufficient to alter the Inspector's conclusions; and
 - e. Although additional active-travel measures are proposed, the underlying locational characteristics of the Mushroom Site identified by the Inspector, including journey length, indirect routes, gradients, absence of lighting and rural safety concerns, remain materially relevant.
39. As the Appeal Decision is a highly material consideration, HDC is urged to take the Appeal Decision into account when determining the 2026 Application on its own merits, having regard to whether the material

circumstances have changed.

40. It is submitted that there have been changes in circumstances identified in the Addendum but the most critical question is whether they materially change the planning assessment of the particular harms identified by the Inspector in favour of the 2026 Application and the Addendum.

Conclusion

41. To conclude, I prepare a summary table for HDC's easy reference:-

<u>Inspector's findings in Appeal Decision</u>	<u>Changes in 2026 Application</u>	<u>Whether the Inspector's Concern Has Been Overcome</u>
Development substantially out of scale	From 247 to 150 dwellings	Arguably reduced but still substantial relative to ~550 dwellings
Poor relationship with facilities	Additional transport measures	The current proposal does not address the underlying location characteristics identified by the Inspector
Heavy reliance on private vehicles	Mobility hub, PROW improvements etc.	Applicant itself accepts private vehicles remain necessary
Sustainable travel unlikely to attract significant purposeful journeys	Further pedestrian / cycle measures	Addendum does not demonstrate that the additional measures will materially increase purposeful walking and cycling
Limited local facilities	General assertions by Applicant	Requires current, specific and quantified evidence

Recent expansion already substantial	Further 150 dwellings	The additional 150 dwellings would still constitute a substantial expansion in the context identified by the Inspector
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42. It is acknowledged that the proposal in the 2026 Application has been substantially reduced from 247 to 150 dwellings that a number of amendments have been made.

43. Although the 2026 Application appears to be an improvement upon the 2024 Application in a number of respects, the critical question is whether those improvements are sufficient to overcome the following specific planning concerns identified by the Inspector:-

- a. The scale and function of the development;
- b. Its relationship with existing facilities;
- c. Sustainable accessibility; and
- d. Reliance upon private vehicles.

44. In assessing whether the 2026 Application overcomes the previous planning concerns, HDC is respectfully invited to consider the Main Question by reference to the following four sub-questions:-

- a. Is 150 dwellings, having regard to the approximately 550-dwelling baseline and recent expansion, still of a scale capable of giving rise to the Inspector's concern regarding settlement scale and function?
- b. Has the Applicant demonstrated that the relationship between the Site and existing facilities has materially improved?
- c. Have the additional active-travel measures materially altered the accessibility characteristics identified by the Inspector? And
- d. Has the Applicant demonstrated that the revised scheme would materially reduce the reliance upon private vehicles identified by the Inspector?

45. The evidence presently submitted by the Applicant does not demonstrate

that the answer to the above four sub-questions is yes.

46. Collectively the answer to the Main Question as a whole is “No”.

47. In the circumstances, I respectfully invite HDC to refuse the 2026 Application.


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6th September 2026