

15 June 2026

The Planning Inspectorate
Temple Quay House,
2 The Square,
Temple Quay,
Bristol,
BS1 6PN

SL/Let/P2305

Dear Sir, Madam

**Request for Appeal to Proceed by way of Informal Hearing at Land North of Eastlands Lane,
Cowfold, West Sussex, Horsham District Council Application Ref: DC/26/0472**

We write on behalf of the Appellant in relation to the forthcoming appeal against Horsham District Council's refusal of planning permission for the erection of 9 no. dwellings with associated car parking spaces, detached carports, garages and landscaping at Land North of Eastlands Lane, Cowfold.

The Appellant respectfully requests that the appeal proceeds by way of Informal Hearing.

This request is made having regard to the nature of the Council's reasons for refusal and the matters identified in the Officer Report. In particular, the appeal will require detailed consideration of housing need, the status and weight to be afforded to the relevant development plan policies, the role of the Cowfold Neighbourhood Plan, and site-specific planning judgements relating to landscape character, settlement form and accessibility.

The Appellant considers that these matters are not suited to determination by written representations alone. They would be most appropriately addressed through a structured round-table discussion, supported by an accompanied site visit.

Housing land supply and paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF

The Officer Report confirms that Horsham District Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, with the current supply calculated as approximately one year. The Council also accepts that the presumption in favour of sustainable development under paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF is engaged.

The appeal will therefore require careful consideration of the consequences of this acute housing land supply shortfall, the weight to be given to the provision of new homes, and whether any alleged adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the scheme when assessed against the NPPF as a whole.

These are central planning balance matters which would be materially assisted by discussion at a Hearing.

Status of the development plan, emerging Local Plan and Shaping Development in Horsham District guidance

The Council's refusal relies heavily on the adopted spatial strategy and policies relating to development outside defined built-up area boundaries. However, the Officer Report acknowledges that the Horsham District Planning Framework is more than five years old and that the most important policies for determining housing applications must be considered in the context of paragraph 11(d) and the Council's housing land supply position.

The Appellant's case will be that the relevant policies concerned with the distribution of housing and settlement expansion are out of date, and that their restrictive application should attract reduced weight in the planning balance.

There is also a live issue regarding the role and weight of the emerging Horsham District Local Plan. A Hearing would enable the Inspector to explore the current policy position, the extent of the housing need shortfall, and the appropriate weight to be given to both adopted and emerging policies.

The appeal will also require specific consideration of the Council's Shaping Development in Horsham District guidance. The Appellant's position is that the proposed development complies with the substance and purpose of that guidance. The scheme represents a modest development of nine dwellings, is well related to Cowfold, uses an existing access arrangement, is contained by existing and proposed landscape boundaries, and would not prejudice the comprehensive long-term planning of the settlement.

The Officer Report appears to apply the guidance too narrowly, particularly in relation to whether the site adjoins the settlement edge. The Appellant's position is that the appeal site is immediately adjacent to the defined built-up area boundary of Cowfold and is physically and functionally related to the settlement.

Cowfold Neighbourhood Plan and housing need

The Council places significant reliance on the Cowfold Neighbourhood Plan, including its settlement boundary, housing allocations and policies concerning residential development. The Appellant's position is that the Neighbourhood Plan must be considered in the context of the wider and acute housing need across Horsham District.

The Appellant will contend that the housing requirement and allocations in the Neighbourhood Plan were based on earlier figures and do not properly reflect the scale of housing need now arising under the Standard Methodology.

The Appellant will also contend that Cowfold is a sustainable settlement capable of accommodating proportionate additional growth beyond that identified in the Neighbourhood Plan.

The interpretation and weight to be afforded to the Neighbourhood Plan, including its housing strategy, will be a central matter in dispute and would benefit from direct engagement between the parties.

Sustainability of Cowfold and relationship to services

Although the Council has raised concerns in the Officer Report regarding accessibility and potential reliance on the private car, this does not form a separate reason for refusal. Furthermore, West Sussex County Council, as Local Highway Authority, has raised no objection to the proposed development.

The Appellant considers that the site occupies a sustainable location adjacent to Cowfold, with access to local services and infrastructure. The Appellant will also address the ability to provide appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures, including low-level lighting to Eastlands Lane where necessary and appropriate, secured by condition or legal obligation.

A Hearing would assist in considering the sustainability of the site and the extent to which Cowfold can accommodate further growth.

Landscape character, settlement form and site visit

The second reason for refusal concerns the alleged formalisation and suburbanisation of the site, and the asserted impact on the informal character of the landscape and countryside setting.

These are inherently judgement-based matters. The Appellant's position is that the proposed development has been designed as a modest form of infill development which responds to the existing pattern of dwellings along Eastlands Lane and the rural fringe character of this part of Cowfold. The Appellant will also rely on landscape evidence in support of the appeal.

It is also material that no objection or substantive landscape response was received from the Council's landscape officer prior to the determination of the application. The Appellant understands that a landscape objection was only received after the refusal of planning permission. This raises important procedural and evidential matters as to the extent to which the Appellant was afforded a proper opportunity to consider and respond to those landscape concerns during the application process.

An accompanied site visit would be particularly important in this case, allowing the Inspector to consider the relationship between the appeal site, Eastlands Lane, existing dwellings, nearby footpaths, landscape features and the settlement edge in situ.

Local Green Space and Eastlands Wood

The Appellant also intends to address what appears to be an important factual issue in the Council's assessment concerning the relationship between the application site, Eastlands Wood, the Tree Preservation Order and the Local Green Space designation.

The Officer Report refers to the western portion of the application site as Eastlands Wood and as being designated Local Green Space. The Appellant's position is that this is incorrect and requires clear clarification. The developable part of the appeal site is not Local Green Space and should not have been categorised as such by the Officer. The Local Green Space designation relates to Eastlands Wood to the west, not to the proposed residential development area.

This is a material factual error because the Officer's assessment appears to have treated the appeal site, or part of it, as falling within the Local Green Space designation. That has the potential to have materially influenced the Council's judgement on the principle of development, landscape character and alleged harm to the countryside setting. The proposed dwellings are outside the Local Green Space designation, no built development is proposed within Eastlands Wood, and the scheme retains an undeveloped buffer to the woodland.

This is a further matter which would benefit from direct discussion at a Hearing and consideration during the site visit.

Other technical matters

The Officer Report confirms that there are no objections from the Council's Arboricultural Officer, the Council's Environmental Health Team, or West Sussex County Council Highways. Drainage matters are capable of being addressed by condition. Ecology and Great Crested Newt matters are also capable of being addressed through the District Licensing route or other appropriate licensing mechanism.

The appeal is therefore not expected to require formal cross-examination. However, the number of interrelated policy, planning balance and site-specific judgement matters means that written representations alone would not provide the most effective or proportionate procedure.

Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, the Appellant respectfully submits that an Informal Hearing is the most appropriate appeal procedure.

The appeal raises important matters concerning housing need, the application of the tilted balance, the weight to be afforded to adopted and emerging planning policies, the role of the Cowfold Neighbourhood Plan, the sustainability of Cowfold as a settlement, and the site-specific assessment of landscape and settlement character.

The Appellant does not consider that a Public Inquiry is necessary, as the matters in dispute can be appropriately explored without formal cross-examination. However, a written representations procedure would be insufficient given the nature, complexity and importance of the issues in dispute.

We therefore respectfully request that the Planning Inspectorate confirms the appeal should proceed by way of a Hearing.

If you have any further queries or require further information, please contact me on 01903 248777.

Yours sincerely
ECE Planning



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Managing Director