Objection to planning application DC/26/1598

Residents of Minster House, Littleworth Lane RH13 8JX

November 13, 2026

Dear Planning Case Officer,

We object to this Planning Application (DC/26/1598) in its current form.

Scale of proposed development

Our property, Minster House, borders the Southern boundary of the site. This is the fifth planning application submitted by the monastery's agents for the site since we moved here in 2009. Previous applications have been revised several times due to their inappropriate scale and character, before being either refused permission, or withdrawn.

A mutually agreeable way forwards for the monastery to obtain funds from this site, for the repair of their Grade 1 listed building Guest House, came from the Parish Council meeting in July 2018. In attendance were the monastery's planning agent and local residents. At the meeting it was agreed a single dwelling on the site could be acceptable to the local community.

However, the subsequent planning application submitted under DC/19/0678, was initially for an enormous single detached house. After strong local objections, this was reduced to the more appropriate single detached property, eventually granted planning permission. It should be noted that if this new planning application were to be granted, it would lead to two new properties on the site; raising again the issue of inappropriate scale, character and over-development of the site as a whole.

It could help the current application for the second house on the site, if the original house were made smaller. Also, if the new application were for a design more in keeping with the surrounding properties.

Enabling development for Monastery repairs

Relating to the position on enabling development for this site, to raise funds for essential repairs to the Monastery's Grade 1 listed Guest House. We understand that, although the site was not sold the essential repairs to the Monastery's guest house have in fact been carried-out. We suggest therefore, that the requirement for enabling funds from this site, key to the previous permission, may no longer be applicable or justification for further development on this site.

Character of proposed development

The site is surrounded by 19th Century properties: South Lodge, Minster House and the terrace of cottages opposite the site; as well as listed Well Cottage (18th Century) a terrace of listed cottages 17th Century. The most recent addition to this area, built in the past two years, is a detached house on the corner of Littleworth Lane and Mill Lane. This is attractively clad in brick and traditionally tile-hung, with an oak-framed porch and clay tiled roof, which blends nicely with the street scene.

The applicant has shared with us the design of the proposed property as a DAN-WOOD prefabricated house, which the brochure describes as being of "minimalist design ... Scandinavian clarity ... Modern Architecture".

The stark features of this design do not feel sympathetic to the character of the area and street view. It would be especially visible as a consequence of significant removal of screening trees and vegetation. There could be some benefit in cladding the property in a more appropriate finish, such as brick or timber facing.

If the application does proceed in some form, we would want HDC to insist on the applicant submitting clear plans for approval, reinstating features of the mature habitat which has been removed, including mature hedging and trees on the boundaries. These are already requirements of the pre-commencement conditions for the site, which should have been enforced, but may go some way to mitigate the ecological destruction that has occurred.

Proximity of garage building

The application plans show a garage erected right-up against our hedge on the site's Southern boundary. The garage should be moved on the plan, to give a Root Protection Area (RPA) to prevent damage to our hedge during garage construction and future maintenance. Also the RPA should allow space for the applicant's additional planting, which they discussed with us would be evergreen extra hedging to provide a screen on this boundary.

Pre-commencement conditions conflict

HDC established eight pre-commencement conditions for this site in March 2025, which are included in the Permission granted in February 2026 (DC/19/0678). These include the following, which particularly affect us:

6 – "no development shall commence, including any works of site clearance, until a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority"

8 – "no development shall commence until full details of all hard and soft landscaping works shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority"

We have been disturbed to witness complete clearance of the site in conflict with the pre-commencement conditions. Please see the attached photos and video of large removal/grab machinery, trashing the bushes and hedges at the site on 18th March 2025. We phoned HDC Planning twice on that date to report our concerns over the ecological damage. We were advised to the effect that there was nothing HDC could do, but we feel that the responsible parties should have been taken to task under the pre-conditions for any work on the site.

Furthermore, between 5th June and 27th July 2026, three months before the Ecology surveys, we and other Littleworth residents noted significant tree-felling at the site. These works included removal of a large oak tree on the West boundary, and several other trees along the South boundary which adjoins our property, and the East boundary. The removal of these trees, damage to the habitat and sudden exposure to the site, all came as a shock to us.

Ecological Appraisal and Survey conflict

The applicant has submitted a Preliminary Ecological Appriasal and a Reptile Survey, carried-out in August and issued in October 2026, after the site had been cleared of habitats. Indeed, in section 3.7.2 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal the surveyor notes "Several trees of varying species and sizes were removed before the UKHab survey, including two mature trees, as evidenced by the remaining stumps and a large pile of wood chippings and sawdust in the northwestern section of the development boundary."

Also, "The client advised that the trees were removed by the previous owner. No pre-felling ecological assessment or photographic evidence sufficient to assess their potential suitability for roosting bats was available."

In any event, if permission were to be granted we would want to see very clear requirements for plan statements regarding rehabilitation of the ecology and boundary plantation of trees and hedging, to mitigate the damage and removal of natural shielding already caused. This would align with discussions we have had with the applicants, regarding softening the boundaries with evergreen year-round cover.

Surface water drainage

Removal of the vegetation on the site has exacerbated the issue of surface water collecting on the site, which already spreads across the southern boundary onto our property in periods of heavy rain. (See attached photos). New paved areas and roofing will increase the amount and rate of run-off, if not properly dealt with. We have made the applicant aware of this issue and would want to see on the plan how they propose to control this and direct it away from our property.

Conclusion

We are not against the building of a property on the monastery's site. We just want it done in a way that is respectful of the rural environment, restores the damaged boundary ecology and is in-keeping with the local area.

Yours sincerely,

Residents of Minster House

Monastery plot clearance photos March 2025 (2 videos also provided)





Surface water run-off to Minster House from Monastery plot - photos





Surface water in Monastery plot - photos



