

[REDACTED]
15 Station Road
Warnham
West Sussex
RH12 3SR

To whom it may concern,

Re: Objection to Outline Planning Application DC/26/0585

I wish to formally object to outline planning application DC/26/0585 on the grounds that the proposal represents an unacceptable and harmful form of development that conflicts with both local and national planning policy and would result in significant and irreversible harm to the character, ecology, safety and amenity of the surrounding area.

1. Harm to Rural Character and Landscape

Station Road is a small rural hamlet consisting of approximately 21 dwellings, a smallholding and a single industrial unit, bounded by woodland, open countryside and the railway line at Warnham Station. The proposed development of 24 dwellings would more than double the number of homes within this location and fundamentally alter the established rural character and identity of the area.

The site currently forms part of an undeveloped landscape setting and informal green space used by local residents. The proposed development would introduce an urbanising and visually intrusive form of development into what is presently open countryside. The erosion of openness, tranquillity and natural character would permanently change the appearance and setting of Station Road and create an undesirable precedent for further encroachment into undeveloped land.

The application is submitted in outline form and therefore fails to provide sufficient detail regarding layout, scale, appearance and landscaping to demonstrate how the development could be integrated sensitively into the locality. The relationship between the proposed development and surrounding properties has not been satisfactorily resolved.

2. Conflict with Planning Policy

The application site lies outside the Warnham Built-Up Area Boundary and is classified as countryside under both the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) and the Warnham Neighbourhood Development Plan (WNDP) adopted in June 2019.

Station Road was specifically considered and rejected as a housing allocation during preparation of the WNDP due to concerns including access constraints, flood risk, countryside protection and unsuitability for development. Those concerns remain valid.

The proposal appears contrary to key policies within the HDPF, including those relating to:

- protection of landscape character and countryside;
- safeguarding residential amenity;
- biodiversity and environmental protection;
- sustainable transport and highway safety;
- high quality and context-sensitive design; and
- development that integrates appropriately with existing communities.

The development would also undermine the strategic separation between Warnham and North Horsham and contribute towards settlement coalescence and unplanned urban sprawl, contrary to the objectives of countryside protection policies and the wider aims of the development plan.

While the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) contains a presumption in favour of sustainable development, this does not override the need to protect valued landscapes, biodiversity, countryside character and residential amenity, particularly where demonstrable environmental harm would arise.

3. Highway Safety and Unsustainable Transport

The proposal would intensify traffic generation and vehicle movements on roads and junctions that already experience safety concerns and limited parking capacity.

Station Road is a narrow rural road with no pedestrian footpaths or street lighting. Residents, including families with children, currently walk and cycle along the road to access Warnham village, the railway station and local amenities. Increased traffic associated with the development would materially worsen conditions for pedestrians and cyclists and increase conflict between vehicles and vulnerable road users.

The junction of Station Road with the A24 and Bell Road has a known history of serious accidents, including incidents involving [REDACTED] life-changing injuries. Additional turning movements generated by the development would increase pressure on an already dangerous junction.

The site is not sustainably located in transport terms. Warnham Station provides only a limited rail service, there is no regular bus connection to Warnham village, and access to local shops, schools, medical facilities and services would largely require private car use. As a result, the development would lead to significant additional car dependency contrary to the aims of the NPPF and local transport policies promoting sustainable travel.

The outline proposals also fail to demonstrate that sufficient parking can be accommodated on site. Overspill parking along Station Road and internal access roads

would likely occur, further reducing highway safety and obstructing access for residents and emergency vehicles.

Furthermore, the report does not consider the loss of parking for existing residents created by the development. The current residents have between them approximately 46 vehicles, of which 28 regularly use the proposed development area. These 28 vehicles (including vans and agricultural vehicles) would have no choice other than to park along the approach to the station. This would mean that at the narrowest point of the road, access by larger vehicles, including emergency vehicles, would be blocked.

Many of the Station Road properties have garages leading onto the rear access track. The proposed boundary provides insufficient turning space for residents to be able to continue to access said garages.

4. Ecology and Biodiversity Harm

The site and surrounding landscape form a valuable and increasingly rare habitat corridor supporting a wide range of wildlife including bats, reptiles, deer, Nightingales and Little Owls.

The ecological value of the site appears to be significantly understated within the submitted application documents. In particular, Nightingales are a species of high conservation concern associated with dense scrub and quiet edge habitats, both of which are especially vulnerable to fragmentation, lighting and increased human activity.

The introduction of housing, roads, lighting, vehicle movements, domestic activity and noise would permanently erode the tranquil nature of the site and result in cumulative ecological harm through habitat loss, disturbance and urbanisation.

The proposal appears contrary to the NPPF requirement to conserve and enhance the natural environment and minimise impacts on biodiversity. It also conflicts with biodiversity net gain principles and the precautionary approach expected where protected and priority species may be affected.

Any loss of mature trees, hedgerows or established vegetation should be afforded substantial weight, as these features contribute not only to biodiversity but also to landscape quality, visual screening, environmental resilience and local distinctiveness.

Once this undeveloped environment is urbanised, the ecological damage cannot realistically be reversed.

5. Residential Amenity

The development would introduce significant additional noise, lighting, traffic and domestic activity into what is currently a peaceful rural environment. These impacts would extend beyond the site itself and materially diminish the living conditions and amenity currently enjoyed by neighbouring residents.

Given the scale of development proposed relative to the existing settlement pattern, the proposal would appear overdeveloped and wholly out of keeping with the established character of Station Road.

6. Flood Risk and Drainage Concerns

Station Road and surrounding fields already experience flooding during periods of heavy rainfall, particularly associated with Boldings Brook overtopping its banks.

The proposed development would likely increase surface water runoff and place additional pressure on existing drainage infrastructure. Concern is reinforced by the fact that Horsham District Council, acting as Lead Local Flood Authority, has objected to the application in relation to surface water disposal, while Southern Water has also objected to the proposed foul drainage arrangements.

These objections demonstrate that the application has failed to provide an adequate and sustainable drainage strategy.

7. Community Impact

The existing green space and smallholding provide amenity and informal recreational value for local residents and contribute significantly to the identity and cohesion of the Station Road community.

Significant weight should be afforded to the concerns raised by local residents and the Parish Council, who understand the constraints and sensitivities of the area. Concerns regarding overdevelopment, ecological loss, highway safety, flood risk and pressure on infrastructure should not be dismissed lightly.

Relevant appeal decisions and case law consistently confirm that harm to character, tranquillity, ecology and residential amenity are legitimate and significant material planning considerations. Decision-makers are also required to assess cumulative and long-term environmental harm, not merely the immediate physical footprint of development.

Conclusion

For all the reasons set out above, I respectfully request that Horsham District Council refuse planning application DC/26/0585.

Yours faithfully,

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of the author.