

Application Reference: DC/26/0366
Address: Land North West of Southwater
Case Officer: Matthew Porter

Commenter:

[REDACTED]
3 Pillarbox Cottages
Tower Hill
Horsham
RH13 0AH

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Commenter type: Member of the public
Stance: Object

Reason for Comment: Highway Access and Parking

Executive Summary

I have lived at 3 Pillarbox Cottages, Tower Hill since 1979 (**NB** Contrary to errors in Google maps and other databases, *Tower Hill extends all the way from Boars Head junction to the Two Mile Ash/Christs Hospital Road junction*).

It is important that, when referring to Tower Hill, all stakeholders are referring to the same stretch of road.

My accumulated knowledge of Tower Hill and its incremental change in usage over 47 years potentially allows planners access to informed insight upon which to make the most informed decisions for current and future needs in this lovely part of West Sussex.

In order to make this information easily accessible to support busy council planners, I have therefore decided to present my comments in the following sequence:

1. Tower Hill's incremental change to current situation
2. Assessment of traffic changes over this time from local resident reality
3. Assessment of traffic in Tower Hill/Two Mile Ash with development proposal
4. Comments on Applicant's Traffic Assessment
5. Impact of development
6. Summary and Proposed Solutions
7. Appendix/References

1. Tower Hill's incremental change to current situation

It is important to remember - as is the case in many rural roads in West Sussex - that Tower Hill evolved as a narrow farm and quarry access - the width, design and subsurface construction was never designed for today's vehicles/demand. (Appendix Photo 1)

"To get our entire network into perfect condition, we would need £400 million for the surfacing works alone. We'd also need to carry out a large amount of other structural and drainage works, especially on rural roads, which don't have the same underlying infrastructure as roads in urban situations do" (2026 WSCC Highways).

It is also imperative to remember that Tower Hill is the **only road access** to Christs Hospital from Horsham town **and** all users/visitors coming from the North or South on the A24 bypass via Hop Oast roundabout.

Even in the 50 years or so that I have lived here the highways reality and environment surrounding and using Tower Hill has changed beyond recognition:

- Christs Hospital has changed from purely a mostly boarding school to also becoming a booming Sports Centre/Multi-Sports Facility covering a huge visitor/member catchment area
- The new A24 by-pass and it's Tower Hill flyover widened only a tiny length of this dangerous road
- The Worthing Road/Tower Hill junction at the Boars Head is a source of constant accidents and injuries and is dangerous not only for drivers, but also pedestrians, cyclists, and pub visitors. The pedestrian safety wall is constantly knocked down
- The Boars Head junction reflects its early 'highway requirement' design: it is narrow, pinched, adverse camber and, for the present-day volume and size of vehicle, causes constant challenges to safe usage and accidents (Appendix Photo 2)
- The Hill up from the Boars Head is narrow, pinched, prone to landslip (Appendix Photos 3a/3b) with unstable old trees and culminates in a 90degree blind bend - the source of frequent nudges and near misses (most recent accident photos 4/5 Appendix)
- The evolution of this country road means there is no pavement, no 21C version of safe pedestrian footway, no allowance for 21C cycle safety. This was not a problem in 1900
- Tower Hill straight has many houses directly adjacent to the road with gateways which step directly into the nearside active roadway (examples Photos 6/7 Appendix) with no safe area. This was not a problem in 1900 - even in 1979 - but it is in 2026
- The end of Tower Hill straight culminates in yet another blind 90degree bend with adverse camber and no footway.

This level of non-local 'visitor' awareness of the dangers

of the road should be recognised

- Tower Hill now floods badly with even moderate rainfall. Cars speed through floods, soaking anyone brave enough to be out, plus walls, windows of houses (photo 10 Appendix)

2. Assessment of traffic changes over this time from local resident reality

Whilst the road was originally designed for horse and cart, even in my 47 years of occupation, the vehicles involved and levels of usage have changed and increased immeasurably:

a) The vehicles:

- Today's cars are no longer minis and cortinas. Today's average cars are SUV's and Range Rovers. Today's lorries and buses are huge/heavy, wide and long. Today's delivery vans are inevitably large, tracked - thus speedy, needing to park outside addresses but unable so to do in a narrow, busy road.
- This size/weight 21C reality causes huge problems on a residential country road like Tower Hill.
- Buses to and from Christs Hospital regularly get wedged on blind corners and especially at top of Boars Head hill (Photo 9 Appendix)
- Wide SUVs/others regularly scrape and lose wing mirrors. Wheelie bins are constantly knocked over. Pedestrians/cyclists have no safe haven

b) Speed/volume

- Until recently this road was 60mph zone. After one of the recent extensions to Christs Hospital Sports Facilities, 30mph signs were erected. These limits are mostly totally ignored, especially along the only straight section of Tower Hill - between two blind, 90degree bends.
- Residents that use Tower Hill are often tailgated as they attempt to keep to the 30mph speed limit
- A Tower Hill community group regularly records c. 12% of drivers on Tower Hill driving at or in excess of 36mph. A significantly higher proportion (up to 38%) of motorists drive between 31 and 35mph. In total therefore, approximately half of motorists using Tower Hill exceed the speed limit.
- As a local resident for nearly 50 years, I know that I used to be able to walk to the post-box and run with my dog without this level of speeding traffic danger, I would also regularly cycle into Horsham - I certainly have not risked this for years. The road is just too dangerous for everyone who lives here to venture out without extreme caution/reason and certainly never in the dark. It has been an incremental deterioration of quality of living
- There are frequent occasions when traffic on Tower Hill is tailed back at pinch points particularly when coaches and other large vehicles are involved (example photo 9 Appendix)

To summarise, with regard to traffic currently using Tower Hill, **the sole Christs Hospital access road**, what **can be definitely stated based on a local resident's years of experience is that:**

- The volume, speed, size, weight of all vehicles **currently** using this fixed-width narrow, bendy, residential country road has increased year on year to present day unsustainable levels for safety
- Tower Hill is a busy road and residents who use it often experience fear and intimidation as pedestrians
- The method used by WSCC and Police for recording the data which they will recognise is entirely out of date for ex-country roads turned unofficial B roads like Tower Hill. The photos of accidents and pictures of blockages in my appendix show a tiny % of the collisions and crashes that are not recorded anywhere, yet they represent huge risk to rate paying inhabitants and road users

3. Comments on Applicant's Traffic Assessment

The applicant's traffic assessment is an enormously complex piece of work and, for many people without technical knowledge of such matters, it is difficult to interpret the assessment's methodology or to verify the conclusions from the data presented. More should be done, in addition to the non-technical summary, to ensure local residents can understand the information and verify impacts

"Most Traffic Assessments are written by people living a long distance away with little or no local knowledge. They often ignore well-known local rat runs" (2015 Gordon-Stokes Transport *Routes taken by traffic* <https://gordonstokes.co.uk/transport/distribution.html>). This statement rings true for the applicant's traffic assessment in that many of the particular features of Tower Hill (pinch points, dwellings adjacent to road) are not mentioned in the traffic assessment

The applicant's asserts that Tower Hill (appearing as link 6c in the transport assessment) is a "low sensitivity" highway, and this characterisation underpins their assessment. Many residents would strongly disagree with this classification, given the issues I have highlighted in preceding paragraphs. Nobody would agree that having an impatient motorist's wing mirrors brush past a pedestrian's elbow as they jump sideways to avoid impact is a "low risk" situation.

The environmental statement provides short and long lists of cumulative developments but the housing development at Horsham Golf and Fitness (recently approved on appeal) does not feature. Can residents be assured that highways impacts have been properly assessed, taking into account the traffic which this development would generate during construction and once completed.

In the applicant's trip distribution, journeys to/from Bluecoat Sports are assumed to be "internal" and subject to modal shift i.e. travel by foot or bicycle. Such modal shift would appear to be an optimistic assumption, even with the walking/cycling mitigations proposed, especially given society's preference to make even short

journeys by car. Therefore the number of vehicles travelling to Bluecoat Sports is underestimated and the impacts associated with it not representative.

The Movement Parameters Plan (MPP) and the Transport Strategy Plan (TSP) identify a secondary access route (SAR) from the development to Two Mile Ash. The application documents indicate that the developer's preference is for the SAR to be used primarily by cyclists and pedestrians and that there is the potential to restrict vehicular access if required. No details are provided on the number of vehicles likely to use the SAR, how such restrictions will be implemented, and how vehicle numbers will be controlled. How will traffic levels on the SAR be monitored and what action thresholds for vehicle usage will be established?

The TSP notes that traffic calming will be established on Two Mile Ash north of the A24 overbridge (this is actually Tower Hill). No details of such measures are described for residents to comment and as such the deliverability of the mitigation measures suggested and the remaining impacts cannot be considered.

The TSP identifies a potential cycling improvement scheme on Two Mile Ash Road [Tower Hill] and PRoW 1639_1 to enhance access to Horsham Town Centre. The hillside down to the railway line is steep, very wet and muddy in winter and utilises an overbridge with numerous steps up and down to cross the railway. On the north side of the railway the path is narrow, even for pedestrians to pass, even more so for a cyclist and a pedestrian. I query whether the applicant's suggested concept to deliver an improved cycling link is viable or deliverable.

Has the Boars Head junction (Tower Hill/Worthing Road) been assessed by the applicant?

4. Impact of development

It has been demonstrated above that without adequate mitigation, this development will exacerbate what many local stakeholders already feel to be an unacceptable situation in highways terms

Traffic routing:

- Christs Hospital sports complex is a significant draw over a wide geographical area (as evidenced by their busy car parks, advertising hoardings at Washington roundabout/in local press, passengers in cars on Tower Hill dressed in sports kit) and has apparently already contributed to an increase in traffic levels to Christs Hospital. Many new home owners at the proposed development will choose to travel by car to get there because of the population's preference to travel by car.
- It would seem that, because use of the proposed SAR will be restricted to vehicles, traffic from the proposed development will still have to approach Christs Hospital via Worthing Road, Boars Head and Tower Hill. The same route will be taken by vehicles travelling to Christs Hospital sports complex from new homes at Horsham Golf and Fitness,
- It is questionable if the walking/cycling proposals are described adequately and, in any event, are they deliverable/credible? If they are not, Tower Hill will be pushed beyond any measure of safe use, with increased levels of traffic

Effect on local junctions and other roads

- There are key junctions and rural roads involved in this development viz Boars Head, Bax Castle and the already barely sustainable Bonfire Hill. Increased usage of already inadequate junctions without mitigation is questionable
- In addition to the Tower Hill challenges above, Two Mile Ash is a rural country road barely adequate for the size and volume of current users where the 40mph limit is constantly ignored
- The development as envisaged will potentially be 'highway landlocked' between an already busy Worthing Road, an already challenged Two Mile Ash and a currently fast, dangerous unsuitable residential country access road - Tower Hill
- The applicant envisages a tranquil village community who barely need to use their cars to travel outside Southwater. It is almost impossible to perceive that 1000 new households are going to ignore Waitrose, John Lewis, Sainsburys and Aldi in North Horsham less than a mile away via Tower Hill
- Schools generate traffic; it is unrealistic to assume otherwise. What proportion of school traffic will be using Tower Hill?
- Traffic will use different routes according to times of day. If there is a rat run when Worthing Road is busy, they will use Tower Hill

6. Summary and Potential Solutions

The planning application documents, in describing the highways environment, are not accessible to many readers who might wish to understand how conclusions have been developed.

The highways assessment does not appear to consider the particular characteristics of Tower Hill which, in conjunction with existing traffic levels, already cause problems for local residents.

There are a number of areas in the highways assessment in which detail is light, particularly in relation to proposed mitigation measures, and insufficient for residents to become comfortable with the highways implications of the proposals.

I do not consider that traffic generated by the proposed development will not have an unacceptable impact on Tower Hill and its residents, as the applicant's planning application supposes.

However, I would strongly suggest that the development represents an opportunity for the applicant, Christs Hospital School (the latter standing to benefit from new homes near to their sports complex), the highways authority, and Horsham District Council, to deliver a new access route from the Hop Oast roundabout to Christ's Hospital. Such a route would benefit the owners of the proposed new homes, and residents of Tower Hill who already experience issues arising from the traffic on Tower Hill.

Tower Hill would be designated restricted access (for local residents, buses, cyclists, emergency vehicles and pedestrians only)

The new access route would be:

- of a size and width able to take **all** current non-resident Tower Hill traffic
- have safe pedestrian and cycle space
- properly connected to Hop Oast roundabout (which itself needs re-design, especially when the new estate on Horsham Golf is recognised)



APPENDIX

PHOTOS

Photo 1.



**Postcard view of Pillarbox Cottages, Tower Hill circa early 1900's
The width, which remains constant to this day, and level of usage at that
time is clearly demonstrated.**

Photo 2.



One of the many road accidents at the Boars Head junction. [REDACTED]

The Pub safety wall has been knocked down twice since last summer

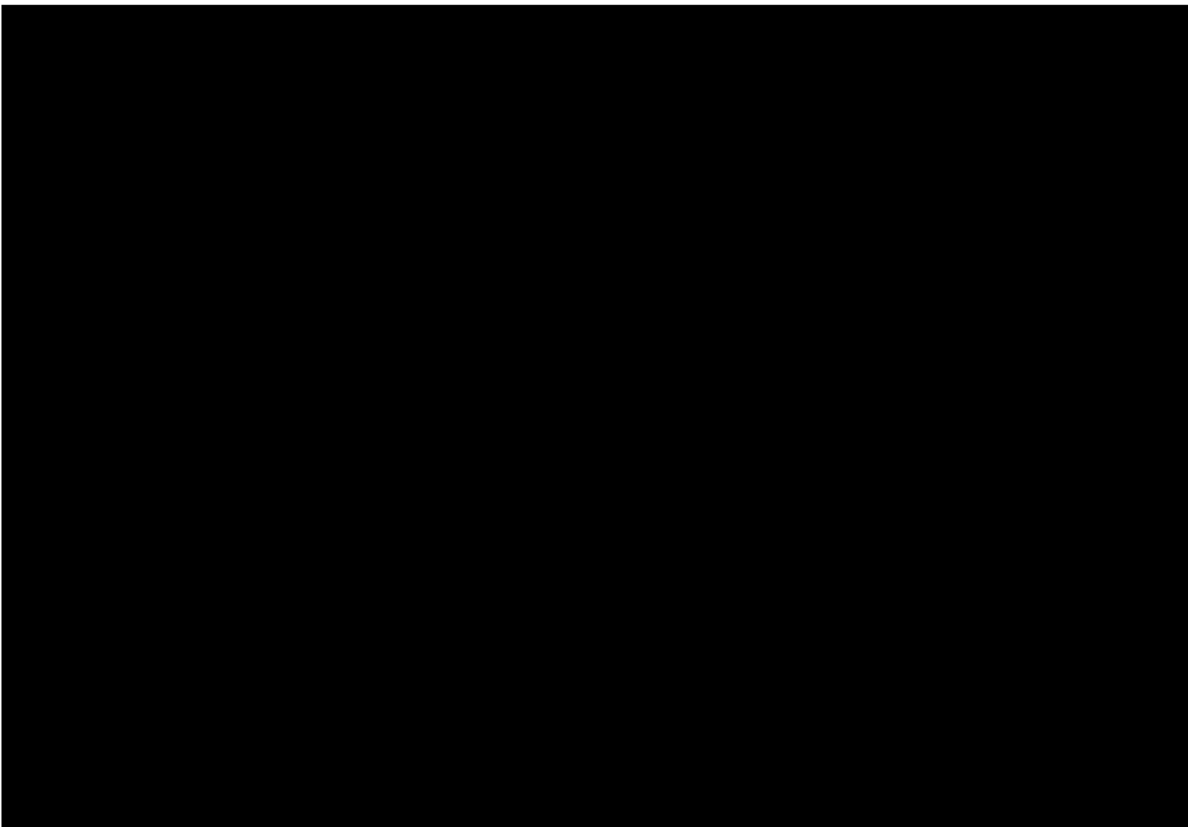
Photos 3a and 3b
3a



3b



The landslide on Tower Hill just up from the Boars Head before (3a) and after repair (3b). It can be seen how narrow the road is here and, since this photo was taken, multiple vehicles snagging the nearside edge have further eroded the area, risking further landslips. Highways have now further narrowed this area with bollards and safety furniture to avoid more erosion



Photos 6/7



Two of many examples of houses on Tower Hill where the only exit from the property requires the householder to step directly into an active fast highway lane - often on or near a blind bend - with cars ignoring speed limits

There is NO footway

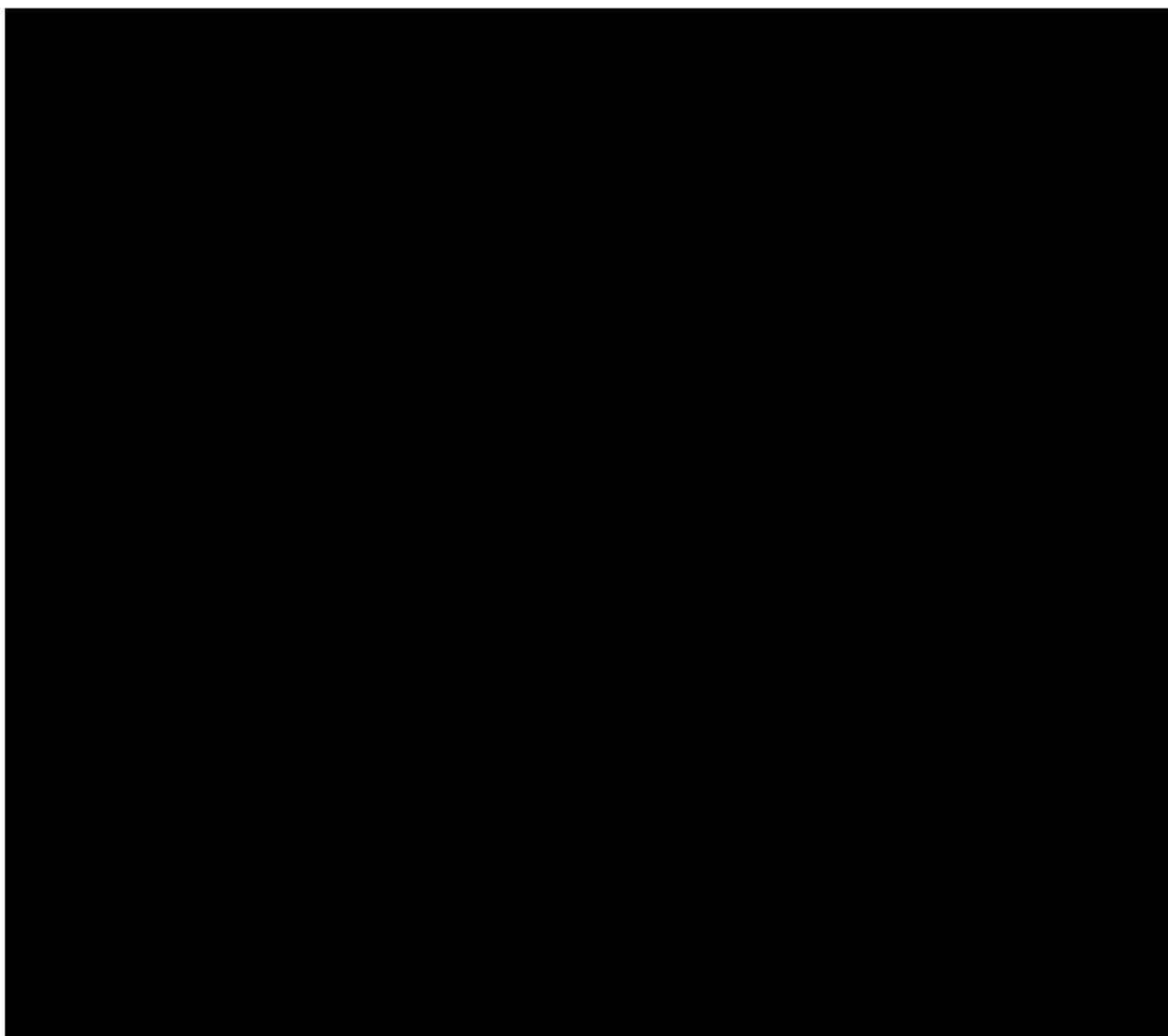


Photo 9



A large bus wedged at the top of the Boars Head hill. There was such a long queue behind the bus nobody could reverse and the queue down behind my car was down to the Worthing Road and similarly could not reverse. The driver of the van finally got out and ran around organising action. This example dates from last winter.

There is no officially recorded data to illustrate this highway problem

Increasing issues such as this example - which resulted in cars driving recklessly up/down the privately owned Salisbury Road as a bypass option - was one of the factors which caused residents there to erect a road entry barrier

Photo 10



Tower Hill straight floods after even moderate rain. This view showing flooding outside and into Pillarbox Cottages illustrates the volume of the problem. Gulleys and storm drains are totally inadequate