SOUTHWATER PARISH COUNCIL

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LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD SCHEME GOLD

Planning Officer
Horsham District Council
Albery House
Springfield Road
Horsham RH12 2GB

25 November 2026

Dear Ms Tinning

DC/26/1475 – Nine dwellings on land to the rear of The Hermitage, Tower Hill

Southwater Parish Council objects to this application and asks Horsham District Council to refuse permission. Our main objection is that the layout would extend housing behind the existing Tower Hill frontage and into a field the District Council has identified as important in keeping settlements separate. The proposal also provides less affordable housing than the Council sought on a comparable site.

Tower Hill's separate identity and rural character

Policy SNP1.3 of the made Southwater Neighbourhood Plan protects the distinct identities of Tower Hill, Southwater and Christ's Hospital and specifically addresses the cumulative effect of development. Adopted District Plan Policy 27 puts that protection into practice. Its first two criteria address the openness of the gap between settlements and the urbanising effects of development within it.

The applicant argues that nine houses on generous plots would reflect Tower Hill's low density. Drawing PL_001_10 shows why we disagree. A new road would run west from Tower Hill, past the rear of the existing frontage, to serve houses and driveways across the field. Plots 6, 7 and 8 would form a new line of housing along its western side. Keeping the trees would screen some views, but the settlement edge would still move west. The Council identified expansion in this direction as harmful in its June 2026 assessment of site SA416, which considered around 34 homes. The current layout has fewer houses but still extends development across the field. It would bring fewer benefits while causing the same harm.

The permitted Horsham Golf and Fitness development of up to 800 homes is also relevant. In paragraphs 22–24 of the appeal decision, the Inspector found that the golf scheme would reduce separation between Horsham and Southwater, but that the remaining countryside would allow each settlement to retain its identity. The District Council has identified this field as part of that separation. In our view, another residential road and houses across the countryside here would erode the rural setting that distinguishes Tower Hill and conflicts with SNP1.3 and Policy 27.

Place Services considers that landscaping could reduce the scheme's effects on the surrounding area. Its response also identifies a noticeable change in the field's character and warns that removing trees for the access could give the Tower Hill frontage a more urban character, contrary to the aims of countryside Policy 26 (paragraphs 3.4 and 3.8). These concerns are directly relevant to the design and tree protections in SNP16 and SNP18.

Affordable housing

Adopted Policy 16(3)(a) requires 35% affordable housing on sites over 0.5 hectares. This site is 1.34 hectares. Two of the nine homes would be affordable, or 22%. At Jolesfield, Partridge Green (DC/26/1311), the Council applied the 35% requirement to nine homes on 0.87 hectares and sought three affordable homes. It cited the failure to secure them as a reason for refusal. The same approach here would mean seeking a third affordable home. The applicant's claim that two homes exceed requirements should therefore carry no additional weight. We ask the Council to secure the amount and tenure of affordable housing required by the policy through a legal agreement, unless the applicant demonstrates a site-specific justification for a shortfall.

National policy and the emerging Local Plan

We give substantial weight to providing homes in a district with an acknowledged shortfall. Under NPPF Policy S5(1)(j)(i), the site's physical relationship with an existing settlement and the infrastructure available to serve it also matter. The applicant relies on Horsham, but describes the site as being about 150 metres south of its built-up area boundary. The railway forms a clear edge to the town, and the proposed road would take housing west behind Tower Hill's frontage. In our view, the applicant has not demonstrated the physical relationship with Horsham on which its case depends. The emerging Local Plan raises the same issue. Further Main Modification FMM1, page 3, proposes that criterion 2 of Strategic Policy 3 should address how well development relates to the settlement boundary and transport facilities.

Accessibility and cumulative infrastructure capacity

Policies SNP1.1(c) and (d) call for development to be considered alongside existing and proposed infrastructure and the community's future needs. Adopted District Plan Policy

39 requires sufficient capacity, or improvements delivered in time to serve the development.

Table 4.2 of the Transport Statement shows a limited service at Tower Close. Better services run along Worthing Road, so the question is how residents would reach them. The proposed footway would improve the first part of that journey. The Council should establish whether the whole route to those stops is accessible throughout the year and what step-free route into Horsham is available for residents who cannot use the stepped railway crossing.

Paragraphs 6.7–6.8 estimate five morning and four evening peak-hour vehicle trips from the nine homes. The Highway Authority expects no severe cumulative impact, but its response does not say whether it included the permitted golf development. We ask the Council to record whether that scheme and its secured transport improvements were taken into account when assessing the shared approaches to Worthing Road.

Southern Water identifies a possible increase in risk to the sewer network and asks for occupation to be tied to any necessary reinforcement. Before deciding the application, the Council should confirm with Southern Water whether the two schemes use the same downstream sewers and, if so, whether its capacity check included flows from the permitted golf development. Any reinforcement needed to serve these nine homes should be in place before the homes that depend on it are occupied.

The Southwater and emerging Joint Neighbourhood Plans

The made Southwater Neighbourhood Plan remains part of the development plan. If permission is granted, the emerging Joint Neighbourhood Plan will need to take account of both this scheme and the permitted Horsham Golf and Fitness development when planning for housing and infrastructure and considering the countryside left between settlements.

Planning balance

We give substantial weight to the nine new homes. But the layout would extend housing across a field that helps keep Tower Hill distinct, adding to the loss of separation already accepted in the golf site appeal. The affordable housing offer also falls below the level sought on a comparable site. Together, these concerns weigh against the scheme. We ask the District Council to refuse the application as submitted.

Yours sincerely

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JULIE CROWHURST
Deputy Executive Officer