

**Midway House
Jolesfield
Partridge Green
Horsham
West Sussex
RH13 8JT**

30th September 2026

Horsham District Planning Department

Dear Sir/Madam

Objection to planning application DC/26/1311

Land north of 1 Jolesfield Cottages, Jolesfield, Partridge Green, West Sussex RH13 8JT

Outline application for nine residential dwellings with all matters reserved except access

We write as the joint householders of Midway House, a Grade II listed property immediately opposite the application site, to object strongly to the proposed nine dwellings.

The application retains the same housing quantum and a broadly similar indicative arrangement to DC/26/0262, refused on 11 May 2026. Our principal objection remains the loss of openness and rural character within the West Grinstead Local Gap. The revised technical submissions also contain specific discrepancies that should be resolved before their conclusions are relied upon.

1 Harm to the Local Gap

Policy 1 of the West Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan protects the openness and separation between Partridge Green, Jolesfield and Littleworth. It requires development to avoid an unacceptable reduction in openness and the break between settlements, contribute where appropriate to conserving and enhancing landscape character, and safeguard neighbouring residential amenity.

NPPF S2(1)(c) expressly recognises, in its plan-making provisions, the role of gap policies where necessary to maintain settlements' separate identities and physical separation. We refer to this to explain the purpose of gap protection, not as a separate test for determining this application: paragraph 8 distinguishes plan-making from decision-making policy. Our objection relies on adopted Policy 1 and the evidence of harm to the openness and separation it protects.

The indicative scheme would replace part of the open land with two groups of houses, access roads, parking and enclosed domestic plots. It would extend residential development into the site away from the existing roadside pattern, introducing a materially different character and associated domestic activity.

Boundary screening does not answer this objection. The applicant's own Viewpoint 9 shows the open interior from the southern footpath. Retaining hedgerows may limit some views, but it cannot preserve the openness of land occupied by buildings and domestic plots. Nor does the retention of the larger field to the north establish that development of this part of the gap is acceptable. Complete coalescence is not necessary for an unacceptable reduction in openness to occur.

The previous officer assessment identified loss of openness and urbanisation of the rural landscape. Although the present application must be determined under the current framework, the site's position and proposed housing quantum remain materially similar. The additional technical reports do not answer that physical harm.

The block plan proposes 30 new native trees, whereas the revised biodiversity report describes 19. Those proposals require reconciliation. In any event, planting does not necessarily compensate for the permanent loss of open land and its conversion to residential use. We consider the proposal contrary to Policy 1.

2 Housing need and site suitability

The housing-supply shortfall and the applicant's reliance on NPPF S5(1)(j) are matters for the Council's planning balance. They do not establish that this particular proposal is acceptable. The assessment must address the site-specific harm identified above, rather than treat proximity to a settlement as sufficient justification.

The applicant's approximately six-minute walk is to the edge of Partridge Green, not its centre. The previous officer assessment identified an approximately 0.7-mile, 16-minute footway journey to the centre and raised concerns about lighting and the accessibility of alternative pedestrian routes. These matters remain relevant to the claimed suitability of the location.

3 Reliability of the biodiversity assessment

The revised biodiversity submission claims gains of 10.62% in habitat units and 10.03% in hedgerow units. However, the submitted Small Sites Metric displays an unresolved area-matching error. Page 5 records 2,218.31 square metres of habitat loss but only 2,093.31 square metres of created surface area. A corrected calculation and corresponding habitat plan are needed.

The same page credits six medium and thirteen large newly planted trees. The metric guidance bases these size categories on diameter at planting, not eventual maturity, and excludes newly planted trees within private gardens from separate tree credit. The applicant should provide planting sizes and mapped locations substantiating those entries. This is material because the new-tree credits underpin the claimed habitat gain.

The assessment also describes a site of approximately 8,705 square metres, while the metric uses 7,865 square metres. The metric retains all 570 square metres of mixed scrub, whereas the Dormouse Method of Works proposes some scrub clearance. These differing assumptions, together with the inconsistent planting totals, require reconciliation. Until that is done, the claimed biodiversity gain should not be treated as established. The Council should also confirm how delivery, management and monitoring would be secured.

4 Compatibility of habitat protection and drainage

The Dormouse Method of Works introduces safeguards, but their feasibility must be demonstrated for the complete scheme. Its 10-metre woodland and 5-metre hedgerow and scrub buffers need to be shown on a coordinated plan covering buildings, drainage, services, excavation and construction access. The ecological material describes three tree removals, while the arboricultural letter describes one Category C Goat Willow. The clearance area and tree identities must be reconciled before the Council can rely on the avoidance measures.

The Flood Risk Assessment positions the dwellings in Flood Zone 1 and proposes attenuation. Our local experience is that the B2135 regularly floods along the site boundary and the fields to the north become inundated; this raises a fundamental concern about the suitability of the site for further development, not merely the detailed design of mitigation. The assessment should address these existing conditions alongside the Flood Zone classification and demonstrate where water would flow and be stored during

such events, taking account of the built development and extensive hardstanding to the south, so that additional development does not exacerbate flooding on the site, highway or neighbouring land.

The specific outstanding concern is whether the discharge strategy and associated works are deliverable alongside the habitat and tree-protection requirements. Section 4.4 assumes an outfall from the pond beneath the B2135; that connection and its discharge feasibility require confirmation. The flow-control and storage values in section 6.11 and the Appendix D drawing should also be reconciled.

This concern extends to the operation of the proposed system when the pond and receiving drainage are already affected by flooding. The Council should require the assessment to address observed flood extents and flow routes, downstream water levels, exceedance flows and safe access during flood events. Unless these matters are satisfactorily demonstrated, the suitability of this site for nine dwellings remains in question, as well as the deliverability of the drainage strategy and its compatibility with retained habitats.

Southern Water's response of 16 September identifies insufficient information on foul-water disposal. The Council should establish the feasibility of the drainage arrangements and explain which outstanding details can properly be deferred by condition. It should not assume that each technical strategy can be delivered independently of the others on this constrained site.

5 Midway House and heritage

The applicant's Heritage Statement recognises that the wider rural landscape contributes to appreciation of Midway House and its historic separateness. It identifies harm, albeit at the lowest end of its less-than-substantial category. The introduction of houses and associated activity opposite the listed building would alter that setting.

The objection concerns the contribution of these rural surroundings to the building's significance, rather than simply a change to private outlook. Layout, scale, appearance and landscaping remain reserved. Any conclusion that mitigation adequately addresses the harm should therefore be supported by clear parameters for building positions, heights and planting, rather than reliance on an illustrative arrangement alone.

6 Safe access for all users

Highway safety and protection of the public right of way are substantial concerns in this objection. Our local experience includes vehicles approaching from the A24 direction and rounding the bend near Mill Lane at high speed. The assessment should address the bend, the approach to both accesses and the interaction between turning vehicles and pedestrians, rather than rely on visibility dimensions alone.

The new transport material does not remove the need to demonstrate safe arrangements at both accesses. The survey records 85th-percentile speeds of approximately 47.5 mph northbound and 45.9 mph southbound. The previous highway comments requested survey evidence for both accesses, while the appended survey identifies one monitoring location. The highway authority should confirm that this adequately represents each access and that the required visibility can be secured and maintained without conflicting with vegetation-retention commitments.

The 85th-percentile figures are not average or maximum speeds: they indicate the speeds at or below which approximately 85% of surveyed vehicles travelled, with approximately 15% travelling faster. The figures therefore do not exclude the faster movements experienced locally. The highway authority should consider the recorded speed distribution and whether the survey adequately captures conditions on the bend and the approaches to both accesses when assessing the proposed arrangements.

The earlier concerns about pedestrian crossing provision and access to public transport should also be addressed. In particular, the scheme should demonstrate how users of Footpath 1839 would be protected where it shares the southern access, and confirm that refuse tracking reflects the actual collection arrangements.

Footpath 1839 is an existing public route whose safety, convenience and availability must be protected. The Public Rights of Way Team's response of 15 September offers no objection on the stated assumptions about continued access and sensitive integration, but specifically draws attention to shared use of the southern access. A clear plan should show the path's legal alignment and width, pedestrian and vehicle conflict points, any proposed surfacing or drainage works, and how construction traffic, deliveries and parking would be managed to keep the route safe and unobstructed. These arrangements should be secured rather than left as a general assurance that the footpath will be integrated.

Conclusion

We consider that the proposed residential development would cause unacceptable harm to the openness and rural character of this part of the Local Gap. The revised submissions do not resolve that concern, and the biodiversity calculation and compatibility of the technical proposals remain insufficiently demonstrated for the reasons set out above.

The reported recurrent flooding also raises a fundamental question about site suitability, while the approach speeds, bend and shared public footpath require a convincing demonstration of safe access for all users. These concerns should be assessed together with the Local Gap harm and the unresolved technical evidence, rather than treated solely as matters of later detail.

We ask the Council to give these site-specific objections full consideration under the current planning framework and to refuse permission for DC/26/1311.

Yours faithfully,

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Midway House