

CPRH Objection to Planning Application DC/26/0556, Land West of Shoreham Road, Henfield, West Sussex: Erection of a complex of 4 buildings comprising 12 light industrial units for employment use (B2, B8 & E(g)) with associated car parking, access and landscaping

The Campaign to Protect Rural Henfield (CPRH) was formed in 2018. We strive to protect and enhance the rural environment of our village. We support development that meets local needs and aligns with the neighbourhood and district planning strategies. We object to this application as currently submitted.

CPRH does not object to the principle of employment development on this site. The site is identified in the Henfield Neighbourhood Plan 2017–2031 (HNP) for employment uses, and we support the delivery of well-designed workspace that strengthens the local economy. However, we object to this application because the layout as currently proposed places Building 2 too close to the boundary with Oak Tree Cottage, a neighbouring residential property, in ways that risk unacceptable harm to residential amenity, to mature trees and to the character of this countryside location. The Neighbourhood Plan is explicit that the amenity of nearby residential properties must be protected. The application as designed does not yet meet that test.

1. The principal impacts

The Environmental Health officer (Lee Money, 3 June 2026) is clear that the main issue with the proposed development is the proximity of the proposed business units to the boundary with Oak Tree Cottage. The occupant of Oak Tree Cottage has also submitted a detailed objection to the application.

The Design and Access Statement presents the proposal as an ‘inward-looking’ scheme that keeps noise and activity to the centre of the development. In practice, Building 2 (the block in the northeast corner of the site) sits at the boundary closest to Oak Tree Cottage. It is this building, and the operational activity associated with it, that mostly gives rise to the concerns set out below.

2. The Neighbourhood Plan

The site falls within HNPD Policy 3.1, which allocates Site E, Southgrounds, Shoreham Road for employment development. Policy 3.1.3(f) expressly requires that proposals have regard to the amenities of nearby residential properties. Oak Tree Cottage is plainly one such property.

Policy 3.1.3(h) also requires that any external lighting is designed to minimise light pollution and to support the dark skies policy of the South Downs National Park Authority.

These are not aspirational statements. They are conditions under which the allocation was made. A proposal that fails to demonstrate compliance with them cannot be said to be consistent with the plan.

3. Noise impacts

The submitted Noise Statement adopts the methodology of BS4142:2014 and recommends a plant noise rating level of 40dB at the boundary with Oak Tree Cottage. The Environmental Health officer accepts this figure but notes that plant noise is not the only source of commercial noise. External activities — loading and unloading, reversing alarms, vehicles manoeuvring — are equally important components of the noise environment and can be particularly intrusive due to their unpredictability, short duration and loudness. The officer states that the 40dB rating level alone may not be sufficient to mitigate all instances of intrusive noise.

Critically, the resident of Oak Tree Cottage reports that the existing tenants of the adjacent site have a history of operating outside permitted hours, generating noise and light disturbance that has already affected the quality of life of neighbouring residents. CPRH notes that where statutory nuisance arises from commercial or industrial uses, the defence of best practicable means is available to an operator, and a local authority may not be able to require its complete abatement. This makes it all the more important that the planning regime addresses these concerns at the outset through design, rather than relying on conditions and enforcement after the fact.

The Environmental Health officer's own recommendation is that the proposed units should be relocated within the red line of the application to increase the separation distance to Oak Tree Cottage. CPRH strongly endorses that recommendation.

4. Lighting impacts

HNP Policy 3.1.3(h) requires that external lighting is designed to minimise light pollution. The proposed close-board fencing along the boundary is significantly lower than the eaves height of the proposed buildings and will be ineffective in containing light spill from rooflights or high level security lighting. The Design and Access Statement does not address this issue in any detail. A full external lighting scheme, designed with reference to the dark skies policy of the South Downs National Park Authority, should be required before any approval is granted.

5. The impact on trees

The Arboricultural Officer (Andy Clout, 3 June 2026) has advised that the current layout is not landscape-led. Two specific problems are identified.

First, the access engineering for the site requires excavation within the minimum recommended root protection area of the adjacent dominant oak tree (ref T69), contrary to

the recommendations of BS5837. The officer does not accept the applicant's own assessment that this impact is minor and considers the harm to the tree's future health to be foreseeable.

Second, the extent of tree pruning required to enable construction is itself evidence of how closely the buildings press against the existing hedgerow and tree lines. The officer recommends that a redesign moves the buildings further from existing tree branching to give improved natural clearance, in accordance with BS5837 section 5.

The officer also notes that no services runs are indicated in the application. Given that adjacent commercial units have drain runs along hedgerow elevations, and given how tightly the proposed root protection areas bear on the proposed building footprints, details of all proposed service runs should be required before a decision is taken.

6. The drainage strategy

The Lead Local Flood Authority (Natalie Biddulph, 3 June 2026) has lodged a formal objection to the application, requiring additional information on eight specific points. These include updating the Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy to reflect the revised National Standards for SuDS, providing an impermeable area plan, an exceedance route plan for the 1-in-100 plus climate change scenario, and revised hydraulic calculations using upper-end climate change allowances. The Environment Agency's updated surface water flood risk mapping, released on 28 May 2026, has not yet been incorporated.

CPRH endorses the LLFA's objection. No approval should be granted until an adequate and fully evidenced drainage strategy has been submitted and accepted.

7. The best solution

The concerns raised above — noise, lighting, tree impacts and the requirements of the Neighbourhood Plan — share a common cause. Building 2 is positioned too close to the boundary with Oak Tree Cottage and to the tree line.

The solution endorsed by both the Environmental Health officer and the Arboricultural Officer is the same: the buildings should be moved further within the red line boundary. The red line encompasses a substantial site of 8.42 acres, and the overall building coverage of the current scheme is only 17% of the site ownership area. There is plainly room to redesign the layout so that Building 2 is set further back from the boundaries most sensitive to its impact. CPRH urges the applicant to undertake that redesign before this application is determined.

8. Conditions

If the planning authority is minded to approve the application without requiring a redesign, CPRH submits that robust conditions will be necessary and that their enforcement must be actively pursued. Those conditions should include, at minimum:

- A limit on plant noise at the boundary with Oak Tree Cottage, with a requirement for monitoring and a mechanism for complaint and remedy.
- Restrictions on working hours, deliveries, and external activities, with particular protection for evening and night-time periods.
- A full external lighting scheme to be approved prior to any works, designed to comply with the dark skies requirements of HNP Policy 3.1.3(h).
- Pre-commencement submission and approval of an Arboricultural Method Statement covering tree protection measures (BS5837 sections 3.8 and 3.9), details of all service runs, and confirmation that no excavation will take place within the root protection area of T69.
- No development to commence until a revised and fully evidenced Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy has been submitted and accepted by the Lead Local Flood Authority.

CPRH notes that the resident of Oak Tree Cottage has raised concerns that the current site operator has a history of working outside permitted hours. Where a pattern of non-compliance already exists, conditions alone are insufficient. The planning authority must be prepared to monitor and enforce any conditions attached to this approval, and CPRH requests that this commitment be made explicit in any decision notice.

Conclusion

CPRH supports employment development at this location as envisaged by the Henfield Neighbourhood Plan. We do not support this application as currently designed. The layout in its present form fails the test set by the Neighbourhood Plan: it does not have adequate regard to the amenities of the neighbouring residential property at Oak Tree Cottage, and it does not adequately protect the mature trees that give this countryside site much of its landscape character.

The statutory consultees — the Environmental Health officer, the Arboricultural Officer and the Lead Local Flood Authority — have each raised objections or required further information. CPRH endorses those responses and asks the planning authority to require the applicant to address them fully, and in particular to redesign the layout so that Building 2 is moved further within the red line boundary before any approval is granted.

Campaign to Protect Rural Henfield

16 June 2026