

From: Planning@horsham.gov.uk <Planning@horsham.gov.uk>
Sent: 29 August 2026 23:55:28 UTC+01:00
To: "Planning" <planning@horsham.gov.uk>
Subject: Comments for Planning Application DC/26/0933
Categories: Comments Received

Comments summary

Dear Sir/Madam,

Planning Application comments have been made. A summary of the comments is provided below.

Comments were submitted at 29/08/2026 11:55 PM.

Application Summary

Address:	Land Between Muntham Drive and Smugglers' Lane Chapel Road Barns Green West Sussex
Proposal:	Erection of 31 dwellings with access from Chapel Road including roads, parking and open space.
Case Officer:	Alice Johnson

[Click for further information](#)

Customer Details

Address:	The Apple Barn Floodgates Farm West Grinstead
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Comments Details

Commenter Type:	Member of the Public
Stance:	Customer objects to the Planning Application
Reasons for comment:	- Design - Highway Access and Parking - Loss of General Amenity - Overdevelopment - Trees and Landscaping
Comments:	Dear Planning Officer and Members of the Planning Committee, I am writing as a local resident to object to planning application DC/26/0933 for 31 houses on land south of Muntham Drive, Barns Green. I should probably start by saying that I am not against

development in Barns Green. I understand that we need more houses and that our village has to take its share. I also understand that this particular piece of land has been identified for development.

My objection isn't really about whether anything should be built here.

It is about what is being proposed, how much is being squeezed onto the site, whether the infrastructure can cope and, most importantly, whether we actually have all the information needed to make that decision yet.

I have spent quite a lot of time going through the documents for this application and comparing them with what has happened immediately around it, particularly DC/21/2697 at Sumners Ponds/Sumners Fields and the recently refused DC/25/2057.

I am not a planning expert, but the more I have read, the more questions I have ended up with rather than answers.

We need to look at these fields together.

The first thing that strikes me is how artificial it is to look at DC/26/0933 completely on its own.

Immediately alongside this area we already have DC/21/2697, where 32 houses have recently been built at Sumners Fields.

Next to that is DC/25/2057, where another 68 houses were proposed and which the Planning Committee refused on 4 August.

On the other side of that is now DC/26/0933 for another 31 houses.

So these adjoining or immediately related sites have been the subject of proposals for 131 houses.

Obviously, DC/25/2057 has been refused, so I am not suggesting that 131 houses are going to be built.

But roads, sewers, wildlife, footpaths, and the people who live here don't recognise planning application boundaries.

Planning applications have red lines. Villages don't.

We experience the cumulative effect of all of it.

That seems particularly important when the 32 houses already built at Sumners Fields are still being marketed and absorbed into the village.

That doesn't mean there isn't a need for more housing. But surely it gives some useful real-world context when deciding both the pace and scale of further development in exactly the same part of Barns Green.

Why has 25 become 31?

This is probably my most basic question.

The Council's emerging allocation BGR2 identifies this site for 25 homes.

Shanly's own Planning Statement acknowledges that.

Yet the application is for 31.

I appreciate that 25 may not be an absolute legal maximum, but presumably the number wasn't plucked out of thin air either.

Thirty-one is 24% more development than 25.

And six extra houses don't just mean six extra front doors.

They mean more building footprint, more cars, more driveways,

more roads, more parking, more sewage, more hardstanding and less space available for landscaping and wildlife.

The plans provide 88 parking spaces for 31 houses.

I don't criticise Shanly for providing parking. In a village like Barns Green people are going to own cars and pretending otherwise would just result in cars parked all over the road.

But 88 spaces tells us something about the intensity of this development.

So I keep coming back to a question which I cannot find answered anywhere in the documents:

What would this development look like with 25 houses?

Not just six houses crossed off the plan. A properly designed 25-house alternative.

Would there be more room around the existing trees? Could more hedgerow be retained? Could there be wider wildlife corridors?

Could more biodiversity be provided on the actual site? Could there be less hardstanding? Would the development feel less suburban?

If 25 has already been identified as an appropriate number through the Council's own plan-making work, I think that is a comparison worth seeing before we accept 31.

The biodiversity figures really concern me.

This is where the numbers start to become difficult to ignore.

According to Shanly's own biodiversity assessment, the site currently contains 7.52 area-habitat biodiversity units.

After development it would contain 4.57.

That is a 39.23% reduction in the biodiversity value of the area habitats on the site itself.

I understand how Biodiversity Net Gain works and that developers can provide biodiversity elsewhere where it cannot all be achieved on-site.

But I struggle with the logic of accepting such a large loss here without first asking whether we could simply destroy less in the first place.

The submitted calculation still needs around 3.70 additional area-habitat units to achieve the required target.

The metric itself also says "Trading rules satisfied? No" and records input errors/rule breaks.

There may be a perfectly reasonable technical explanation for those warnings, particularly because the off-site provision hasn't yet been finalised.

But that is also my point. It hasn't been finalised.

The BNG report itself says the calculations will need updating when the final detailed landscape masterplan is available.

So we appear to be making a decision based upon a biodiversity solution which isn't actually finished yet.

There also appears to be around 1,000m² missing from the biodiversity calculation.

Perhaps there is a simple explanation for this, and I would genuinely welcome one.

The BNG Feasibility Assessment describes the red-line site as 1.98 hectares.

The Statutory Biodiversity Metric appears to calculate a total site area of about 1.88 hectares.

That is a difference of roughly 0.10 hectares, or around 1,000 square metres.

That isn't an insignificant patch of land.

I am not suggesting that somebody has deliberately left land out.

It may simply be a difference in how the areas have been measured or classified.

But if that is the case, please explain it.

Before relying on the biodiversity calculation, surely, we need to know that the whole relevant site has actually been accounted for.

More importantly, the ecology work isn't finished.

This is the part I find hardest to understand.

Shanly's own Preliminary Ecological Appraisal identifies the site's hedgerows and tree lines as being of high interest to commuting and foraging bats.

Barbastelle bats have been recorded on immediately adjoining land and the ecological report identifies a potential relationship with The Mens Special Area of Conservation.

Their own ecologists say further bat activity surveys are required between April and September 2026, with further assessment following completion of those surveys.

It is currently August.

So unless I have missed a later report somewhere, the survey period Shanly's own ecologists say is necessary hasn't even finished yet.

This isn't local residents demanding another survey because we don't like the application.

It is Shanly's own ecological consultant saying the work is required.

If the completed surveys show important bat commuting routes, foraging areas or requirements around lighting and habitat buffers, couldn't that affect the layout?

And if it could affect the layout, shouldn't we know that before approving 31 houses, rather than trying to accommodate it afterwards?

Trees and hedges tell a similar story.

The arboricultural documents identify partial removal of two tree groups, pruning works and hard surfacing within the Root Protection Areas of four retained trees.

The ecological assessment also identifies around 15 metres of good-condition native hedgerow being removed for the access.

None of those things on its own necessarily makes the development unacceptable.

But put them together with the biodiversity loss and it starts to look as though the layout is being fitted very tightly around the existing environmental constraints.

Which brings me, yet again, back to 25 versus 31.

Would some of those compromises disappear if there were six fewer houses?

I think that deserves an answer.

Then there is the sewage issue

This one particularly concerns me because of what has just happened with DC/25/2057.

One of the reasons that application was refused was the absence of proven foul sewerage capacity from Southern Water.

Now look at the correspondence for DC/26/0933.

Southern Water says there is capacity within the local foul sewer network.

That sounds reassuring until you read the rest of the correspondence.

HDC's own Senior Planning Officer questioned Southern Water about how capacity could be confirmed for this application while the testing associated with DC/25/2057 was still outstanding.

Southern Water then confirmed that testing at Barns Green Wastewater Treatment Works was still being undertaken, with the results expected around September.

Perhaps I am oversimplifying this, but there seem to be two different questions:

Can the pipes take the sewage?

and:

Can the treatment works ultimately cope with it?

We seem to have an answer to the first but are still waiting for the answer to the second.

So why not wait?

If the September results demonstrate that Barns Green WTW has plenty of capacity, that's one concern dealt with.

But it seems extraordinary to approve another development first when the information is apparently only weeks away.

More importantly, how could that be reconciled with the decision on DC/25/2057?

If proven foul sewerage capacity mattered on 4 August, surely it still matters now.

The history of DC/21/2697 is also worth learning from

There is another reason I am uncomfortable with too many important matters being left until after permission.

Look at what has happened with DC/21/2697.

Since the original permission, there have been numerous subsequent planning processes associated with the development.

I completely accept that many of these are perfectly normal discharge-of-condition applications. Large developments inevitably have detailed matters which have to be approved later.

But it hasn't only been routine condition discharge.

The planning history also includes a Non-Material Amendment, a variation of the Section 106 agreement and a formal variation of the approved plans under DC/25/1251, followed by a further application relating to conditions on that varied permission.

One discharge submission was refused before revised details were subsequently accepted.

Again, I am not accusing the developer of doing anything improper.

This is how the planning system works.

But that is exactly why it matters.

The scheme ultimately being delivered can evolve after the main

permission has been secured.

That makes me very wary of being told that important matters on DC/26/0933 can simply be conditioned or sorted out later.

There has to be a distinction between deciding the final colour of a brick and resolving something which might fundamentally affect whether 31 houses actually fit on the site.

Bat activity, ecological buffers, wastewater capacity, biodiversity provision, and the density of development feel like the latter to me.

Once permission exists for 31 houses, the conversation changes.

Instead of asking: "Can this site properly accommodate 31 houses?" we risk asking: "We already have permission for 31 houses, so how do we alter things to make them work?"

Those are two very different starting points.

Residents and councillors should be able to look at an application and be reasonably confident that what they are commenting on and approving is representative of what will eventually be built.

I also understand Sumners Fields has had temporary power issues.

I understand locally that at least some of the houses at Sumners Fields have been reliant upon temporary generator power because the development had not yet been fully connected to the permanent mains electricity supply.

I have not been able to independently verify whether that is still the case, so I am not presenting it as established fact.

But I would ask HDC to confirm whether this has occurred and whether any occupied dwellings remain reliant upon temporary generation.

If that understanding is correct, it provides another very local example of why the practical delivery of essential infrastructure matters.

Again, this isn't about blaming anybody because a utility connection has been delayed.

It is about learning from what has actually happened on the development next door before approving further development.

Are we building the houses local people actually need?

There is clearly genuine housing need locally.

HDC's own Housing Team identifies 163 households with a local connection to Itchingfield/Barns Green on the Housing Register.

That is significant.

But their response to this application is not simply "great, another 31 houses".

It says, "More information needed" and raises questions about the affordable housing mix, tenure, unit sizes and Registered Provider involvement.

At the same time, the market element includes a number of substantial four and five-bedroom detached houses, including three five-bedroom houses of around 2,300 square feet.

I am not against large houses either.

But if one of the arguments for putting 31 rather than 25 onto this site is that six extra homes are a significant public benefit, then surely, we should ask whether the resulting mix is actually addressing the need HDC's own Housing Team has identified.

More houses and the right houses aren't necessarily the same thing.

The bridleway matters as well.

WSCC hasn't formally objected on Public Rights of Way grounds. But its response does say the development is likely to have a detrimental impact on the safety, convenience, or enjoyment of path users, including concern about fencing creating an enclosed or tunnel-like environment.

That may seem like a relatively small issue on a development of 31 houses.

But this is exactly how the character of a village changes.

A bridleway running beside a field and hedgerow feels rural.

A path running between housing and close-boarded garden fences doesn't.

The path may still exist on the map, but what it actually feels like to use has completely changed.

And this is where the three developments come together.

This is probably my biggest concern.

If you look at each application individually, it is possible to explain almost everything.

A bit of hedge can be replaced. Biodiversity can be bought elsewhere. Trees can be pruned. Hard surfacing within Root Protection Areas can be specially engineered. Drainage can be conditioned. A path can have different fencing. Another six houses aren't very many. Thirty-two houses at Sumners Fields aren't very many. Thirty-one houses here aren't very many.

And then you stand back.

DC/21/2697 - 32 houses.

DC/25/2057 - 68 houses proposed and refused; an appeal is pending.

DC/26/0933 - another 31 houses proposed.

All across adjoining or immediately related land.

That is how a rural village becomes suburbanised without anybody ever actually making a decision to suburbanise it.

Each new development becomes the new edge of the village, and then the field beside it can be described as being next to existing housing.

Then that becomes the new edge.

And on it goes.

I believe this is precisely why the Planning Committee's concerns about the character and suburbanisation of Barns Green when it refused DC/25/2057 are so important to this application.

There just seems to be too many things still being sorted out.

When I put all of the documents down and look at the overall picture, this is what bothers me.

- We are being asked to approve 31 houses on a site identified for 25.

- The bat survey programme isn't finished.

- The resulting ecological assessment appears to depend upon that work.

- The applicant's own biodiversity figures show a 39.23% on-site area-habitat reduction.

- The biodiversity solution isn't final.
- The metric needs updating.
- There appears to be a roughly 1,000m² discrepancy in the site area used between biodiversity documents.
- The Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan remains a draft with important matters still to be finalised.
- There are trees and hedgerow impacts.
- HDC's Housing Team wants more information.
- Environmental Health wants more investigation around the former stable area.
- Southern Water's testing at Barns Green WTW is still outstanding.
- We have a very recent example next door showing how a development can continue to evolve through amendments and variations after the original permission has been granted.

At some point surely, we have to stop saying "that can be dealt with later" and ask whether we actually know enough to make the decision now.

What I am asking HDC to do

I therefore respectfully ask HDC to refuse DC/26/0933 in its current form.

If the Council remains supportive of the principle of housing on BGR2, then I would at least ask that the application isn't determined until the important outstanding information is available.

In particular, I would like to see the completed bat surveys and ecological assessment, the Barns Green WTW results, a reconciled and completed biodiversity calculation, and a clear explanation of the difference between the 1.98ha and 1.88ha site figures.

I would also ask HDC to require Shanly to show a properly designed 25-house alternative alongside the 31-house scheme. Not because I have arbitrarily decided that 25 is acceptable. Because HDC has.

Show us the difference.

If the 31-house scheme is genuinely better, demonstrate it.

If reducing it to 25 would make little environmental difference, demonstrate that too.

But if 25 houses would allow more habitat to remain, wider ecological buffers, fewer tree constraints, less hardstanding and a development which sits more comfortably on the edge of Barns Green, then surely that needs to form part of the planning balance.

Finally, please consider this application alongside what is actually happening around it.

Sumners Fields has recently delivered 32 houses.

The adjoining proposal for another 68 was refused only weeks ago.

Now 31 are proposed on the other side.

The Committee decided when considering DC/25/2057 that the character of Barns Green and proven sewerage capacity mattered.

They still matter.
I am not asking for Barns Green to be frozen in time.
New homes bring new families and new people into the village.
They support the school, the shop, the pub, and the organisations that make this a community.
But there is a difference between a village growing and a village gradually being swallowed by housing estates.
Development should be proportionate. Infrastructure should be capable of supporting it. Environmental impacts should be understood before permission is granted, and residents should be able to have confidence that the plans they are commenting upon bear a reasonable resemblance to what will eventually be built.
Once a field has been developed, we don't get to reconsider the decision.
The surveys can be finished.
The sewage tests can be finished.
The biodiversity figures can be corrected and completed.
And a 25-house alternative can be drawn.
There is no good reason to make the permanent decision before doing the temporary work needed to make it properly.

Kind regards

Telephone:

Email: planning@horsham.gov.uk



Horsham District Council, Albery House, Springfield Road, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 2GB
Telephone: 01403 215100 (calls may be recorded) www.horsham.gov.uk Chief Executive: Jane Eaton