



SOUTHWATER PARISH COUNCIL

Beeson House, 26 Lintot Square,
Fairbank Road, Southwater,
West Sussex RH13 9LA

The Planning Inspectorate,
Temple Quay House, 2 The Square,
Temple Quay
Bristol
BS1 6PN

03 October 2025

Dear Sir/Madam,

FORMAL COMPLAINT REGARDING THE INSPECTOR'S DECISION IN THE HORSHAM GOLF & FITNESS APPEAL (REF: APP/Z3825/W/24/3355546) – LEGAL ERROR IN RESPECT OF NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

I write on behalf of Southwater Parish Council to register a formal and serious complaint concerning the Inspector's decision in the above appeal, which granted outline permission for up to 800 dwellings at Horsham Golf Club.

The Council is firmly of the view that the Inspector acted unreasonably by considering whether the Southwater Neighbourhood Plan (2021) had allocated its full housing requirement "when made". That issue was resolved through due and proper process at the point of examination and adoption, and it is not open to an Inspector to revisit it by applying current housing methodologies to a plan prepared under the requirements of the time.

In paragraphs 18–25 of the appeal decision, the Inspector treated this question as determinative, and in doing so wrongly concluded that the Neighbourhood Plan was "out of date". Such an approach sets a dangerous precedent: it suggests that no made neighbourhood plan can ever be relied upon, as it could at any point be re-assessed against rising housing figures and shifting methodologies. That strikes at the heart of the plan-led system and undermines the stability and certainty it is intended to provide.

The effect of the decision locally has been damaging. Residents, the Parish Council and community stakeholders invested considerable effort and resource into preparing the Neighbourhood Plan in good faith, believing that a made Plan would carry weight in decision-making and that paragraph 14 of the NPPF would protect its status for its intended lifetime. This decision has eroded confidence in the value of neighbourhood planning and risks causing long-term disengagement from the planning system.

Whilst the Planning Inspectorate may wish to await the outcome of the Judicial Review launched by Horsham District Council, a challenge which we fully expect to succeed, the seriousness of this matter requires an immediate response. Southwater Parish Council therefore requests:

- A formal apology from the Planning Inspectorate for the Inspector's treatment of the housing requirement in the Southwater Neighbourhood Plan, which was not a matter within their gift and is not required by national policy or legislation.

- An acknowledgment that this decision has undermined the status of the Neighbourhood Plan, damaged public confidence, and risks creating a harmful precedent for future appeals.
- Confirmation that the Inspectorate will take steps to ensure Inspectors do not exceed their remit in re-examining the basis of housing calculations in made neighbourhood plans against today's figures or methodologies.
- Recognition that, should the Judicial Review succeed, the Inspectorate will cooperate fully with the Court's findings and take steps to amend guidance or practice to avoid similar errors in future.

This complaint is made with the utmost seriousness. We expect a prompt and considered response setting out how the Inspectorate intends to address these concerns.

We look forward to your earliest reply.

Yours sincerely,



Justin Tyler

Executive Officer & RFO