

RE: LAND EAST OF ANSTY WAY  
APPEAL UNDER S.78 OF THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

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OPENING STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF ANSTY AND STAPLEFIELD PARISH  
COUNCIL AND CUCKFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

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1. Ansty and Staplefield Parish Council and Cuckfield Parish Council (**"the Parish Councils"**) strongly resist this appeal.
2. While the Parish Councils acknowledge that there is a need for housing of different types within the district and that the appeal proposals would deliver some benefits in that respect, the Parish Councils will demonstrate that those benefits are obviously outweighed in this case by the harms to which the development would give rise, in particular by reference to the harm to landscape character and visual amenity and because the appeal scheme, even taking account of the mitigation proposed, is not sustainably located.
3. Furthermore, the housing needs which are the essential justification for the scheme will be met in very large part in any event by way of development coming forward through the emerging Local Plan. In that context, and quite aside from the site-specific harms, the appeal scheme risks prejudicing the timely delivery of the plan-led development being promoted through the emerging Plan. It is striking that the development of the appeal site has repeatedly been rejected from allocation within that Plan and is nonetheless being pursued speculatively by way of this appeal, notwithstanding the real and obvious concern that, if permission were to be granted, that would delay and frustrate the adoption of the Local Plan which is designed to deliver the housing that the district needs in a sustainable way.

Landscape character and visual amenity

4. There can be no sensible dispute that the appeal scheme would be harmful in terms of its effect on landscape character and visual amenity. That harm arises because the contribution made by the appeal site to the landscape character of the locality would be entirely lost. While there are, of course, various forms of settlement within the locality, the contribution made by the appeal site to the character of the locality is as a 'rural' landscape. With the appeal scheme in place, that contribution would be lost. On any view, the appeal scheme would be harmful in those terms.

5. That harm is amplified in this case because the appeal proposals would result in the perception of coalescence between the villages of Ansty and Cuckfield, thereby causing harm to their character and identity.
6. Additionally, the landscape of the appeal site is reflective of, and consistent with the adjacent High Weald National Landscape (“HWNL”) and plays an important role in providing a contiguous rural setting for the HWNL. Notwithstanding the landscape mitigation proposed, the appeal scheme would curtail that contribution by replacing the rural setting which currently exists with built form. This results in harm to the HWNL itself to which great weight must attach.

### Sustainability

7. Again, there cannot be any dispute that the appeal site itself is, currently, an unsustainable location for development having regard to the nature of the existing services in the locality (which are very limited) and the availability of pedestrian, cycle and public transport connections to nearby settlements.
8. It is for that reason that the Appellant has proposed various measures, principally to improve pedestrian and cycle links to Cuckfield (and, in particular, the Warden Park Academy) and cycle links to Haywards Heath as well as agreeing to provide temporary funding for a bus service.
9. The Parish Councils have considered carefully the mitigation measures proposed by the Appellant to make the development acceptable in this regard, and have noted that the LPA now accepts that its concerns have been overcome (subject to the agreement of the S106). The Parish Councils do not agree with the LPA on this issue and remain firmly of the view that the measures proposed by the Appellant are inadequate.
10. The Parish Councils remain concerned, in particular, in relation to the adequacy of the proposed pedestrian and cycle improvements, and the extent to which they will provide residents of the appeal scheme with a meaningful opportunity to access the destinations they are intended to serve on foot or by bicycle. The Parish Councils also remain of the view that the proposed bus service is inherently financially unsustainable such that it is likely to cease operation upon expiry of the time-limited funding to which the Appellant has committed. This is a development which will be in existence indefinitely. Once the Appellant’s funding runs out, residents will have no option but to resort to their cars for any journeys beyond the appeal site which cannot be made on foot or by bicycle.

### Prematurity

11. The Parish Councils adopt and rely on the evidence given by the LPA in relation to the issue of prematurity. It is of particular concern to the Parish Councils that the promoter of this scheme is continuing to pursue it speculatively by way of this appeal when to do so risks delaying the delivery of much needed development through the plan-led process.

### Planning balance

12. The Parish Councils accept that the appeal scheme would give rise to benefits, including the delivery of market and affordable housing. While this would be a substantial benefit of the scheme, the Parish Councils note that there will be some considerable delay in delivering any homes on the site and that the grant of permission for the appeal scheme risks prejudicing the timely delivery of homes through the plan-led process. So far as the C2 Units are concerned, the Parish Councils have seen no convincing evidence that this element of the Scheme can be delivered in a sensible or sustainable way unless it is delivered as part of a Care Home (which is not the case on the Appellant's alternative plans). The Parish Councils accept that there will be other benefits, including educational provision and open space and sports/recreational uses.
13. The Parish Councils do not accept that all the benefits claimed by the Appellant will arise, or that they should attract any meaningful weight in the planning balance. This is the case for the healthcare provision (which is designed to mitigate the effects of the appeal scheme only) and the bus service (in light of the concerns above).
14. Set against the benefits of the Scheme are the harms by reason of the unsustainable pattern of development, the harm to landscape character and visual amenity (including the harm to the HWNL), the loss of agricultural land, the loss of trees, the effect on the significance of heritage assets and prematurity.
15. Notwithstanding the LPA's 5YHLS position, the effect from the Scheme on the HWNL provides a 'strong reason for refusal' so as to disengage the tilted balance. In any event, the harms significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
16. The Parish Councils will in due course invite the Inspector to dismiss the appeal.

**9 June 2026**

**Jack Parker**

**Cornerstone Barristers**

## List of Appearances

**Jack Parker**, Counsel, instructed by Susy Gandy of Richard Buxton Solicitors, will call:

- **David Lewis**, MSc, CIHT in respect of the sustainability of appeal proposals with regard to access and services
- **Louise Hooper**, BA (Hons), L Arch, CMLI in respect of landscape character and visual amenity
- **Mark Connell**, BSc (Hons), RTPI in respect of planning policy and planning balance