

Ardingly Parish Council

June 2026

Proposed Development on the South of England Showground

SA25 Detailed planning application DM/26/1186

(c.f. Outline planning application DM/22/1575)

Ardingly Parish Council objects to the detailed planning as proposed under DM/26/1186 on the following basis:

Alignment with Local Planning and Community

Neighbourhood Plan

The application makes no reference to the ratified and adopted Ardingly Neighbourhood Plan and how the development is expected to fit into these policies and the overall plan. Specifically, the plan allows for the provision of 37 dwellings up until 2031. These dwellings were delivered on Monk's Meadow in 2014/15. This development is therefore in contravention of the Neighbourhood Plan. There are other policies in place regarding traffic, local amenities, the landscape setting of Ardingly etc that have not been referred to or taken consideration of. The developers need to take this into consideration and frame their application accordingly.

Community Engagement

The Statement of Community Involvement suggests a level of engagement with local stakeholders that does not accurately reflect the Parish Council experience. The document identifies consultation with the Parish Council, St Peter's Primary School and the Ardingly Scout Group. However this process was very much a one-way flow of information rather than genuine consultation. It is also unclear why these particular organisations were selected and not others, and what the extent of that consultation was in each case. The Statement of Community Involvement should therefore be reviewed to ensure it provides a fair and accurate account of the engagement undertaken.

Hard Landscaping

There are a number of features of the hard landscaping that are not in keeping with the rural nature of the site itself and the surrounding countryside:

- 1) There are lots of changes of surface colours and textures. We would suggest this is reduced and the “louder” colours removed. We appreciate that the colours may be trying to slow traffic but the winding road and housing setting will, in our opinion, suffice.
- 2) There seems to be a large amount of concrete block paving which makes the setting feel very municipal / urban.

The use of gravel for front gardens does not reflect this rural setting and should be replaced by grass.

Soft Landscaping

The screening to the west of the site has been reduced significantly from the original planning. This negatively affects the long views from the west of the village which are highlighted in the Ardingly Neighbourhood Plan. We recommend that greater screening with appropriate native tall trees is used on the western boundary of the site.

Given APC’s experience at Monk’s Meadow, a condition should be added to require planning approval to install any imitation grass to house frontages.

The document notes a 30-year management period for SUDS and all the landscaping other than rear gardens. It is not clear what happens to the management of the landscaping and SUDS after that period. We believe a robust plan that works in perpetuity should be put in place.

Noise Assessment

In the documentation, the Developers state that “the dominant sound source remains Selsfield Road”. However, when there are events taking place at the South of England Showground, then inevitably, the Showground and the perimeter access road will be the dominant sound source and hugely contribute to the site soundscape. Well documented evidence of serious noise pollution is in the possession of Ardingly Parish Council and MSDC which has been caused by numerous events at the Showground from well beyond the proximity of this site. The statement that Selsfield road is the dominant sound source is not something based on local experience.

Events occur frequently, which involve large amounts of traffic and pollution, from vehicles both attending and taking part in events including motorbike festivals, truck festivals, high performance cars, battle re-enactments and helicopter rides. Apart from considerable noise, there is also light and air pollution through drone laser shows, music events, fireworks, strobes and more.

Travel Plan Statement

The Travel Plan Statement has a number of errors.

1. It notes the amenity of the Ardingly Post Office. It closed in 2020. Any assessment of local services and facilities should therefore be updated to reflect current circumstances.

2. The document highlights the site is 6 km by bike to Balcombe station which will take 22 minutes. Whilst this may be technically achievable for experienced cyclists, the assessment fails to acknowledge the challenging topography between Ardingly and Balcombe. The route contains several steep hills that would make daily commuting by bicycle impractical for many residents, particularly those expected to use folding bicycles in conjunction with rail travel.

Similarly, the assessment presents an overly optimistic picture of bus accessibility. Local experience demonstrates that the 272 service is often operating at capacity, particularly during school travel periods, with children regularly unable to board. Furthermore, the first bus service to Crawley does not arrive until mid-morning, limiting its usefulness for commuters and others.

The Travel Plan Statement significantly overstates the sustainability of the location and underestimates the expected use of private car ownership. The reality is that Ardingly functions as a predominantly car-dependent village and the application should assess its transport impacts on that basis. This especially includes impact on the high street which appears to have been completely overlooked.

Finally, we would request that there is careful consideration of imposing limitations during the construction upon this site. Deliveries of construction materials with large trucks should all be directed from the north and not through the High Street. The High Street is highly congested and used by pedestrians. Often large lorries must drive on the pavements in order to navigate the narrow road making it unsafe for pedestrians.

Design and Access Statement

It seems the low cost housing is being used as a continuous noise buffer for noise emanating from the Showground. This acknowledges the greater sound impact of the Showground and manages it within the house layout which is unfair to those who have less financial choice.

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

It is stated that the Eastern Conservation Area follows the Selsfield road verge as it passes the Recreation Ground. This is incorrect. The course is aligned with the rear gardens of the homes in the High Street and contains all the trees and benches on the Eastern boundary and a substantial section of the Recreation Ground. As such views towards the West from the Conservation Area are important and should not be impeded by the development.

The High Weald Management Plan 2024-9 Objective PQ2 states:

“To protect the unspoilt rural landscape with its intrinsic sense of naturalness, valued views and the extent of green space which foster experiences of rurality and tranquillity.”

6.32 States that users of the Recreation ground have low visual susceptibility – we challenge this statement. Many people use the area for access to the school, relaxation, playing with their children and simply to watch sport. The importance of the view towards the West is critical as it changes the rural setting of the Recreation Ground into an urban setting completely surrounded by houses.

Archaeological Assessment

I would question the “low significance” noted in 5.4.1 attributed to the presence of a Roman road nearby to the West. The site being relatively flat but lightly falling to the South is considered to be the best land in the Parish. As such it is possible that it was farmed in the early Saxon period and probably earlier.

Just in the last month a Roman coin and brooch were found on a site at least 2 miles from the Roman Road in Horsted Keynes so it should not be assumed that an early site could not be in this area of development.

There is also physical evidence of a North-South cart track running up the Western boundary of the Recreation Ground and through the site, which has not been picked up on the assumed desk-top study.

Drainage

Due to the poor percolation of the site, the Surface Water requires a SUDS basin or pond which is positioned roughly where the earth mound at the top of the Recreation Ground is located.

Again however, due to site levels, the area of those four houses require a pumped system. To address this, the layout design has incorporated both pumping stations just above the playground.

From the SUDS basin a 525mm diameter pipe will be laid to the nearest ditch which is to the rear of the Cemetery, by the Church. This ditch which is on SEAS land and about 40m long terminates with a 300mm ribbed plastic pipe. Where this pipe goes and outfalls or enters a soakaway is unclear on site.

The ditch’s function and outfall needs confirmation, maintenance arrangements with SEAS clarified and whether there is sufficient capacity additional flows from the development.

The maintenance of pumps and the drainage system remain a significant concern. Even with a dedicated maintenance company, standards can slip over time, leading to inevitable system failures.

The report does not address what occurs if the foul water pumping station fails. The likely outcomes are either foul water backing up into the lowest house or overflowing past the playground and tennis courts, both of which are unacceptable.

Similarly, if the surface water pumping station fails, such as due to power loss, the application report indicates that the cellular attenuation tank would overflow past the APC playground and multi-sport courts. Although the application report claims this would not alter the current situation, this assertion warrants careful scrutiny as overflow is already an issue.

The application highlights the importance of regular maintenance for all pumps, valves, and grass cutting around open SUDS basins. However, based on experience at Monks Meadow, consistent maintenance is unlikely despite the developer’s assurances. The developer needs to put in place a robust plan that is sustainable over the long term.

In summary, we are very concerned about the site’s reliance on pumping stations – especially given the weather we have suffered recently with high rainfall events. The pumps are a clear weak point, with substantial risks of pollution affecting both surface drainage and sewerage systems - especially given their proximity to the village playground and multi-sport courts.

We specifically ask:

- What are the safeguards, if any, should the foul water pumping station fail, that will prevent foul water flowing past the playground and multi-sport courts?
- Can the Southern Water wastewater network hydraulically handle the additional foul water to be discharged into the manhole on Selsfield Road? Already some Showground events require foul water to be tankered off site and taken direct to the Ardingly wastewater treatment works.
- What is the functionality of the surface water discharge to the water course (ditch) north of the Cemetery? Is it connected to highway drains or is it a soakaway? Are SEAS in agreement with its use? Currently the water in that ditch does not appear clean and looks like it has some pollutants in it.
- Could local flooding occur in the area of the Cemetery?
- This water will ultimately end up in the reservoir. What happens if it is polluted?

We believe we should see a revised design where all drainage and sewerage are managed via gravity flow, thereby eliminating the need for pumping stations.

Heritage Statement

6.3.8 states: “As the site is only considered to make a minimal contribution to the setting of the conservation area, the proposed development of modestly scaled and appropriately designed buildings on the site will have a negligible impact upon the setting of the Ardingly Conservation Area.”

6.4.2 states: “Furthermore, key views of the assets (Conservation Area) , which aid their appreciation as described in the above sections, will not be impacted by the proposals.”

We would like to note that part of the Conservation Area is actually within the Recreation Ground on the Eastern boundary and, as such, views from this area should be considered. The Western leg of the proposed development does significantly impact on the distant views across the open countryside towards the Church and Western Conservation Area and conversely from the Western Conservation Area; these views should be retained.

Site Layout

The affordable housing, Plots 27 to 35 to the North of the site, is formulaic and visually repetitive. They seem to have been positioned to provide a noise barrier to the more expensive houses to the South. In addition, the site road runs parallel to the Showground access road and will resemble a dual carriageway with the existing trees running down the middle.

There seems to be a public open space in the Northeast corner of the site; what is its purpose? Is this for the general public or for site residents only?

A pedestrian gate should be provided into the site behind the north goal in the Recreation Ground (recently removed) so that access to the Recreation Ground can be gained by site residents and for footballers / cricketers to retrieve their balls when they inevitably go over the hedge. The alternative of a high netting screen installed along this boundary would be expensive and visually intrusive as compared to a simple gate.

The leg of development at the Western end of this scheme causes issues with:

- Views of open countryside
- Surface Water drainage
- Foul Water drainage
- Encroachment on the playground
- Possible flooding of the tennis courts and playground

Future residents should be made fully aware of the site's relationship with existing recreational facilities as the development adjoins active community spaces, including the cricket ground and children's play facilities. Residents should therefore expect occasional noise associated with cricket matches, cricket balls / footballs leaving the field of play, organised events and children using the playground and recreation ground.

Appropriate disclosure and design measures should be incorporated to avoid future complaints that could undermine the operation of these valued community assets.

The houses in the SW corner create an orbital 'highway' right next to the playground. This will potentially spoil the current long established peaceful nature of the playground which has been a desirable feature of the village of Ardingly.

Design

The proposed housing mix is heavily weighted towards larger family homes, including a substantial number of four- and five-bedroom dwellings. Several properties also include additional rooms (designated 'games' and 'hobby' rooms) that could readily function as bedrooms, increasing occupancy and more importantly increasing associated vehicle ownership.

The development contains very little provision for smaller homes: there are only four two-bedroom dwellings and no one-bedroom flats. This is inconsistent with identified local housing needs and fails to support younger residents wishing to remain within the village.

The Ardingly Neighbourhood Plan and the recent 2025 Village Survey both identify demand for smaller and hence affordable homes for purchase by both young residents seeking to remain in Ardingly and older residents seeking to down-size. The current proposal does not adequately respond to that evidence and need.

Furthermore, a development located on the edge of the village would typically be expected to transition more sensitively into the surrounding landscape, with density and building scale reducing towards open countryside. Instead, the proposal maintains a concentration of larger dwellings that appear more suited to a suburban extension than a rural village edge.

The housing mix should therefore be revisited to better reflect local need and provide a greater proportion of smaller homes.

The appearance of the proposed development appears broadly respectful of the Ardingly vernacular. However, in terms of scale and massing, it represents a much greater contrast with the existing village character. In particular, the inclusion of three-storey dwellings is not generally characteristic of Ardingly and risks creating a development that appears overly prominent within the local landscape.

On a more detailed note:

- Plots 1,2,23,33,34 and 35 would benefit by the addition of a chimney, even if false.
- Plots 6,12,14,19 and 24 have a flat roofed rear extension which would be improved with the introduction of a pitched roof.

Elevations of the proposed pumping station, which is close to the public footpath and children's playground to the South, have not been provided.

Parking Provision

The village currently experiences significant parking pressures.

Existing public parking facilities, including the Mid Sussex District Council car park in the village centre and the Recreation Ground car park, are frequently at or near capacity. The Parish Council has invested in increasing parking provision at the Recreation Ground, yet demand continues to exceed availability. On-street parking is also heavily utilised.

Given these existing constraints, it is essential that every dwelling provides sufficient on-plot parking to accommodate likely levels of car ownership. Any overspill parking generated by the development would place unacceptable additional pressure on already overstretched village infrastructure.

The provision of two additional parking spaces above policy requirements within the visitor parking allocation appears unrealistic, as it relies on residents using garages solely for vehicle storage. In practice, garages are often used for storage, workshops, home gyms or other domestic purposes and therefore cannot be relied upon to absorb additional parking demand. In some dwellings, given our comments elsewhere regarding Ardingly being a car-reliant community, especially the "affordable homes" to the north, there is simply not enough car parking space where only once space has been allocated.

It must also be noted that, given the location of the site, at busy times for the Showground (the Spring Show, the Autumn Show, the South of England Show and many other shows throughout the year, the residents of the new site will not have access to their homes – or if they do, it will be restricted and slow. As a result residents will end up parking elsewhere in the village where there is no capacity or locations to park.

The applicant should therefore increase that parking provision to reflect the actual likely demand arising from the proposed housing mix, rather than relying upon assumptions more appropriate to sustainable urban locations with ready access to regular and reliable public transportation.