

**Sarah Valentine**

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 21 August 2026 08:28  
**To:** planninginfo  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: DM/26/2007 – Land East of Wineham Lane, Wineham, West Sussex BN5 9AY

[REDACTED]  
Dear Planning Officer,

**Re: DM/26/2007 – Land East of Wineham Lane, Wineham, West Sussex BN5 9AY**

Please find attached our formal representation concerning the above application and, in particular, the proposed discharge of the condition relating to Fire Service access and firefighting water.

As it is not possible for us to submit comments on this application through the online Planning Register, please accept the attached letter as our formal representation and ensure that it is **placed on the public planning file for DM/26/2007 and considered before any decision is made.**

We have copied this correspondence to Andrew Watt, Councillor Geoff Zeidler, Twineham Parish Council and Shermanbury Parish Council because of the important fire-safety and emergency-access matters raised.

We would be grateful for confirmation that our representation has been received and placed on the application file.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]  
Gatefield Cottage  
Wineham Lane  
Wineham  
Henfield  
West Sussex

BN5 9AY

Dear Planning Officer,

**Re: DM/26/2007 – Land East of Wineham Lane,  
Wineham, West Sussex BN5 9AY**

# Fire Safety, Firefighting Water and Emergency Access – Request Not to Discharge Condition

We are writing following the latest consultation response from West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service (WSFRS), dated **14 August 2026**, concerning the discharge of the fire-safety condition relating to Fire Service access and firefighting water.

We remain concerned that the condition should not be discharged until a number of important matters have been clarified and, importantly, physically verified.

## 1. Firefighting water must be operational before BESS installation

WSFRS states that the condition may be discharged **provided that the water tanks shown on the submitted plan are in place and ready for use prior to installation of the BESS units.**

This is an extremely important qualification.

Of particular concern is WSFRS's statement that on **“too many occasions”** it has not been informed that water supplies were in place and ready for use before BESS installation commenced.

WSFRS itself states that this increases the risk to the site in the event of a fire.

Given this warning from the Fire Service, we do not believe it is sufficient to discharge the condition simply because tanks are shown on a plan or because the developer has undertaken to provide them.

Before any BESS units are delivered to or installed on the site, please confirm:

- who will physically verify that the firefighting water tanks have actually been installed;
- who will verify that they are filled to the required capacity and immediately operational;
- who will confirm that the tanks and their connections are accessible to Fire Service appliances;
- who will verify that the required Fire Service access is physically available and unobstructed;
- how and when WSFRS will be formally notified that the firefighting water supply is operational; and
- what enforceable mechanism will prevent BESS installation commencing before these requirements have actually been satisfied.

Given WSFRS's own experience on other BESS sites, this surely demonstrates why **physical verification rather than reliance upon assurances** is necessary.

## 2. Emergency/secondary access – planning and highway status

There is a further important matter concerning the proposed emergency/secondary access onto Wineham Lane.

In its consultation response dated **7 August 2023**, West Sussex County Council, acting as Local Highway Authority, considered this emergency access.

The Highway Authority stated that it had no record of the access, raised concerns regarding works apparently undertaken within the adopted highway and concluded:

**“The current access is not suitable for use and as far as we are aware has no planning permission to be in use.”**

The Highway Authority went on to state that, if this were to become the emergency access, supporting information would be required to obtain planning approval for a new access onto the classified road, including its dimensions and visibility splays. It also referred to the need for the access to be constructed to an acceptable highway standard through the appropriate highway agreement/authorisation.

We appreciate that the principal BESS application, **DM/21/2276**, was subsequently granted planning permission.

However, we have been unable to identify documentation demonstrating that the specific planning and highway requirements identified by the Local Highway Authority concerning this emergency access were subsequently satisfied.

We therefore ask MSDC to confirm:

1. **What planning permission presently authorises this emergency/secondary access onto Wineham Lane?**
2. On what date was that permission granted and what is the relevant application/reference number and approved drawing?
3. Were the dimensions and visibility splays required by the Local Highway Authority subsequently submitted and approved?
4. Was the appropriate Section 278 agreement or other highway authorisation obtained from West Sussex County Council?
5. Has the access actually been constructed or upgraded to the standard required by the Highway Authority?
6. Has West Sussex County Council subsequently inspected the access and confirmed that it is suitable for use by Fire Service appliances?

If these requirements have not been satisfied, we find it difficult to understand how this access can presently be relied upon as an essential part of the emergency arrangements for the BESS.

### **3. Apparent inconsistency between Fire Service and Highway Authority evidence**

There is an additional issue which we believe requires clarification.

Earlier correspondence on the original application records WSFRS as being satisfied with the alternative access route and its separation from the principal entrance.

However, shortly afterwards the Local Highway Authority stated that the access was **not suitable for use** and, as far as it was aware, **had no planning permission to be in use**.

These appear to be materially different assessments of an access which could be critical during a serious BESS incident.

We therefore ask MSDC to establish whether WSFRS was made aware of the Highway Authority's concerns and, importantly, whether those concerns were subsequently resolved.

We would also ask whether WSFRS, when providing its latest response dated **14 August 2026**, was specifically informed of the previous planning and highway concerns associated with the emergency access.

An emergency access being acceptable to the Fire Service in principle is not necessarily the same as that access being **lawfully authorised, constructed to the appropriate highway standard and physically suitable for use**.

#### **4. WSFRS's latest response should not be interpreted as approval of the overall fire safety of the development**

We are concerned that the latest WSFRS response could inadvertently be interpreted as confirmation that the BESS development as a whole has been assessed as safe.

That is not what the response says.

The response is specifically concerned with the requirements relating to **Fire Service access and the provision of water for firefighting**.

There remain wider fire-safety considerations which should not simply be regarded as resolved by the discharge of this condition.

These include the practical response to a thermal runaway event, the resilience of emergency access, the availability and sustainability of firefighting water during a prolonged incident, containment and separation arrangements and the implications of a significant incident for nearby residents and the surrounding rural road network.

#### **5. Current NFCC BESS guidance**

We would also ask MSDC to clarify what consideration has been given to the **current NFCC guidance concerning Battery Energy Storage Systems**.

We appreciate that revised guidance cannot necessarily be applied retrospectively as though it were a new planning condition.

However, where detailed conditions relating specifically to **firefighting water and emergency access are only now being considered for discharge**, it would seem inappropriate simply to disregard current professional fire-safety knowledge.

This is particularly important where matters concern the safety of firefighters, neighbouring residents and the ability to manage a potentially prolonged BESS incident.

If the currently proposed arrangements differ materially from what would now be regarded as appropriate under current BESS fire-safety guidance, we ask that those differences are identified and considered before the condition is discharged.

#### **6. Verification rather than assumption**

The central issue is not simply whether drawings show firefighting tanks and two access routes.

The issue is whether those provisions **actually exist, are lawful, have been constructed appropriately, are operational, are accessible and will remain available when they are needed.**

WSFRS's own statement that on “too many occasions” it has not been informed that firefighting water supplies were ready before BESS installation commences demonstrates why this distinction is so important.

For a development involving a substantial battery energy storage facility, we do not believe that matters as fundamental as firefighting water and emergency access should be left to assumption.

We therefore respectfully request that the relevant condition **is not discharged until MSDC has obtained and published satisfactory evidence demonstrating that:**

- the required firefighting water supply is installed, filled and operational before BESS installation;
- WSFRS has been formally notified and the necessary arrangements verified;
- the emergency/secondary access has the necessary planning and highway authorisation;
- the access has been constructed to the required standard and is physically suitable for emergency vehicles; and
- the apparent discrepancy between the previous WSFRS and Highway Authority positions concerning the emergency access has been satisfactorily resolved.

We would be grateful if this correspondence could be placed on the **public planning file** and these matters addressed before a decision is made to discharge the condition.

Yours faithfully,



**Gatefield Cottage**

**Wineham Lane**

**Wineham**

**Henfield**

**West Sussex**

**BN5 9AY**

