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Guildford Borough Council

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Via email only

6 May 2026

Dear Andrew,

NETWORK RAIL CONSULTATION RESPONSE TO 25/P/01521– SHORTLANDS FARM, GUILDFORD ROAD, ASH, GUILDFORD GU12 6DF

These representations are submitted to Guildford Borough Council ('the Council') by Network Rail Infrastructure Limited ('Network Rail') to 25/P/01521 ('the planning application'). Network Rail (NR) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the planning application.

South Western Railway (SWR) operates most national rail services through Guildford. SWR is now in public ownership and there is greater integration with NR as the railway moves toward Great British Railways (GBR). NR remains the statutory consultee for planning applications however these representations should be considered as a rail industry response.

NR is the statutory undertaker for maintaining and operating railway infrastructure of England, Scotland, and Wales. As statutory undertaker, Network Rail is under license from the DfT and Transport Scotland (TS) and regulated by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) to maintain and enhance the operational railway and its assets, ensuring the provision of a safe operational railway. As a matter of course, proponents of sites which are close to the railway boundary or sites which could affect the railway asset directly are required to engage with our Asset Protection and Optimisation team (ASPRO).

Having reviewed the details contained within the planning application, NR have the following comments to make.

The planning application is located on Shortlands Farm, north-east of the Ascot to Guildford railway on the North Downs line. The planning application proposes the following:

- demolition of the existing buildings and hardstanding and the erection of up to 200 residential dwellings including affordable housing and plots of self-build plots (Class C3);
- green and blue infrastructure and associated service and utility structures.

The proposed development is submitted in outline with all matters reserved except for the accesses from Guildford Road and Wyke Lane.

Rail Impacts

The planning application site ('the Site') is located around 700m from Ash Railway Station (the Station'), located to the east of the site and served by stopping services between Guildford and Farnham, operated by SWR and services from Reading to Gatwick Airport, operated by Great Western Railway (GWR). As of March 2025, the Station had 259,336 entries and exits.

The station is classified as a step-free category B2 station, meaning there is some step-free access at the station. This includes level access to Platform 1 (for trains towards Guildford). A short ramp with a gradient approx. 1:8, and a sharp turn that might cause difficulties to some wheelchair/mobility scooter users to Platform 2 (for trains towards Ascot). Access between platforms is via level crossing only (full barrier). Following the completion of the Ash Road Bridge (ARB) in 2025, the level crossing is now closed to vehicles. However, pedestrians and cyclists are still able to use this to cross the railway and to access the station platforms. As part of the ARB project, full closure of the crossing is sought with the provision of a footbridge for pedestrians to cross the railway. This would significantly improve safety at the level crossing. Funding is needed for the footbridge.

There are no known capacity constraints at the station. There are several schemes coming forward as part of adopted Policy A31 following land being opened by the ARB. This will lead to increased usage of the station over time following the completion and occupation of these developments. NR continues to monitor the cumulative impact of increasing usage on rail services stopping at the station. The station has limited passenger facilities which are required to be upgraded to improve the experience for additional passengers linked to new development near to the station.

Given the proximity of the site to the station, the development will be reliant on the railway to aid its sustainable transport strategy. The Transport Assessment (TA) submitted with the application indicates the highest trips at the site will be made by vehicles, as shown in Table 5.1 of paragraph 5.7.

The share for public transport appears low and at odds with the summary with paragraph 7.3 which states '*Ash rail station is accessible on foot either via Guildford Road or the PRoW network that passes through the site. The TA proposes improvements to both the pedestrian network and public transport infrastructure to encourage sustainable travel*'. The measures to improve sustainable transport provision are included at paragraph 4.8 however no reference is made to the railway. Given the relatively short distance (16-minute walk; 5-minute cycle) it seems a missed opportunity to better connect with the station.

To improve public transport infrastructure, NR requires a contribution to be made towards the station. The station requires the improvement of passenger facilities alongside accessibility and significant investment is needed to enable it to accommodate increased use from development around Ash. A contribution should also be provided to assist in the funding of the footbridge at the station. As established through the Wisley Airfield planning appeal, NR use £2,176 per dwelling as the basis for which contributions are calculated. Using the per dwelling figure, this generates a requested contribution of **£435,200** towards passenger facilities and accessibility at Ash station, including the footbridge.



The site

The site is located north-east of the railway. Ash level crossing has suffered from historic flood events that have made the crossing unusable and affected the safe and efficient running of the railway. Measures to improve drainage at the crossing have been made as part of the ARB project however there remains a constraint on drainage infrastructure running adjacent to the railway. NR therefore wants to ensure that new development close to the railway does not further exacerbate the flood issues.

It is noted that foul drainage for the site is proposed to connect into the existing Thames Water public sewer network via a pump station (paragraph 5.1 of the drainage strategy). It is noted that surface water is proposed to be managed on site by several partial infiltration features, attenuation features such as permeable paving located within parking bays, attenuation tanks, bio-retention areas, swales and attenuation basin (paragraph 2.4 of the drainage strategy).

NR notes the proposed conditions set out by the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) in the response dated 5 March 2026. These conditions are supported by NR and considered necessary to manage the impacts of the site.

I trust the above clearly sets out NR's requirements and how the development will be required to contribute towards improving the rail network. Please do let me know if further information is required or if a meeting to discuss would be beneficial.

Yours Sincerely

Craig Hatton

Senior Town Planner
Network Rail Infrastructure Limited