25/03686/OUT Land off Darnhall School Lane

Outline application for up to 330 dwellings

Darnhall Parish Council – Consultee Response

Darnhall Parish Council wish to object to the above application on the following grounds: -

The site is outside the settlement boundary for Winsford as designated in the statutory development plan. The proposal is therefore prima face a departure from the development plan.

Strategic context

The proposed development is speculative i.e. It falls outside the existing Local and Neighbourhood Plans. The NPPF and Local Plan are to be revised but until they are this sort of development will not be linked to appropriate infrastructure development. This will lead to unsupportable demands on the local schools, healthcare, transport networks and open space. The application contains no clear evidence of timely delivery of necessary mitigation

This is a large development which would overwhelm local school provision. Darnhall Nursery and Primary school is already full and unable to expand provision due to lack of space. The Authority should refer to the DfE recently published Education Estates Strategy (Feb 2026) and consider whether this development application together with the cumulative impact of others nearby are an opportunity to ensure that the Swanlow Ward community has Nursery and Primary education facilities that meet the Governments ambition for school buildings to be Safe, Suitable, Sustainable and Sufficiently Sized. Allowing more incremental development without rigorous strategic planning is likely to leave local Nursery and Primary School provision in a position where it would be unable to adapt or expand to meet current and future needs.

The cumulative impact of this and other development applications in the town is likely to result in increasing demand for Secondary school places that could not currently be met in Winsford. This would further exacerbate the problem of migration to schools out of Winsford resulting in financial stress on families, increased traffic volumes and have a detrimental effect on the standard of education and therefore the reputation and economy of Winsford.

Incremental development in Swanlow Ward over the years has resulted in a large urban area with no public playing fields or recreational green space, this development offers no benefit in public amenity to the wider community.

The proposal conflicts with key policies in the adopted CWAC Plans (Part one and Part Two), the Darnhall Neighbourhood Plan (DNP) made 20th May 2012 and the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan (2014). It also fails to accord with NPPF December 2024.

Sustainability

Transport.

The site is over 2 miles from the nearest railway station, therefore not within walking distance (in conflict with NPPF guidance and STRAT6 and STRAT 10 of the Local Plan)

The bus service is infrequent and not on Sundays. Residents would need cars to access town centre shops and facilities.

The proposed access to the site is onto Darnhall School Lane. Darnhall Nursery and Primary School is a split site school with buildings on either side of Darnhall School Lane. Children and staff cross the road throughout the school day. The road is already seriously congested in the area around the school. Safety concerns including speeding, inconsiderate driving and congestion have been raised with CWAC Highways by the Headteacher, School Governors and the Swanlow Ward Councillor. The supervised crossing patrol has been withdrawn by CWAC and Highways have declined to provide any safe crossing facility. The proposed development will increase traffic volumes on Darnhall School Lane and further increase the risk to pedestrians and road users. The walking route from the site via Darnhall School is unsafe. There is no continuous footpath on the North side of Darnhall School Lane (the site side) pedestrians will have to cross the road after leaving the site, cross two busy junctions and many will have to re-cross Darnhall School Lane to access the school. At one point the footpath on the South side is less than 1 meter wide making it difficult to navigate safely with a pram and / or small children.

Speeding vehicles on Darnhall School Lane and nearby Moors Lane are a frequent problem reported by residents. Adding up to 330 new homes would generate substantial additional peak-hour vehicle movements, exacerbating congestion, queuing, and safety concerns on local roads that are already under pressure. The submitted Transport Assessment appears to underestimate these cumulative effects when considered alongside other committed and proposed developments in Winsford

Economic

This proposal will have a significant detrimental effect on the local dairy farm business at Beech House. The farm has already lost 60 hectares to a solar farm. This conflicts with the vision of Darnhall Neighbourhood Plan (DNP) To preserve the local character of the area as open rural countryside maintained through active farming.

Social Equity

The scale and location of the proposed development would urbanise a currently rural approach leading to visual intrusion, increased noise, air quality issues and the total loss of landscape character contrary to Darnhall Neighbourhood Plan CE5 – Local Plan part Two DM35 open space, DM44 protecting and enhancing the natural environment.

Biodiversity

This development is situated in open countryside adjacent to an area highlighted as a nature recovery zone. Policy DM44 (Eco-network within Darnhall Neighbourhood Plan.)

The applicant's ecological survey states 'the area has native hedgerows and scattered mature trees and ponds set in open grass land. These have the potential to support a variety of ground nesting and other nesting birds' (paragraphs 2.24, 2.25,2.26) The development is likely to affect threatened and priority species

The proposal has not taken into account recreational pressures on any mitigation e.g. domestic pets. This requires assessment under habitat regulation rules.

The development conflicts with DNP Policy CE1 '*protect species rich areas'* In this case building on the areas where ground nesting birds are likely to be would destroy their habitat. Any mitigation would not compensate for the catastrophic decline in England's biodiversity (one of the most nature depleted on the planet)

A development of this size will result in runoff of pollution e.g. from car exhausts, which will drain into a local brook that runs through Rookery Wood and into Ashbrook Valley (an SSSI)

Amenity and Design

The development is outside the settlement boundary which is in conflict with Strat 6 of the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan and the Local Plan Part Two. The site is not allocated for housing.

The design of the development does not accord with DNP Policy CE5 which states the '*development should conserve the low density scattered settlement pattern that results in a quiet tranquil landscape'* and RCLE1 which states that '*proposals which support the rural economy will be supported.'*

Infrastructure

At present there is insufficient infrastructure to support this development. (School places, playing fields, bus services) In addition there is a loss of amenity in the form of open countryside and access to high quality green space. It therefore contradicts the following policies Local Plan part One SOC5 and STRAT11, Local Plan Part Two Policy DM29, NPPF paragraph 20 and 35, Darnhall Neighbourhood Plan policy CE5

Policy ENV2 states '*the landscape of areas such as Darnhall are an essential landscape asset'* and should be protected for the benefit of Winsford and beyond.

In the Landscape Character assessment 2009 it is noted that Darnhall, with its mixture of ancient woodland, footpaths and open countryside should be valued and preserved for our community and future generations. It also has an important role in mitigating Climate Change, providing a cooling effect for Winsford

History of the site

The site has been subject to a previous planning applications (13/03127/ OUT and 14/01532/OUT) that after a lengthy appeals process and judicial review concluded with the decision of the Secretary of State who refused the application in 2019. Despite repeated proposals from Darnhall Estates the applications were unanimously rejected by all parties at all stages.

Community Concerns

Darnhall Parish Council held a public consultation meeting on 24th March 2026, attended by 86 residents. There were no residents in favour of the development. Their concerns and lived experiences are reflected in the above objections and centred around issues of sustainability, danger to road users particularly school children from the access onto Darnhall School Lane, visual and proximity impact, and impact on wildlife and loss of green spaces.

In conclusion we ask that this application should be refused

or postponed until a strategic plan has been finalised which determines where development should occur linked to appropriate infrastructure. This will be when the revised NPPF becomes law and the CWAC Local Plan is agreed

Darnhall Parish Council

xx April 2026