



Horsham
District
Council

HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL CONSULTATION

TO:	Horsham District Council – Planning Dept
LOCATION:	Land West of Parsons Field Stables Pickhurst Lane Pulborough West Sussex
DESCRIPTION:	Application for the continuous use of land for the stationing of 2 static caravans for residential purposes and associated day rooms. Associated landscape works (Retrospective).
REFERENCE:	DC/25/0317
RECOMMENDATION:	Holding Objection / More Information
SUMMARY OF COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATION:	
<p>In our judgement, the urbanising form and more importantly, the recent loss of mature boundary vegetation, has an adverse effect on the visual amenity of receptors on Pickhurst Lane and Public Right of Way (PRoW) 1983, as well as an eroding effect on the rural landscape character of the area, contrary to policies 23 and 25 of the HDPF.</p> <p>In addition, the increase in overall level of activity in the countryside location, and additional light and noise pollution incurred as a result of the development would also contribute as detracting from the tranquillity and sense of place of the rural countryside setting. The proposal or retrospective development in its current form therefore does not conserve or enhance the key features and characteristics of its landscape character area, contrary to policies 26 and 33 of the HDPF.</p> <p>Should the principle of development is found acceptable however, we recommend that mitigation and replacement planting is proposed to soften the appearance of the development and retain the wooded and verdant character of the area.</p> <p>We also recommend that the site's red line boundary is amended to reflect the retrospective works and secure replacement and mitigation measures as above and bring the tree removal to the HDC's arboricultural and ecology teams' attention for further advice.</p> <p>Please see further recommendations below.</p>	
MAIN COMMENTS:	
<u>Site description & context</u>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The proposed site is located to the south of the hamlet of Codmore Hill, outside of the built up area boundary (BUAB), in a countryside location. Prior to the retrospective development, it was an undeveloped field, bounded by agricultural fencing to the east,	

mature hedgerow to the north and woodland to the west and south, creating a sense of containment within the wider landscape.

2. The immediate site context holds rural qualities, predominately composed of wooded and agricultural landscape features. Ancient Woodland (AW) and a small stream abut the southern boundary, comprising part of a larger woodland block that sprawls further north-west and south-east. Adjacent to the woodland block lie agricultural fields, comprising a strong and well-defined field pattern by hedgerow and hedgerow trees interspersed by shaws and sporadic dwellings and farmsteads.
3. Immediately to the north, opposite the site, is Bets Farm and to the east, Parsons fields stables, both urban features of which sit behind layers of mature landscape and not experienced as major detractors to the countryside setting.
4. The site's wider landscape context is heavily wooded and predominately remote and undeveloped with few residential and urbanising detractors. In addition to the AW abutting the site's southern boundary, further parcels of AW can be found to the north and south of the site. The closest settlement is the hamlet of Codmore Hill and there are no larger settlements in proximity. A number of horse paddocks and areas of equine related development sit within the wider context.
5. Access to the site is from Pickhurst Lane, a narrow, verdant road bounded by dense vegetation, running in a west-east direction on the northern site boundary. Multiple PRowS are located in proximity, including:
 - PRow 1983 – along the western boundary, running north-south
 - PRow 1987 – in proximity to the southern boundary, running west-east, then southwest-northeast

The woodland and fields are enjoyed by receptors on PRow 1983, and views onto site should positively contribute to the rural character and landscape setting. These views, however, are now screened by a newly implemented closeboard fence, introducing suburban form into the undeveloped woodland.

Landscape character

6. At a local level, the proposed site falls within J1 Billingshurst and North Heath Farmlands Landscape Character Area (LCA) as defined by the Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment (2003). Key relevant characteristics of J1 experienced within the site and contextual landscape include: *gently undulating landform; small to medium size fields enclosed by frequent hedgerows, copses and small to medium sized woodland blocks; and semi enclosed landscape*. Sensitivity to change is moderate, with key sensitivities to: *small scale incremental changes eroding character, e.g. increase in horse paddocks*.

Relevant planning and land management guidelines state to:

- *Conserve the mostly rural character of the area.*
- *Ensure any appropriate new development responds to the historic settlement pattern and local design and materials. Such development should be well integrated with the surrounding landscape by setting it within the existing pattern of small native woodlands, hedgerows and shaws.*
- *Conserve existing woodlands, shaws and mature hedgerow trees.*
- *Conserve small irregular field patterns.*

Assessment

7. Policy 26 of the HDPF requires proposals to be essential to the countryside location be of a scale appropriate to their countryside character location, not lead, either individually or cumulatively, to a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside and/or conserve, and/or enhance, the key features and characteristics of the landscape character area in which it is located. Further policy 23 requires the development to not have an unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the landscape and to sensitively designed to mitigate any impacts on its surroundings.
8. The retrospective development results in a sense of domestic sprawl to the detriment of the undeveloped character and quality of the local landscape. More importantly, due to the recent clearing of hedgerow and vegetation on Pickhurst Ln and the site's western boundary, the site is now visually open and particularly sensitive to views. The dense vegetation which contributed to the verdant character of the lane and PRoW 1983 and positively reinforced the rural character enjoyed by these receptors has been lost. . In addition, as per point 5, the recent vegetation clearance and introduction of closeboard fencing along the boundary has also introduced urbanising detractors to the rural setting.
9. As result, it is our professional judgement that the proposals have an adverse effect on visual amenity and an eroding effect on the landscape character as a result of vegetation removal and the introduction of domestic and urbanising features that appear out of place or dominant within the context of the surrounding landscape. The proposed site layout plan is not reflective of the works carried out to date and makes no provision for mitigation and replacement planting.
10. Furthermore, as result of the substantial ground works along the woodland edge to install the closeboard fence, concern is raised with the long term retention of existing trees on the western boundary, which are likely to suffer decline and future loss as a result of their RPAs being heavily disturbed during works and encroached by hardstanding. This will have a further eroding effect on the wooded character of the area.
11. It can therefore be concluded that the proposals and retrospective development do not conserve or enhance the key features and characteristics of its landscape character area and give rise to an unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the landscape, contrary to HDPF Policy 23, 25 and 26.

Considerations

12. If the principle of development is found acceptable despite the above conclusions, more information is needed in order to secure a more considered scheme that includes mitigation and replacement planting measures to reduce the identified adverse effects, noting that design considerations must be sensitive to the rural surrounds and aim to minimise urbanising detractors.
13. We note that there is significant discrepancy between the provided plans and the retrospective development which needs to be updated. Further, the following information must be addressed or provided:

Soft landscape

- a. Tree survey, including trees RPAs to identify vegetation removed and retained, as well as to understand the impact of the proposals on existing trees and hedgerows.
 - i. Please seek the advice of HDC's Arboriculturalist on the introduction of hardstanding on the western boundary, as it may need to be removed in

order to safeguard the retention of the existing mature trees abutting PRoW 1983.

- b. Soft landscape details to include planting plans, planting schedule and tree pit details.
- c. We require tree and native hedgerow planting using the species listed within section 7.4 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Sylvatica Ecology Ltd, 2025) in the following locations:
 - i. As shown in the block plan along the northern, eastern and in between pitches.
 - ii. Alongside the western and southern boundaries.
 - iii. Mature and semi-mature specimens in order to soften the appearance of the development and screen views from Pickhurst Ln.
- d. Existing scrub within the block plan has regrettably been removed. This must be reinstated using species as per point 11c and fenced off as per the block plan.
- e. Newly planted *Prunus laurocerasus* (Cherry laurel) is of key concern due to the proximity of abutting AW. Its removal is required due to its invasiveness and its propensity to overshadow and outcompete other planting, as well as its urbanising appearance that is incongruous with the setting. Please provide a programme of works detailing its removal.
- f. In order to conserve and protect the abutting AW, planting stock must be locally sourced and grown, in line with Woodland Trust guidance. Please provide supplier information to ensure risk to AW is mitigated.

Hard landscape

- g. Hard and soft landscape specification
- h. Details of all hard surfacing materials and finishes, including layout, colour, size, texture, coursing and levels
- i. Proposed and existing services above and below ground such as drainage, power, communications cables and pipelines. Please include drainage ditch levels and location relative to existing trees.
- j. Boundary treatment is required for the 15m AW buffer. Please add a post and rail fence along the buffer to avoid encroachment.
- k. Closeboarded fencing is advised against in this location, please amend to reflect post & rail fencing throughout, with native hedgerow as per 11ci.
- l. Details of all external lighting.
 - i. Woodland and particularly AW, which are key characteristics of the local landscape, can be deteriorated due to increasing levels of light pollution, therefore light spill must be considered sensitively so as not to cause potential adverse effects.

Given the intrinsically rural setting, outside lighting should be restricted or absent in order to avoid light intrusion. If outside lighting cannot be reasonably avoided, based on guidance from SDNP Dark Skies Technical Advice Note Version 2 and The Bat Conservation Trust guidance note 08/23, we recommend the following to mitigate adverse landscape effects in regard to external lighting in a countryside location:

1. 3000Kelvin or warmer
2. 500 Lumens or below
3. Where appropriate, use of motion/proximity sensors and set to as short a possible a timer as a risk assessment will allow. For most purposes, a 1 or 2 minute timer is appropriate.
4. Horizontally mounted luminaires with no light output above 90° and/or no upward tilt.

RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS:

If you're minded to recommend the application for approval without the concerns addressed above please get in touch as specific conditions will be required.

NAME:	Elly Hazael Trainee Landscape Architect (Planning)
DEPARTMENT:	Specialists Team - Strategic Planning
DATE:	02/04/2025
SIGNED OFF BY:	Inês Watson CMLI Specialists Team Leader (Landscape Architect)
DATE:	09/04/2025