



TO: Planning Committee

BY: Head of Development and Building Control

DATE: 06 January 2026

DEVELOPMENT: Permission in Principle for a residential development with the erection of up to 9no. dwellings.

SITE: Oxcroft Farm Henfield Road Small Dole Henfield West Sussex BN5 9XE

WARD: Bramber, Upper Beeding and Woodmancote

APPLICATION: DC/25/1506

APPLICANT: Name: The Trustees of E G. Collins Address: C/O Agent

REASON FOR INCLUSION ON THE AGENDA: More than eight persons in different households have made written representations within the consultation period raising material planning considerations that are inconsistent with the recommendation of the Head of Development and Building Control.

At the request of Councillors Mike Croker and Roger Noel.

RECOMMENDATION: To approve permission in principle

1. THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

1.1 To consider the planning application.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION

1.2 Permission in Principle is sought for the redevelopment of Oxcroft Farm. The proposal comprises the demolition of the existing buildings on the site, and the erection of up to 9 x residential dwellings. An illustrative layout plan is submitted which shows how 9 dwellings can be accommodated on site. Currently the site is comprised of hardstanding and number of outbuildings. The proposal seeks to establish the principle of redevelopment for the demolition of these buildings and residential development of up to 9 dwellings, with matters of layout, access, design and landscaping reserved for a later Technical Details Consent stage should Permission in Principle be granted.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

1.3 The application site is located on the western side of Henfield Road, within the village of Small Dole, and extends to approximately 0.547 ha. It comprises an area of hardstanding

containing several buildings. Although the planning statement describes the site as being in agricultural use, the current physical appearance and activity observed on site suggest that it is operating as a commercial yard. The site is comprised of hardstanding, multiple buildings and access associated with agricultural purposes. The site is currently occupied by a Tenant Farmer.

- 1.4 The site is enclosed in part by boundary fencing along its south-western edge. The land rises from Henfield Road, with the yard positioned at a slightly elevated level. Vehicular access is taken directly from Henfield Road to the east via an existing access track. To the north-east, the site adjoins Nos. 1 and 2 Henfield Road, both residential properties. Immediately to the east, on the opposite side of Henfield Road, lies Mackley's Industrial Estate, which is situated within the defined Built-Up Area Boundary (BUAB) for Small Dole. The Fox Public House and Car Park lie further north-east. Agricultural fields surround the site to the north, west and south.
- 1.5 The application site itself lies outside, but directly adjacent to, the BUAB—separated only by the highway—and is therefore designated as countryside for policy purposes

2. INTRODUCTION

STATUTORY BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

- 2.2 The following Policies are considered to be relevant to the assessment of this application:

National Planning Policy Framework:

Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF 2015):

- Policy 1 - Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development
- Policy 2 - Strategic Policy: Strategic Development
- Policy 3 - Strategic Policy: Development Hierarchy
- Policy 4 - Strategic Policy: Settlement Expansion
- Policy 15 - Strategic Policy: Housing Provision
- Policy 16 - Strategic Policy: Meeting Local Housing Needs
- Policy 17 - Exceptions Housing Schemes
- Policy 24 - Strategic Policy: Environmental Protection
- Policy 25 - Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
- Policy 26 - Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection
- Policy 30 - Protected Landscapes
- Policy 31 - Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
- Policy 32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development
- Policy 33 - Development Principles
- Policy 34 - Cultural and Heritage Assets
- Policy 35 - Strategic Policy: Climate Change
- Policy 36 - Strategic Policy: Appropriate Energy Use
- Policy 37 - Sustainable Construction
- Policy 38 - Strategic Policy: Flooding
- Policy 40 - Sustainable Transport
- Policy 41 - Parking

Upper Beeding Neighbourhood Plan (2018-2031) (adopted 2021)

- Policy 1 – Spatial Plan for the Parish
- Policy 2 – Housing Allocations

Policy 4 – Land at southern end, Oxcroft Farm, Small Dole
Policy 8 – Design Standards for New Development

Supplementary Planning Guidance:

Planning Obligations and Affordable Housing SPD (2017)

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule (2017)

WSCC Supplementary Planning Guidance (September 2020) - revised county parking standards and transport contributions methodology

Planning Advice Notes:

Facilitating Appropriate Development

Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY AND RELEVANT APPLICATIONS:

None identified.

3. OUTCOME OF CONSULTATIONS

3.1 Where consultation responses have been summarised, it should be noted that Officers have had consideration of the full comments received, which are available to view on the public file at www.horsham.gov.uk.

INTERNAL CONSULTATIONS

3.2 **HDC Landscape Architect:** The application site is located to the south of Small Dole village, with access from the A2037 Henfield Road. Opposite the site is a large employment area. The site itself comprises an existing bound farmyard with hedgerows and trees which form the outer perimeter. A Priority Habitat (Deciduous Woodland) forms the south-western site boundary. The wider landscape comprises arable and grassland farmland.

3.3 The proposed site is located within an existing farmyard, proposing the demolition and removal of all structures on site before developing 9no. dwellings. The red line boundary (RLB) only includes the farmyard site, however, Policy 4 Allocation within UBNP is for 20 dwellings across a wider site which extends north into greenfield land.

3.4 The site is well-screened from adjacent Henfield Road which runs along the eastern site boundary. This reduces the visual impact from Henfield Road, however we advise that a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) is submitted to demonstrate the landscape and visual effects associated with the development and identify key mitigation measures.

3.5 South Downs National Park (SDNP) is located to the east and south of the site. Impacts on the SDNP will need to be considered within any future application. Consideration for the appearance of the scheme from Henfield Road and the entrance into the site will need more consideration. Based on the Layout Plan, the main view is of the back corner of Plot 1, which will likely be accompanied by close board fencing which will impact the visual amenity of the development. Whilst the principle of developing this parcel could be acceptable from a landscape perspective, its assimilation into the landscape within this countryside location will be based on a high-quality design with consideration for the visual impact from the entrance point.

3.6 As per Policy 4 of the UBNP, the existing vegetation, trees and habitats on site should be retained and incorporated into the proposal. The site offers opportunities to enhance green infrastructure through the retention of landscape features, and additional landscaping proposals. Overall, we consider that the principle of developing 9no. dwellings at this location could be acceptable from a landscape perspective, subject to the submission of an appropriately designed and contextually sensitive proposal, supported by a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA).

OUTSIDE AGENCIES

3.7 **Southern Water:** Comment. Construction of the development shall not commence until details of the proposed means of foul/surface water drainage disposal have been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Southern Water

3.8 **WSCC Highways:** No Objection: -

3.9 The site is a brownfield site comprising buildings / structures used for agricultural purposes. The site gains access from A2037 Henfield Road which is a two-way single carriageway road subject to 30mph speed limit at this point. An indicative layout plan has been submitted which indicates a new access will be constructed opposite the junction serving Mackley's Industrial Estate on Henfield Road. The LHA would expect that visibility splays are demonstrated at Technical Details Consent stage, in accordance with Manual for Streets guidance, which sets out minimum splays of 2.4m x 43m for a 30mph road.

3.10 As per the application type, details have not been provided with regards to dwelling size (number of bedrooms), or parking provision. At Technical Details Consent stage, the LHA would expect details to be provided demonstrating proposed vehicular access arrangements to the site, sufficient space for parking and turning of vehicles in accordance WSCC Parking Standards. Sufficient secure and covered cycle storage should also be demonstrated, to encourage sustainable transport methods and reduce the reliance upon the private car.

3.11 As outlined above, the LHA is limited in its ability to comment on an application for permission in principle. In principle, the LHA would not raise any objections to an application at this site, subject to the submission of sufficient information at Technical Details Stage.

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

3.19 **Representations:**
58 letters of Objection have been received from 44 addresses, objecting to the application on the following grounds:

- Design
- Highway Safety
- Access and Parking
- Loss of General Amenity
- Overdevelopment
- Loss of Privacy
- Harmful light and noise
- Trees and landscaping
- Loss of agricultural land

Parish Comments

3.21 **Upper Beeding Parish Council:** Comment: -

3.22 Upper Beeding Parish Council notes that the application site forms part of the wider allocation under Policy 7 of the Upper Beeding Neighbourhood Plan, which identifies land at Oxcroft Farm for around 20 dwellings, with potential for a higher number subject to review by Horsham District Council. The Parish Council sets out the full list of criteria contained within Policy 7, including requirements for affordable housing, ecological and biodiversity protection, an access from Henfield Road meeting WSCC standards, retention of the pond, landscape buffering, safeguarding neighbour amenity, and opportunities to connect to existing footpaths and bus stops.

3.23 The Parish Council recognises that the current Permission in Principle application relates only to 9 dwellings on the brownfield yard portion of the allocation, and that the applicant's supporting material provides limited information on the Neighbourhood Plan criteria. It acknowledges that this may be acceptable at PiP stage, but expresses concern that the wider development intentions for the remaining part of the allocation (indicatively shown as a further 18 dwellings) appear relatively dense and may risk overdevelopment.

3.24 A key concern raised is that by submitting the larger allocation in two separate components, there may be reduced incentive or ability to secure affordable housing, which the Parish Council considers should be delivered across the allocation as a whole. The Council therefore requests that Horsham District Council considers the full allocation comprehensively, rather than as two unrelated developments, to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan requirements—particularly affordable housing—are fully met.

3.25 An important aspect for the Members is non vehicular traffic access, as the facilities are easily accessible by foot and cycle so this needs to be included, the new Walking and Cycling plan should be referenced if possible.

3.26 **Member Comments:**

Cllr Mike Croker – Would like further consideration given to the potential cumulative impact of DC/25/1019.

Cllr Roger Noel - *Small Dole has recently had a number of applications for additional housing in the village. Residents are becoming concerned that although the Upper Beeding NP allows a certain number of dwellings, there appears to be no real consultation locally on the different proposals.*

4. HOW THE PROPOSED COURSE OF ACTION WILL PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS

4.1 The application has been considered having regard to Article 1 of the First Protocol of the Human Rights Act 1998, which sets out a person's rights to the peaceful enjoyment of property and Article 8 of the same Act, which sets out their rights in respect to private and family life and for the home. Officers consider that the proposal would not be contrary to the provisions of the above Articles.

4.2 The application has also been considered in accordance with Horsham District Council's public sector equality duty, which seeks to prevent unlawful discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between people in a diverse community, in accordance with Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. In this case, the proposal is not anticipated to have any potential impact from an equality perspective.

5. HOW THE PROPOSAL WILL HELP TO REDUCE CRIME AND DISORDER

5.1 It is not considered that the development would be likely to have any significant impact on crime and disorder.

6. PLANNING ASSESSMENTS

Background:

6.1 The Permission in Principle consent route is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for residential development, which separates the consideration of matters of "principle" for the proposed development, from the "technical details" of the development. As such, the Permission in Principle route has two stages: the first being the "Permission in

Principle" stage (subject of this current application), which establishes whether the site is suitable in-principle; and the second being the "Technical Details consent" stage which is when the detailed development proposals are assessed.

6.2 The scope of the Permission in Principle application (being the first stage) is limited to location, land use, and amount of development, as explained in Paragraph 012 of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) (Permission in Principle):

'The scope of permission in principle is limited to location, land use and amount of development. Issues relevant to these 'in principle' matters should be considered at the permission in principle stage. Other matters should be considered at the technical details consent stage. In addition, local authorities cannot list the information they require for applications for permission in principle in the same way they can for applications for planning permission.'

6.3 The PPG 020 (Reference ID: 58-020-20180615) further states that:

'It is not possible for conditions to be attached to a grant of permission in principle and its terms may only include the site location, the type of development and amount of development. Local planning authorities can inform applicants about what they expect to see at the technical details consent stage.'

Location of Development

6.4 Policy 2 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) sets out the overarching growth strategy, focusing development within the District's main settlements. The adopted settlement hierarchy represents the most sustainable approach to accommodating growth, directing the majority of new housing to Horsham, Southwater and Billingshurst, with only limited development elsewhere, and only where it accords with an adopted Neighbourhood Plan.

6.5 Policy 3 seeks to retain the existing settlement pattern and ensure that development takes place in the most sustainable locations possible. Policy 4 supports limited settlement expansion outside built-up area boundaries only where: the site is allocated in the Local Plan or a Neighbourhood Plan and adjoins an existing settlement edge; the scale of growth is appropriate to the settlement; the proposal meets identified local needs; and the development is contained within defensible boundaries that respect landscape character

6.6 The application site is located on the western side of Henfield Road, adjoining the village of Small Dole. The site lies outside, but immediately adjacent to, the Built-Up Area Boundary (BUAB) as defined in the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF). In policy terms, land outside the BUAB is designated as countryside, where development is ordinarily restricted unless it is considered essential or is otherwise supported by specific policies.

6.7 In this case, while the site lies outside the BUAB, it forms part of an allocated housing site under Policy 4 of the Upper Beeding Neighbourhood Plan, which identifies the wider land parcel for approximately 20 dwellings. The Neighbourhood Plan allocation comprises two distinct components:

1. the open fields adjacent to the Fox Public House; and
2. the existing yard area at Oxcroft Farm, which is the subject of this Permission in Principle application.

6.8 The proposal for up to 9 dwellings relates solely to the yard, which is previously developed (brownfield) land. The allocation provides policy support for the principle of residential development on this site, consistent with the spatial strategy of the HDPF and the Neighbourhood Plan.

6.9 **Policy 1 – Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development**

The proposal contributes towards meeting identified housing needs within a sustainable settlement pattern. Although located outside the Built-Up Area Boundary (BUAB), the site forms part of an allocated housing site in the Upper Beeding Neighbourhood Plan, which supports the principle of development in this location. The scheme therefore aligns with the District's overarching sustainable development strategy.

6.10 **Policy 2 – Strategic Development**

While the application is not of strategic scale, Policy 2 requires that development locations accord with the District's spatial strategy. The site is positioned immediately adjacent to the BUAB and within an area specifically allocated for housing growth through a made Neighbourhood Plan, ensuring consistency with the spatial approach.

6.11 **Policy 3 – Development Hierarchy**

Policy 3 restricts development outside settlement boundaries unless supported by policies in the Plan. In this instance, the Neighbourhood Plan allocation provides an appropriate policy hook allowing residential development adjoining Small Dole. The proposal therefore accords with the intended hierarchy of growth.

6.12 **Policy 4 – Settlement Expansion**

Policy 4 permits settlement-edge development where allocated through a Neighbourhood Plan. The application site forms part of the housing allocation at Small Dole (Upper Beeding Neighbourhood Plan Policy 4). The proposal for up to 9 dwellings on the previously developed portion of the allocation is therefore consistent with this policy.

6.13 **Policy 26 – Countryside Protection**

Development in the countryside is typically resisted unless it is essential to its location or supported by allocated growth. The site's inclusion within a formal Neighbourhood Plan allocation provides the policy justification for development at this location and satisfies the requirements of Policy 26, subject to detailed impacts being acceptable.

6.14 **Policy 32 & Policy 33 – Design, Character and Amenity**

While detailed layout and design are not assessed at the Permission in Principle stage, the site is considered capable of accommodating development that respects local character and neighbouring amenity. These matters will be considered fully at Technical Details Consent.

6.15 **Policy 40 & Policy 41 – Transport**

The Local Highway Authority has raised no objection in principle, confirming that a safe access arrangement can be achieved and parking/cycle storage provision can be addressed at the Technical Details stage. The development is considered capable of complying with these policies.

6.16 **Upper Beeding Neighbourhood Plan**

Policy 4 – Residential Allocation (Land at Small Dole)

The application site forms part of this allocation for approximately 20 dwellings. The yard area, being previously developed land, is an appropriate location for the initial phase of development. The proposal for up to 9 dwellings accords with the Neighbourhood Plan allocation and supports its housing objectives.

6.17 **Facilitating Appropriate Development (FAD) Criteria**

Consideration is also given to the Council's guidance document "Facilitating Appropriate Development" (FAD), which sets criteria for assessing proposals on the edge of settlements in circumstances where growth may be acceptable. While the site benefits from a formal allocation, several FAD tests remain relevant. These are set out below:

- Relationship with the settlement - The site adjoins the BUAB and forms a logical extension to the built form of Small Dole.
- Sustainable access - The site fronts the A2037 and is accessible to local services, employment sites (including Mackley's Industrial Estate) and bus routes.
- Deliverability - The brownfield nature of the yard supports efficient development without significant land remediation constraints.
- Landscape and character - The site is enclosed and previously developed; effects on wider landscape character are expected to be limited.
- Infrastructure capacity - No in-principle concerns have been raised by statutory consultees, with detailed matters to be resolved at the Technical Details stage.

6.18 Given the scale of the proposal in relation to Small Dole, the level of proposed growth can be seen as proportionate and appropriate. Future occupiers would be within acceptable walking distance (some 0.8 kilometres) of Small Dole's services and facilities (post office and shop) and bus stops closer still for onward journeys to larger settlements. Crucially, the Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, and this development would make a meaningful contribution towards meeting a local housing need.

6.19 Overall, the location of the development is supported by the Neighbourhood Plan allocation and is capable of complying with the strategic objectives of the HDPF, subject to detailed matters being addressed at the Technical Details Consent stage.

Land Use

6.20 The application site comprises an existing yard area containing hardstanding and a number of buildings historically associated with agricultural contracting activity. The site is located outside, but immediately adjacent to, the Built-Up Area Boundary (BUAB) for Small Dole, and is therefore categorised as countryside for the purposes of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF). Under HDPF Policy 26 (Countryside Protection), development in the countryside is generally resisted unless it is considered essential to a countryside location or is otherwise supported through specific policy allocation.

6.21 In this case, the site forms part of a wider housing allocation under Policy 4 of the Upper Beeding Neighbourhood Plan, which identifies the combined land parcel for the delivery of approximately 20 dwellings. The yard area the subject of this Permission in Principle application constitutes the previously developed (brownfield) component of the allocation. Neighbourhood Plan allocations are supported by HDPF Policy 4 (Settlement Expansion), which allows for development adjoining established settlements where allocated through a community-led plan.

6.22 The proposal would involve the redevelopment of a previously developed site, thereby aligning with the national presumption in favour of brownfield redevelopment under the NPPF. HDPF Policy 3 (Development Hierarchy) and Policy 1 (Sustainable Development) support the principle of directing new housing to sustainable locations that are well-related to existing settlements. Although located outside the BUAB, the site's allocated status and direct adjacency to built form means that residential use is compatible with the strategic planning approach for the district.

6.23 The proposal would also result in the loss of the existing yard use. While there is no evidence of a currently lawful commercial use, the redevelopment of this previously developed parcel for housing is considered acceptable in land-use terms given the allocation, the lack of policy protection for the existing activity, and the strategic priority of delivering housing in sustainable locations. The proposed residential use is consistent with the Neighbourhood Plan's intended land-use strategy and the spatial distribution of new housing within the parish.

6.24 Overall, the principle of residential land use on this site is supported by the combined effect of HDPF Policies 1, 3, 4, and 26, national brownfield redevelopment policy, and the specific Neighbourhood Plan allocation. Detailed matters relating to layout, scale, design, and amenity will be addressed at the Technical Details Consent stage.

6.25 As such, the proposed use of the land is considered acceptable in principle.

Amount of Development

6.26 Policies 25 and 33 of the HDPF promote development that protects, conserves and enhances landscape character and ensures that proposals reflect the locally distinctive character of settlements. Policy 32 requires high quality design. Proposals should consider landscape characteristics, with development seeking to provide an attractive, functional and accessible environment that complements the locally distinctive character of the district. Buildings should contribute to a sense of place, and should be of a scale, massing and appearance that is of a high standard or design and layout which relates sympathetically to the landscape and built surroundings.

6.27 Paragraph 68 of the NPPF (2024) requires local planning authorities to support opportunities to bring forward small and medium-sized sites, particularly where such development can make an important contribution to meeting local housing needs and maintaining the vitality of rural communities. The delivery of up to 9 dwellings on an edge-of-settlement brownfield site aligns with this objective by providing a modest but meaningful level of growth within an allocated location.

6.28 Furthermore, paragraph 137 of the NPPF (2024) emphasises the importance of making efficient use of land, particularly previously developed land, while ensuring that development is appropriate in terms of scale, character, and relation to the surrounding area. The redevelopment of the existing yard presents a logical and efficient use of land within an established allocation, avoiding unnecessary encroachment into open countryside and limiting landscape impacts by focusing development on an already altered site.

6.29 The amount of development proposed is considered appropriate when assessed against the characteristics of the site, the nature of the surrounding built form, and the expectations of the Neighbourhood Plan allocation. The indicative capacity of up to 9 dwellings sits comfortably within the achievable distribution of development across the wider allocation and supports the efficient, phased delivery of housing in accordance with national and local policy objectives. Detailed matters relating to layout, density, and design will be considered at the Technical Details Consent stage.

Water Neutrality

6.31 Natural England's 2021 Position Statement previously required all new development within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone to demonstrate water neutrality in order to ensure no adverse effect on the integrity of the Arun Valley SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites.

6.32 On 31 October 2025 Natural England formally withdrew the 2021 Position Statement, citing a range of measures now in place to safeguard the Arun Valley designated sites. Although the proposed reduction in Southern Water's abstraction licence has not yet been implemented, Natural England's updated advice confirms that development may rely on the significant water consumption savings already achieved by Southern Water in 2024/25, including leakage reduction and other efficiency measures, without increasing abstraction beyond baseline levels.

6.33 Natural England's Standing Advice (10 November 2025) now functions as its formal response for the purposes of Regulation 63(3) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for all planning applications within the Sussex North Water Resource Zone.

This advice confirms that new development may lawfully rely on Southern Water's existing 2024/25 consumption savings as mitigation, provided the competent authority secures appropriate water-efficient design and consumption standards for the development.

6.34 As this application is for Permission in Principle, only matters of land use and location are within scope. Detailed water consumption information is not required at this stage. However, the application has been subject to a Habitat Regulations Appropriate Assessment, which concludes that the development—using a precautionary occupancy rate of 3.09 persons per dwelling and subject to standard water-efficiency requirements secured at the Technical Details stage—would not give rise to an adverse effect on the integrity of the Arun Valley SAC/SPA/Ramsar sites, either alone or in combination.

6.35 At the Technical Details Consent stage the applicant will be required to provide detailed information demonstrating that the dwellings will achieve no more than 110 litres per person per day (including external consumption), in accordance with Building Regulations Part G and Natural England's standing advice. The submission will also need to confirm the specific fittings, technologies, and design measures that will deliver this standard. These measures will be secured by condition and/or planning obligation.

6.36 On this basis, the principle of development is not precluded on water neutrality grounds, and the completed Appropriate Assessment provides the necessary certainty—beyond reasonable scientific doubt—that the development can proceed without adverse effects on the Arun Valley designated sites.

Other Considerations:

Climate Change:

6.37 Policies 35, 36 and 37 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) require that development mitigates the impacts of climate change through measures including improved energy efficiency, reduced flood risk, lower water consumption, enhanced biodiversity and the promotion of sustainable transport modes. These policies reflect Chapter 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), which requires that local plans and decisions support the transition to a low carbon future and minimise vulnerability to climate impacts.

6.38 Given the outline nature of this Permission in Principle application, limited technical detail has been provided at this stage. At the detailed design stage, it is anticipated that the following measures could be incorporated to ensure the development builds resilience to climate change and reduces carbon emissions:

- Water consumption limited to 110 litres per person per day, in line with Policy 37 and Building Regulations Part G;
- Integration of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and permeable surfacing to manage surface water runoff;
- Provision of electric vehicle charging points for each dwelling;
- Refuse and recycling storage incorporated within the layout;
- Opportunities for biodiversity net gain, to be delivered through new landscaping and habitat creation; and
- Improved energy performance of the dwellings in accordance with, or exceeding, Building Regulations Part L requirements.

6.39 Full details of these measures would be expected at the Technical Details Consent stage, where conditions can be imposed to secure their implementation. Subject to these future provisions, the proposed development could suitably reduce its impact on climate change and would accord with Policies 35, 36 and 37 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) and the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

6.40 Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021) mandates that every development must achieve at least a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) (unless the development qualifies as exempt under the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024) and that every planning permission granted for the development of land in England shall be deemed to have been granted subject to the condition that development must not be begun unless a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority and the planning authority has approved the Plan.

6.41 Given the outline nature of this Permission in Principle application, detailed ecological information has not been submitted at this stage. Should the principle of development be supported, ecological survey work and appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures would be required at the Technical Details Consent stage to ensure compliance with Policy 31 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015), the NPPF (2024), and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

6.42 The site also falls within the scope of the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) regime. A minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity value will be required to be demonstrated at the Technical Details Consent stage, through submission of a habitat baseline assessment and Biodiversity Metric calculation in accordance with the Environment Act 2021 and the Biodiversity Gain (Town and Country Planning) (General) Regulations 2024.

6.43 At this stage, it is considered that the site provides scope to deliver BNG through appropriate landscaping and habitat creation as part of any detailed design, and that the requirements of Policy 31 and national BNG legislation could reasonably be met.

6.44 The matters of scale, design, layout, and access for the proposed development are reserved for consideration under the subsequent "Technical Details" application. However, given the number of neighbour comments regarding the loss of use, flood risk, and impact on highway safety, a response is provided below.

Existing Agricultural Use and Employment Considerations

6.45 Representations have been submitted by the long-standing agricultural tenant of Oxcroft Farm expressing concern that the proposed development would adversely affect the viability of the existing small-scale mixed farming enterprise. The comments reference the presence of poultry, livestock and associated agricultural buildings, and raise concerns regarding the potential loss of agricultural land and the impact this may have on the current farm business.

6.46 The application site is, however, an allocated housing site within the made Upper Beeding Neighbourhood Plan, which establishes the principle of residential development at this location. In allocating the site, the Neighbourhood Plan has already undertaken the strategic balancing exercise required by the NPPF, including consideration of land availability, existing uses and the most appropriate locations for new housing. Therefore, while the existing agricultural activity is acknowledged, the transition of the land from agricultural to residential use has been determined through the plan-making process.

6.47 The NPPF (2024) at paragraphs 85–87 supports the rural economy but also recognises that the use of agricultural land for development may be justified where allocated through the development plan. The proposal concerns a modest portion of the wider holding, and its development would not prevent the continued operation of agricultural activities on the remaining land. Matters of compensation or land tenure fall outside the planning system; the role of planning is to assess the land-use implications in policy terms.

Flood Risk

6.48 A number of neighbour representations raise concerns regarding flood risk associated with the proposed development. However, the Environment Agency's Flood Map for Planning identifies the entire application site (0.547ha) as being located within Flood Zone 1, which represents land at the lowest probability of fluvial or tidal flooding. In addition, the updated Surface Water Flood Risk mapping confirms that the site is at very low risk of surface water flooding, with no identified flow paths or ponding areas affecting the developable area. As set out in paragraph 163 of the NPPF (2024), sites within Flood Zone 1 are appropriate for all forms of development and do not require the application of the Sequential or Exception Tests.

6.49 While this is a Permission in Principle application and detailed drainage design is not required at this stage, the subsequent Technical Details Consent will be expected to demonstrate that the development incorporates an appropriate surface water management strategy, consistent with Building Regulations, policy 31 (Flood Risk, Water Quality and Water Efficiency) of the HDPF, and best practice SuDS principles. Given the site's location in Flood Zone 1, its small scale, and the absence of identified surface water risk, it is concluded that the proposal does not present a flood risk concern and is capable of achieving a policy-compliant drainage solution at the next stage.

Impact on Highway Safety

6.50 A number of representations raise concerns regarding the safety of the proposed access, particularly in relation to its location opposite the junction serving Mackley's Industrial Estate and the volume of traffic on Henfield Road. These matters have been fully considered by West Sussex County Council, in their capacity as the Local Highway Authority (LHA).

6.51 The LHA has reviewed the Permission in Principle (PiP) submission and confirms that they raise no objection in principle to the creation of a new access in this location. Henfield Road (A2037) is a 30mph, two-way single carriageway, and the indicative plan demonstrates that an access can be achieved opposite the industrial estate junction. The LHA advises that appropriate visibility splays of 2.4m x 43m, in accordance with *Manual for Streets*, will need to be demonstrated at the Technical Details Consent (TDC) stage. This level of detail is not required at PiP stage.

6.52 The LHA also notes that matters such as internal layout, parking provision, turning space, and cycle storage will be assessed at the TDC stage in accordance with WSCC Parking Standards, but that there is no reason to conclude that a safe and policy-compliant access cannot be achieved.

6.53 Given the formal professional advice of the Local Highway Authority, there is no technical highway basis to substantiate the concerns raised by neighbours. The location of the access opposite an existing junction does not in itself constitute a safety issue, and there is no evidence that the proposal would result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety or severe cumulative impacts, which is the threshold for refusal under paragraph 116 of the NPPF (2024).

6.54 Accordingly, it is concluded that highway safety concerns do not provide a defensible reason for withholding Permission in Principle, and all necessary design details will be secured and scrutinised at the Technical Details Consent stage.

Affordable Housing

6.55 The application site forms part of a wider allocation for approximately 20 dwellings under Policy 4 of the Upper Beeding Neighbourhood Plan (2018–2031). Part 1 of Policy 4 requires that residential development within the allocation delivers affordable housing in accordance with identified local need.

6.56 The current application seeks Permission in Principle (PiP) for up to 9 dwellings. Under the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) (Amendment) Order 2017, a PiP may only establish the principle of development in relation to the *location, land use* and *amount* of development. At this stage, the Local Planning Authority is not able to secure affordable housing, require a viability assessment, or enter into a Section 106 agreement. These matters fall to be considered at the Technical Details Consent (TDC) stage.

6.57 Although this PiP relates to a parcel of land capable of accommodating up to 9 dwellings, the site nevertheless forms part of the single, larger allocation of 20 dwellings under Policy 4 of the Neighbourhood Plan. Policy 16 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) confirms that where a development site is subdivided so as to create separate schemes—one or more of which fall below affordable housing thresholds—the Council will seek an appropriate proportion of affordable housing reflecting what would have been required had the site come forward as a single, comprehensive development. The subdivision of the allocation therefore does not remove or dilute the requirement to deliver affordable housing across the site as a whole.

6.58 The first phase (up to 9 dwellings) would fall within Policy 16(3)(b), which requires 20% affordable housing on developments of between 5 and 14 dwellings. This would be secured at the TDC stage via a Section 106 agreement. Should a subsequent application be submitted for the remaining part of the allocation (anticipated to be approximately 11 dwellings), the affordable housing requirement would be aggregated across the whole site, thereby increasing the overall requirement to 35% in accordance with Policy 16(3)(a). Any affordable housing delivered within phase one would count toward this total, with the remaining proportion secured as part of the later application.

6.59 A Section 106 agreement for the first phase would be drafted so that if a second phase comes forward the developer would be obligated to deliver the residual affordable housing needed to secure a full policy-compliant 35% across the entire allocation. At this PiP stage an informative can appropriately alert the applicant to the need for affordable housing at the TDC stage.

6.60 Accordingly, while affordable housing cannot be secured at the PiP stage, the Council will apply Policy 4 of the Upper Beeding Neighbourhood Plan, Policy 16 of the HDPF, and relevant national policy at the TDC stage to secure a policy-compliant level of affordable housing across the site as a whole through the use of Section 106 agreements.

Conclusions and Planning Balance:

6.61 The application seeks Permission in Principle (PiP) for up to 9 dwellings. In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) Order 2017, only the location, land use and amount of development can be considered at this stage. All detailed matters—including design, layout, access, drainage, ecology, infrastructure and affordable housing—will be assessed at the Technical Details Consent (TDC) stage.

6.62 The site forms part of a wider allocation for approximately 20 dwellings under Policy 4 of the Upper Beeding Neighbourhood Plan, which expects the delivery of affordable housing as part of the comprehensive development of the allocation. Although affordable housing cannot be secured at the PiP stage, the requirement remains applicable and will be addressed at the Technical Details Consent stage in accordance with Policy 16 of the Horsham District

Planning Framework. The subdivision of the wider allocation does not remove or diminish the requirement to provide a policy-compliant level of affordable housing across the site as a whole, and this will be secured through a Section 106 agreement at the appropriate stage.

6.63 The site is located adjacent to the built-up area boundary and benefits from access to local services in Small Dole and Upper Beeding. The Highways Authority raises no objection in principle and confirms that access arrangements can be suitably resolved at TDC stage. The site lies within Flood Zone 1, with no identified surface water flood risk, and therefore represents an appropriate location for new housing in accordance with both local and national flood risk policy.

6.64 The Landscape advice confirms that the development of this enclosed farmyard is acceptable in principle, subject to a high-quality and contextually sensitive design supported by a Landscape and Visual Appraisal at TDC stage. No landscape harm has been identified that would justify withholding PiP.

6.65 Neighbour representations have been fully considered. However, issues relating to traffic, access, drainage, archaeology, ecology, and rural character require detailed assessment and cannot be determinative at the PiP stage. No statutory consultee has raised an in-principle objection, and the allocation of the site in the Neighbourhood Plan carries significant weight. The comments from the tenant farmer regarding agricultural viability are noted, but the site's allocated housing status outweighs the continued informal agricultural use, which carries no standalone policy protection.

6.66 With regard to water neutrality, Natural England's Standing Advice (10 November 2025) confirms that new development within the Sussex North Water Resource Zone may rely on Southern Water's 2024/25 consumption savings as mitigation, subject to securing appropriate water-efficiency standards. The Council's Appropriate Assessment concludes that, using a precautionary occupancy rate and subject to a condition requiring all dwellings to achieve the Building Regulations Part G standard of no more than 110 litres per person per day, the development would not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the Arun Valley designated sites. The detailed water-efficiency measures will therefore be secured and assessed at the Technical Details Consent stage..

6.67 On balance, taking into account:

- the allocation of the wider site for housing in the made Neighbourhood Plan,
- the previously developed nature of the application site,
- the absence of technical objections from statutory consultees,
- the site's sustainable location,
- the low flood risk,
- the ability to address design, landscape, ecology, drainage, transport and affordable housing matters at TDC stage,

there are no in-principle planning harms sufficient to outweigh the policy support for residential development on this parcel.

6.68 It is therefore concluded that the proposal represents a suitable site for the amount and type of development proposed and that the requirements for granting Permission in Principle are met.

6.69 As set out in national guidance, conditions cannot be imposed on PiP decisions. A series of informatics are therefore provided to guide the scope and expectations for any future TDC submission.

6.70 Having regard to the above assessment, the proposal accords with the development plan when considered at PiP stage, and Permission in Principle is recommended.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Officers recommend that the application for permission in principle is APPROVED, with the following notes recommended for inclusion on the decision notice:

Notes to Applicant: -

1. Technical Details Consent (TDC) Requirements

This Permission in Principle establishes only the location, land use and amount of development. All detailed matters, including access, layout, design, drainage, ecology, landscaping, affordable housing and infrastructure requirements, must be addressed through a subsequent Technical Details Consent (TDC) application in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) Order 2017.

2. Affordable Housing

The applicant is advised that the site forms part of a wider allocation for approximately 20 dwellings under Policy 4 of the Upper Beeding Neighbourhood Plan (2018–2031), which requires the provision of affordable housing in accordance with identified local need. Although affordable housing cannot be secured through this Permission in Principle, the requirement remains applicable to the comprehensive development of the allocation. At the Technical Details Consent stage, the proposal will be assessed against Policy 16 of the Horsham District Planning Framework, and a Section 106 agreement will be required to secure a policy-compliant level of affordable housing across the allocation as a whole.

3. Water Efficiency

In accordance with Natural England's standing advice (10 November 2025), the applicant will be required at the Technical Details Consent stage to demonstrate that the development achieves a water consumption rate of no more than 110 litres per person per day per dwelling (Building Regulations Part G) and incorporates appropriate water-efficiency measures.

4. Landscape and Visual Impact

A Landscape and Visual Appraisal will be required at the Technical Details Consent stage, as advised by the Council's Landscape Consultant, to demonstrate that the detailed design responds positively to the rural edge setting, site topography and views from public vantage points.

5. The Amount of Development

The applicant is advised that whilst permission in principle is granted, this decision is based solely on the proposed *minimum* amount of development (9x dwellings) being considered acceptable. In order to ensure that the subsequent technical details application is successful, the applicant is advised that any future proposal should be made in accordance with the proposed minimum amount of development (9 x dwellings) and should be located within the red line as indicated on the approved location plan.

6. **Ecology**

The TDC submission should be supported by updated ecological information proportionate to the scale of development and the nature of the site. Details of any necessary mitigation and opportunities for measurable biodiversity enhancements should be clearly set out.

7. **Biodiversity Net Gain**

Paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requires that planning permission is deemed to be granted subject to the “Biodiversity Gain Condition”, which would prevent development from commencing until a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

However, under Regulations 4, 5, 7 and 8 of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024, the statutory biodiversity gain condition does not apply to certain categories of development, including development which:

- 1) does not impact any onsite priority habitat (as defined under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006); and impacts less than 25sqm of onsite habitat with a biodiversity value above zero, and less than 5 metres of onsite linear habitat;
- 2) is the subject of a householder application;
- 3) is undertaken solely or mainly for the purpose of fulfilling a biodiversity gain planning condition attached to another development;
- 4) consists of no more than 9 dwellings on a site no larger than 0.5ha and consists exclusively of self-build or custom-build dwellings.

Transitional arrangements also apply, under which the biodiversity gain condition does not attach to major development submitted before 12 February 2024 or to non-major development submitted before 2 April 2024.

Applicants are advised that statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements are set out at Paragraph 003 (Reference ID: 74-003-20240214) of the Planning Practice Guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain> .

Where onsite habitat includes irreplaceable habitat, as defined in the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024, additional requirements apply to the content and approval of any Biodiversity Gain Plan.

8. **Highways and Access**

The Local Highway Authority has raised no in-principle objection. However, full access details, parking layouts, and internal circulation arrangements will be required at the Technical Details Consent stage, supported by appropriate highway safety information.

9. **Drainage Strategy**

A detailed surface water drainage strategy and foul drainage arrangements will be required at the TDC stage in accordance with the requirements of the LLFA and Southern Water.

10. Noise, amenity and Design Quality

The TDC submission must demonstrate that the proposed layout and design achieve high standards of residential amenity, including appropriate separation distances, garden sizes, outlook, daylight and privacy, and that the development meets the expectations of Policies 32 and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework.