



# **PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT**

**TO:** Planning Committee

**BY:** Head of Development and Building Control

**DATE:** 6<sup>th</sup> January 2026

**DEVELOPMENT:** Full Planning Application to form a comprehensive masterplan including:  
1. Rationalisation and enhancement of existing commercial facilities (Use Classes E(g) B2 and B8 at Stonehouse Business Park including demolition of two buildings and their replacement with new Class E(g), B2 and B8 facilities. Extension of existing building to form a new office and wardens' accommodation. Existing mobile home removed.

2. Decommissioning of the Anaerobic Digester and re-use of the existing 2no buildings for storage and office uses (Class E(g) and B8) and the diversion of a public footpath.

3. Residential redevelopment of the Jacksons Farm site including the demolition of existing barns to provide 3no. dwellings with access, parking, and landscaping.

**SITE:** Stonehouse Farm, Handcross Road, Plummers Plain, West Sussex, RH13 6NZ

**WARD:** Nuthurst and Lower Beeding

**APPLICATION:** DC/25/0403

**APPLICANT:** **Name:** Lake Investments Limited **Address:** C/O ECE Planning, 64-68 Brighton Road, Worthing, BN11 2EN

**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.

By request of Councillor Livingstone

The application represents a departure from the development plan

**RECOMMENDATION:** To refuse planning permission

## **1. THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT**

To consider the planning application.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

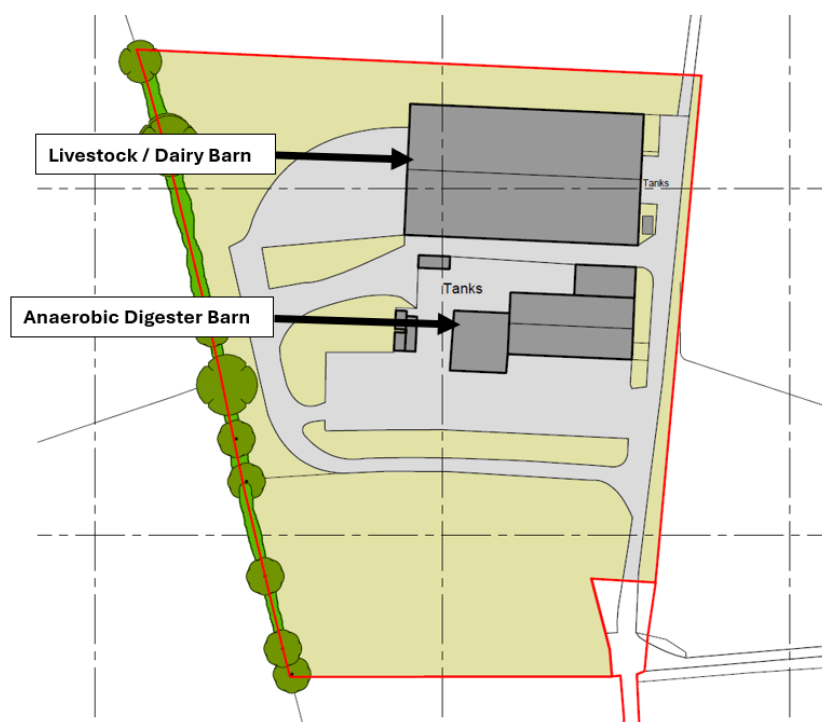
- 1.1 The application site comprises of three distinct red line boundaries within the Stonehouse Farm / Jacksons Farm agricultural holding which is located between Handcross Road (to the

south) and Hammerpond Road (to the north), approximately 1.22km north east of the Built up Area of Lower Beeding (BUAB). The holding extends to a total of 41 hectares (101 acres) and was historically a dairy farm with a range of agricultural buildings. The holding falls within Landscape Character Area N1, Mannings Heath Farmlands, and is generally characterised by a highly rural and open character, mixed arable / pasture land, mature tree boundaries and undulating valley. The holding is also located directly north of the High Weald National Landscape (HWNL).

- 1.2 This application relates to three specific red line boundaries within the holding, as follows:

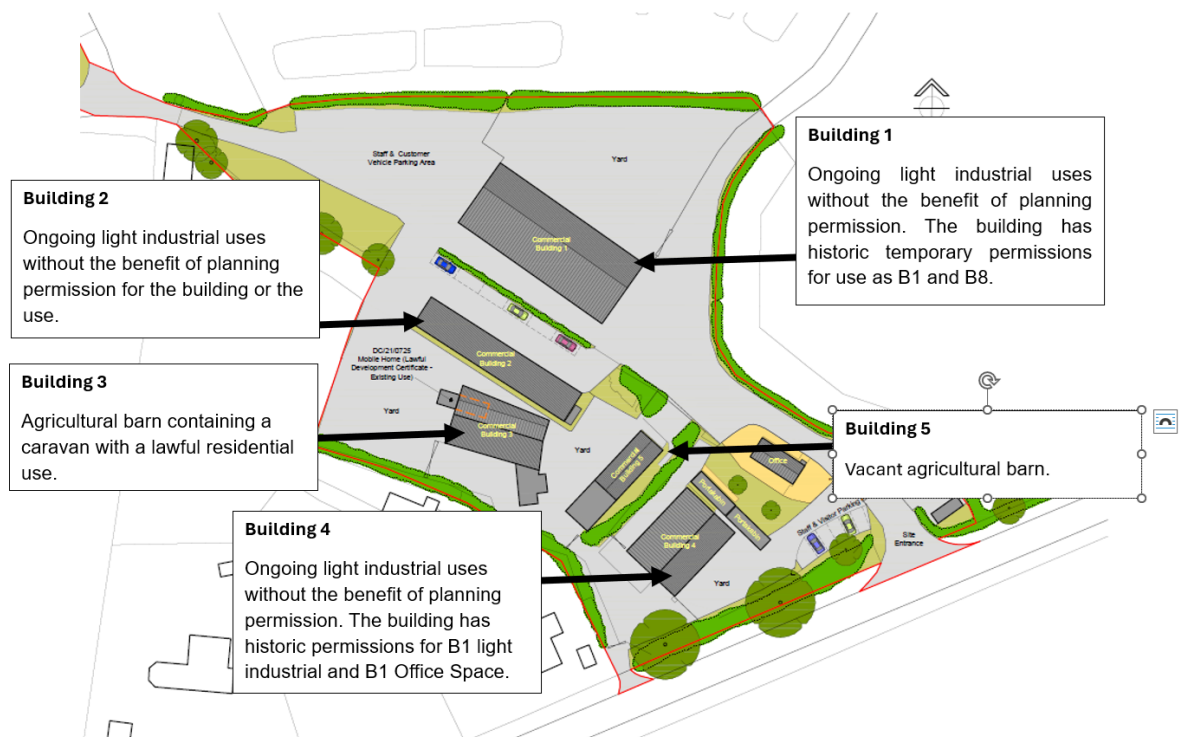
Lot 8 - Anaerobic Digester (AD) and Plant and Livestock Building

- 1.3 Lot 8 refers an approximately 2.3 ha plot located centrally between Handcross Road and Hammerpond Road. The site is accessed via an unmade track which runs for approximately 400m north from Handcross Road (B2110).
- 1.4 The site comprises of a livestock barn and anaerobic digester barn. The livestock building was constructed as a dairy circa 2019 (DC/19/1122) and is currently vacant. The barn has measures 37m x 67m, with an approximate GIA of 2500 sqm and a ridge height of 14.5m. Though of a substantial scale, the building is of a typical agricultural appearance with partially open sides, timber cladding and a pitched roof.
- 1.5 The anaerobic digester barn was constructed circa 2015 (DC/14/0729) to house an Anaerobic Digester, which is not currently in operation. The barn, though smaller is still of a substantial scale with a GIA of approximately 790 sqm and a ridge height of approximately 10m. The barn has an agricultural / utilitarian appearance with green metal cladding, large shutter doors and external plant. The remainder of the site comprises of a yard, hard standing and raised ground with a degree of external storage taking place on site.
- 1.6 The site is substantially set back from the road and falls within a dip in the landscape. The site is bound by agricultural fields on all sides with a dense treeline on the northern and eastern boundaries. The nearest residential dwellings are those to the south along Handcross Road (B2110), and to the north along Hammerpond Road. Public footpath (FP1708) runs along the site's access track and passes the site to the east.



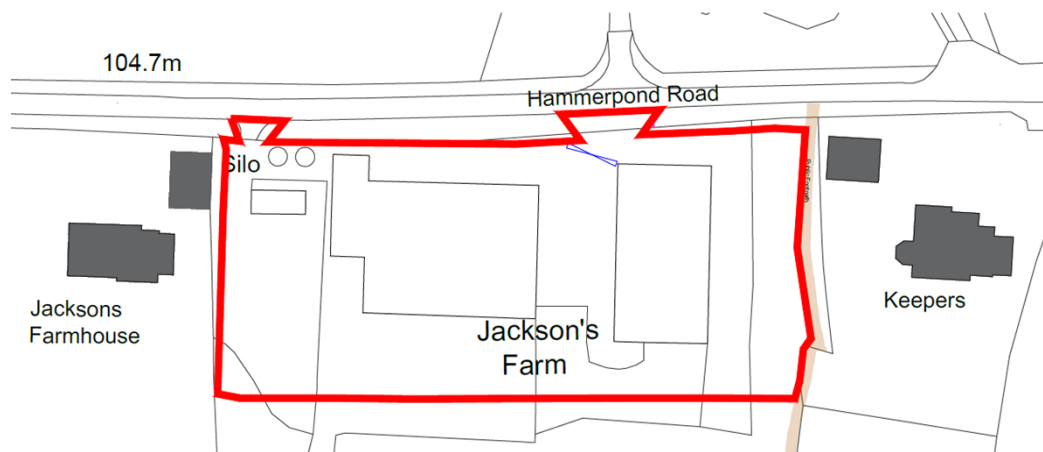
## Lot 2 - Stonehouse Business Park (see plan overleaf)

- 1.7 Lot 2 refers to a collection of agricultural and commercial buildings within an approximately 1.07 Ha plot on the eastern side of the site, accessed directly off Handcross Road (B2110). Whilst the site began as an agricultural farmyard, historic development and the introduction of commercial activities have given the site a utilitarian and commercial character. Whilst this report refers to Lot 2 as Stonehouse 'Business Park', this is for consistency with the details submitted in support of this application. The site comprises of the following structures (as marked on Site Layout 024/PL01 Rev C):
- Building 1 – A former agricultural store and dairy processing plant which has been granted successive temporary permissions for use as B1 and B8. These temporary consents have now expired; however, the building continues within a B2 use (General Industrial) without the benefit of planning permission.
  - Building 2 – This building was initially constructed as a replacement agricultural building without the benefit of planning permission. A retrospective application for the building (DC/22/0829) was dismissed at appeal in March 2024 only on the grounds of water neutrality (PP/Z3825/W/22/3311244). Whilst the building was constructed for the purposes of agriculture, and considered by the inspector on the basis of being for agricultural use, the building is currently used for light industrial uses without the benefit of planning permission.
  - Building 3 – An agricultural barn containing a caravan with a lawful residential use.
  - Building 4 – Originally constructed as an agricultural barn, this building has historically been lawfully used for B1 light industry and then for B1 Office. The building is currently used for light industrial without the benefit of planning permission.
  - Building 5 – A vacant agricultural building.
  - Site Office – A detached office building used as a warden's office.
  - Portacabin – Two portacabins currently used as office space.
- 1.8 Within the site's immediate setting, Handcross Road (B2110) and the HWNL bound the site to the south. Two detached residential dwellings (Stonehouse Farm and Meadowcroft) are located to the west and three large ponds bound the site to the north. These ponds were constructed under DC/07/2250 as a sustainable drainage system for management of waters emanating from and in connection with the previously granted agricultural and dairy processing dairy barn (Building 1) permitted under DC/11/2010. The wider landscape comprises of a patchwork of agricultural fields, blocks of woodland and sporadic development.



### Lot 9 – Jacksons Farm

- 1.9 Lot 9 refers to an approximately 0.45 ha plot located south of Hammerpond Road and on the northern extent of the Stonehouse Farm / Jacksons Farm agricultural holding. The site primarily comprises of 2 large agricultural barns and a large apron of hard standing. At the time of site visit the site was overgrown and in a disused and dilapidated condition.
- 1.10 To the north, the site is bound Hammerpond Road which is a rural, tree lined road with a sporadic detached dwellings set back from the road along its length. A barn (The Saw Mill) and residential dwelling are located north of Hammerpond Road, directly opposite the site. Two residential dwellings are located to the east and west. 'Jacksons Farmhouse' to the west which is separated by a hedgerow, and 'Keepers' to the east separated by Public footpath (FP1708), close board fencing and a dense built up of treed-hedgerow. To the south of the south the site opens into open agricultural fields which slope steeply downhill towards Lot 8 (AD and Plant and Livestock Building). Within the wider landscape, the site has a distinctly rural and tranquil character with large blocks of Ancient Woodland to the north, and the HWNL to the south.



## DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION

- 1.11 Full planning permission is sought for a number of works within the Stonehouse Farm / Jacksons Farm agricultural holding. The proposal comprises of three aspects, each located within a separate red line boundary within the agricultural holding. The applicant has additionally made reference to a wider masterplan for the redevelopment of the agricultural holding. Whilst wider ambitions for the site are noted, this application seeks only the works set out below:

### Lot 8 - Anaerobic Digester (AD) and Livestock Building

- 1.12 The proposal seeks to decommission the existing AD Plant and to re-use two existing barns for storage, distribution and office space (Class E (g) and B8). The site is proposed to be occupied by an aerospace parts / distribution business who currently operate near Steyning.
- 1.13 The existing livestock building would be retained and converted to form a large B8 storage / distribution building. The ground floor would be largely open plan with four secure storage rooms and vehicle / HGV access from the east and western elevations. A central mezzanine is proposed providing a staff area, toilet facilities and meeting rooms. Externally the building would be re-clad and two shutter vehicle doors, two windows and two pedestrian doors would be added to both the East and West Elevations. Solar Panels are also proposed on the south roof slope.
- 1.14 Within the AD barn, the existing AD Plant would be decommissioned and removed from site. The barn would be converted to provide office space over the ground and first floors and storage within the basement. Externally, the building would be clad to reflect the larger storage barn, and extensive glazing is proposed on each elevation. Access to the building would be via a covered entrance / porch on the south elevation, and via ramped vehicle access to the basement.
- 1.15 The remainder of the site is proposed to be landscaped including the provision of large areas of hard standing for 'HGV Parking & Turning' an area of 'External Storage Area' and the provision of 'Staff & Visitor Parking' containing 44 parking spaces, of which 2 would be accessible, planting and the provision of SuDs. Access would remain via the existing access track onto Handcross Road (B2110).
- 1.16 The proposal also includes amendments to the line of the existing public right of way which currently runs along the access track, with the new line to run parallel to the access track and pass to the east of the site. These changes would be subject to a Section 257 application under the Town and Country Planning Act (2015).

### Lot 2 - Stonehouse Business Park

- 1.17 The proposal seeks to regularise / formalise the existing commercial use of the site and to rationalise the site's layout.
- Buildings 1, 2 and 4, as shown on the Existing Site Layout (2024/PL01 Rev C), are proposed to be retained as existing, and the ongoing commercial uses are proposed to be regularised (Class B2, B8 and Class E (g) light industrial).
  - Building 3 is proposed to be demolished and the mobile home within the building is also to be removed from site. A replacement building comprising of 2 commercial unit is proposed on a similar footprint for use as Class B2, B8, and Class E (g) (light industrial).
  - Building 5 is proposed to be demolished and would be replaced by an additional 8 staff / visitors parking bays.

- The site office is proposed to be retained and extended to provide office space and residential / wardens accommodation.
- The exiting portacabins between the Office and Building 4 are proposed to be removed.
- A SUDS basin / attenuation pond is proposed to the west.

#### Lot 9 - Jacksons Farm

- 1.18 The proposal seeks to demolish the existing agricultural barns and to introduce three detached 5-bedroom dwellings, associated parking and landscaping. The dwellings would be of a contemporary design with prominent recessed gables on the front and rear elevations and a material palette of cedar cladding, black timber cladding, zinc cladding, black brick, and black-framed windows. Each dwelling would also have a full width first floor balcony with a glazed balustrade on the rear (south) elevation. Each dwelling would have a large private driveway providing parking for a minimum of 2 vehicles, in addition to a detached pitched roof outbuilding / 2-car garage.
- 1.19 Access is proposed via the two existing vehicle accesses onto Hammerpond Road which would be upgraded as part of the proposal.

## **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 7 - Strategic Policy: Economic Growth
- Policy 9 - Employment Development
- Policy 10 - Rural Economic Development
- Policy 15 - Strategic Policy: Housing Provision
- Policy 16 - Strategic Policy: Meeting Local Housing Needs
- Policy 20 - Rural Workers Accommodation
- 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 37 - Sustainable Construction
- Policy 38 - Strategic Policy: Flooding

Policy 40 - Sustainable Transport  
Policy 41 - Parking  
Policy 42 - Strategic Policy: Inclusive Communities

**Lower Beeding Neighbourhood Plan (2025):**

Policy 1: Biodiversity  
Policy 2: Landscape Character  
Policy 3: Green Infrastructure  
Policy 4: Sustainability  
Policy 5: Energy Efficiency  
Policy 10: Windfall Development  
Policy 11: Housing Mix  
Policy 12: Design  
Policy 13: Density  
Policy 14: Recreation Areas  
Policy 16: Broadband and Telecommunications  
Policy 17: Existing Employment Sites  
Policy 18: Economic Growth

**Horsham District Local Plan (2023-40) (Regulation 19):**

Strategic Policy 1: Sustainable Development  
Strategic Policy 2: Development Hierarchy  
Strategic Policy 3: Settlement Expansion  
Strategic Policy 6: Climate Change  
Strategic Policy 7: Appropriate Energy Use  
Strategic Policy 8: Sustainable Design and Construction  
Strategic Policy 10: Flooding  
Strategic Policy 11: Environmental Protection  
Strategic Policy 12: Air Quality  
Strategic Policy 13: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character  
Strategic Policy 14: Countryside Protection  
Strategic Policy 16: Protected Landscapes  
Strategic Policy 17: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity  
Strategic Policy 19: Development Quality  
Strategic Policy 20: Development Principles  
Policy 21: Heritage Assets and Managing Change within the Historic Environment  
Strategic Policy 24: Sustainable Transport  
Policy 25: Parking  
Strategic Policy 29: New Employment  
Strategic Policy 30: Enhancing Existing Employment  
Policy 31: Rural Economic Development  
Policy 32: Conversion of Agricultural and Rural Buildings to Commercial, Community and Residential Uses  
Strategic Policy 37: Housing Provision  
Strategic Policy 38: Meeting Local Housing Needs  
Policy 39: Affordable Housing  
Policy 40: Improving Housing Standards in the District  
Policy 44: Rural Workers Accommodation

**West Sussex Joint Minerals Local Plan (2018)**

Policy M9 - Safeguarding Minerals

**Other Relevant Guidance and Policies:**

Planning Obligations and Affordable Housing SPD (2017)  
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule (2017)  
HDC Planning Advice Note: Biodiversity and Green infrastructure (2022)  
HDC Planning Advice Note: Shaping Development in Horsham District (2025)

## PLANNING HISTORY AND RELEVANT APPLICATIONS

### 2.3 Lot 8 - Anaerobic Digester (AD) and Livestock Building

AP/22/0003 / APP/Z3825/C/2 2/3290669 & 3290670	Appeal against enforcement notice EN/21/0534	Enforcement Quashed	Notice
EN/21/0534	Enforcement Notice - Without planning permission, the material change of use of the land from agriculture to the stationing of a caravan for residential occupation the approximate location of which is shown edged blue on the attached plan.		
DC/19/1122	Amendments to dairy livestock building approval of full application DC/15/1831 to include an additional 384 sq. m of gross floor area and additional concrete yard area, creation of tracks as well as increasing the height of the building.	Approved 30.03.2020	
DC/15/1831	Construction of dairy parlour to be served by farm track (to include resurfacing and widening) to be accessed from Hands Cross Road.	Approved 02.06.2017	
DC/14/2286	Portal frame Livestock Building	Approved 19.03.2015	
DC/14/0729	Creation of agricultural building for Anaerobic Digestion (re-siting of building permitted under DC/13/0259).	Approved 10.07.2014	
DC/13/0259	Prior notification for new agricultural building.	Prior Approval Not Required 05.12.2013	
DC/12/2086	Prior notification for new agricultural building.	Prior Approval Required 03.12.2012	

### 2.4 Lot 2 - Stonehouse Business Park

#### Stonehouse Business Park – Building 1

DC/23/1326	Change of use to permanent use for Class B2 / B8 parking of HGV vehicles (Retrospective).	Withdrawn 29.04.2024
DC/23/0545	Change of use of agricultural store and dairy processing plant to Use Class B2 and part B8 for the maintenance and repair of HGV motor vehicles (as previously granted under a limited period of three years under DC/19/1046).	Withdrawn 29.04.2024



DC/19/1046	Temporary change of use for a further three year period of an agricultural store and dairy processing plant to Use Class B1 and part B8 (Renewal of DC/16/0702).	Approved 09.07.2019
DC/19/1035	Temporary change of use for a period of three years of existing hardstanding from Use Class B1 to Use Class B1/B8 for the storage of full and empty skips and for overnight parking of vehicles in connection with the use (Renewal of DC/18/0109).	Approved 30.03.2020.
DC/18/0109	Proposed change of use of existing hardstanding from Class B1 to Class B1 /B8 for the storage of full and empty skips and for overnight parking of vehicles in connection with the use.	Approved 08.06.2018
DC/16/0702	Temporary change of use for a three year period of an agricultural store and dairy processing plant to B1 use.	Approved 24.06.2016.
DC/13/1115	Non-material amendment to previously approved DC/07/2250 (Provision of sustainable drainage system for management of waters emanating from and in connection with a previously approved dairy unit (under application DC/06/1106), comprising 5 reedbeds, 3 attenuation ponds and importation of material for associated raising of land levels (Field located to the northeast of the existing farm buildings) to change the shape of the 3 x dairy reed beds.	Approved 10.07.2013.
DC/11/2010	Erection of an agricultural store and dairy processing unit - revised design to earlier planning approval under ref DC/06/1106 (which has been partially implemented ) with the addition of solar panels to be mounted on the south-western part of the roof.	Approved 25.11.2011
DC/07/2250	Provision of sustainable drainage system for management of waters emanating from and in connection with a previously approved dairy unit (under application DC/06/1106), comprising 5 reedbeds, 3 attenuation ponds and importation of material for associated raising of land levels (Field located to the northeast of the existing farm buildings).	Approved 06.11.2008
DC/06/1106	Erection of an agricultural store and dairy processing unit and formation of a track and hard standing.	Approved 08.09.2006

#### Stonehouse Business Park – Building 2

AP/22/0091 / APP/Z3825/W/2 2/3311244	Appeal to DC/22/0829	Dismissed 27.03.2024
DC/22/0829	Retrospective application for the replacement of an Agricultural Building.	Refused 24.10.2022

#### Stonehouse Business Park – Building 3 / *Mobile Home*

DC/21/0725	Application to confirm the continuous stationing of a mobile home for residential purposes (Class C3) for a period in excess of ten years (Lawful Development Certificate - Existing).	Approved 15.06.2022
AP/15/0090 / APP/Z3825/W/1 5/3134720	Appeal to DC/15/1270	Withdrawn 19.02.2016
DC/15/1270	Prior Approval of proposed change of use of an agricultural building (Milking Parlour) to one dwellinghouses (Use Class C3).	Refused 30.07.2015
DC/15/0409	Prior Approval of Proposed Change of Use of an Agricultural Building (Milking Parlour) to one dwellinghouses (Use Class C3).	Refused 13.04.2015

#### Stonehouse Business Park – Building 4

DC/16/0454	Change of Use from slab making (Sui Generis) to B1 offices, with retention of existing parking	Approved 05.05.2016.
DC/16/0381	Retrospective change of use on agricultural barn to B1 light industry in a residential area.	Approved 05.05.2016
DC/15/0208	Change of use of lean-to attached to dutch barn and associated yard from agriculture to paving slab manufacturing and sales.	Approved 02.04.2015.

#### Stonehouse Business Park – Building 5

AP/15/0091 / APP/Z3825/W/1 5/3134719	Appeal to DC/15/1295	Withdrawn 19.02.2016
DC/15/1295	Prior approval of proposed change of use of an agricultural building (Grain Store) to one dwellinghouses (Use class C3).	Refused 30.07.2015
DC/15/0408	Prior Approval of proposed change of use of an agricultural building (grain store) to one dwellinghouses (Use Class C3).	Refused 13.04.2015

#### Stonehouse Business Park – Site Office

DC/16/1224	Prior Notification for Change of Use of Agricultural Building to a Dwelling House.	Approved 27.07.2016.
AP/15/0092 / APP/Z3825/W/1 5/3134718	Appeal to DC/15/1271	Withdrawn.
DC/15/1271	Prior Approval of proposed change of use of an agricultural building (Farm Office) to one dwellinghouses (Use Class C3).	Refused 30.07.2015
DC/15/0410	Prior Approval of Proposed Change of Use of an Agricultural Building (Farm Office) to one dwellinghouses (Use Class C3).	Refused 13.04.2015.

#### Lot 9 – Jacksons Farm

DC/25/1740	Prior Notification for Change of Use of 2no. Agricultural Buildings to 8no. dwellinghouses (C3 Use Class).	Refused
DC/10/0230	Recladding of existing live stock buildings	Approved 07-10-2010
DC/09/0804	Re-positioning of entrance door and concrete apron to southern elevation of cattle feed store (approved under DC/06/0408) retention of extended yard and landscaping area with improvements.	Refused 07-10-2010
DC/08/1411	Access track to approved cattle feed and straw store from Hammerpond Road (Stonehouse Farm).	Approved 27-08-2008
DC/08/1351	Prior notification to form an access to approved cattle feed store from Hammerpond Road for deliveries of cattle feed and straw.	Withdrawn 03-07-2008
DC/08/0074	Mobile home for agricultural stock person.	Approved 07-03-2008
DC/06/1106	Erection of an agricultural store and dairy processing unit and formation of a track and hard standing.	Approved 08-09-2006
DC/06/0408	Erection of a straw and cattle feed store (Stonehouse Farm).	Approved 15-02-2006

### **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](http://www.horsham.gov.uk).

#### **INTERNAL CONSULTATIONS**

3.2 **HDC Environmental Health: Further Information Required**  
Comments received 26th September 2025 (summary)

Water Supply

The three new residential dwellings at Jacksons Farm are proposed to be fitted out with fixtures and fittings and rainwater harvesting systems. Rainwater harvesting systems (RHS) can be highly contaminated. In order to provide the LPA with sufficient confidence that the above mentioned RHS will be maintained and managed for the lifetime of the development a detailed private water supply management and maintenance plan will need to be submitted in support of the application.

It is also noted that rainwater harvesting is already in place at the area known as Lot 8. It is however not clear from the supporting information if the proposals for this part of the site will utilise this existing private water supply.

Land Contamination

Further investigation is required in relevant parts of the site to fully address the risks from contamination to future site users. This investigation could be undertaken prior to determination or secured via condition.

Construction Phase

During site clearance, preparation and construction there is the potential for local residents to experience adverse impacts from noise, dust and construction traffic movements. These should be minimised and controlled by the developer and a construction environmental management (CEMP).

3.3 **HDC Arboricultural Officer: Advice**

No significant trees of stature are proposed to be removed. The proposal would result in root disturbance to the belt of trees along the frontage of Hammerpond Road and future pressures to maintain the trees. This would be significantly impact on the street scene. Should the proposal be approved then additional planting and an arboricultural method statement are requested via condition.

3.4 **HDC Landscape Architect: Holding Objection**

HDCs Landscape Architect have provided 3 comments during the course of the application, dated. *2<sup>nd</sup> July 2025, 26<sup>th</sup> August 2025, and 24<sup>th</sup> September 2025.*

*Lot 8 - Anaerobic Digester (AD) and Plant and Livestock Building*

The proposal would result in increase activity in the countryside which may result in adverse effects on the receiving landscape. Additional light and noise pollution generated by the development and its associated use will detract from the tranquillity and sense of place of the rural countryside setting, over and above that experienced with the current use.

The site has a high degree of visibility within the valley. It is noted that g historic planting approved under the initial barns consent has not been implemented. The officer has outlined the need for mitigation via a mitigation strategy prior to determination. This should include details of planting including details of the woodland to the south. It is noted that the tree survey does not include all trees and vegetation present on site. Additional, lighting should be dark skie sensitive.

*Lot 9 -Jacksons Farm*

The new dwellings are set back, in line with the adjacent development pattern. The proposal would result in eroding effect on the existing landscape character and setting of the HWNL as a result of the introduction of domestic and other urbanising features, to the detriment of the current rural and agricultural qualities experienced on PRow 1708 and Hammerpond Rd. It is noted that glazing has been reduced during the application. A mitigation

management plan has also been requested prior to determination, this should include details of planting and screening along the southern boundary.

#### Lot 2 - Stonehouse Business Park

The proposal seeks minor layout and building changes with little to no visual change is anticipated to be noted from PRoW 1708 and Handcross Road, additional light and noise pollution would likely detract from the tranquillity of the High Weald National Landscape. It is noted that the proposals are likely to result in an increment of activity in the countryside location. Additionally, the mature oaks on the southern boundary are key landscape features within the character area and clarification is required regarding on site vegetation and the completeness of the submitted tree survey. Details of soft and hard landscaping and lighting could be secured via condition,

3.5 **HDC Business Enterprise:** No comment provided

3.6 **HDC Ecology BNG:** No Objection

The Ecology / BNG Officers has provided 4 comments during the course of this application, dated 1st September 2025, 21st August 2025, 17th June 2025, 16th May 2025. Following the submission of a BNG metric which covers all three sites the officer has reviewed the BNG for the proposal has a whole.

It has been noted that an overall net gain of 27.65% in area habitats (+1.28) and 23.05% net gain in hedgerows (+2.60 units) has been demonstrated. However, the trading rules have not been met for bramble and mixed scrub and therefore on-site habitat plan amendments or purchasing of habitat bank units will be required for these trading rules to be met. These details should be addressed prior to the signing of the S106 agreement.

Concerns were initially raised around Jackson Ridge including discrepancies between plans and the including of habitat in residential spaces. These matters have now been resolved to the officer's satisfaction. It is additionally noted that future changes to landscaping such as the removal of introduction of trees would need to be reflected within updated BNG details.

#### OUTSIDE AGENCIES

3.7 **Health and Safety Executive:** No comment provided

3.8 **Ecology Consultant:** No Objection

#### Comments received 9th September 2025 (summary)

Updated comment were provided stating of that sufficient ecological information is now available to support determination of this application. A Protected Species Precautionary Working Methods Statement has been submitted and is consider sufficient to ensure a non-licenced approach is appropriate and sufficient mitigation is detailed to minimise potential impacts. The officer has also recommended a number of conditions in line with the initial comment set out below.

#### Comments received 4th June 2025 (summary)

Initial comments were received outlining that insufficient ecological information on protected species available for determination of this application had been provided with additional details requested prior to determination. The comment notes:

Three Hazel Dormouse records within 2km of the site, the hedgerows around the site contain suitable habitat for this species and the hedgerows are connected to the wider landscape. Hedgerow are proposed to be me removed, replanted and extended on Lot X (Anaerobic Digester Plant and Main Livestock Building). A non-licenced Precautionary Method Statement for Hazel Dormouse is therefore required prior to determination

Stonehouse Business Park (Lot 2) Buildings B3 and B4 have low bat roost potential. A single dusk emergence survey was therefore undertaken in June 2024 finding no evidence of bat roosts. We note that Buildings B1, B2 and B5 have negligible bat roost potential and that Building B6 will not be impacted by the works. We also understand from Section 4.88 of the Ecological Impact Assessment (CSA Environmental, February 2025) that no trees will be impacted by the works. We therefore agree that no further surveys for bats are required.

Support is also given to recommendation within the Ecological Impact Assessment. These include the precautionary Method Statement for mobile protected species (including reptiles, common amphibians and Hedgehog, which is a Priority and threatened species), the recommendation for a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), a Wildlife Friendly Lighting Strategy and the proposed reasonable biodiversity enhancements which should be outlined within a Biodiversity Enhancement Layout. This matters / details can be secured by a condition of any consent and implemented in full.

It is additionally recommended that two presence/absence surveys for Barn Owl are undertaken prior to works starting on Building B2 (Plot 8 Anaerobic Digester) in Section 5.87 of the Ecological Impact Assessment (CSA Environmental, February 2025). This should also be secured by a condition of any consent.

### 3.9 **NatureSpace:** No Objection

It is agreed that a Non-Licensed Method of Works for Great Crested Newts should be adhered to during works. This can be secured via condition.

### 3.10 **Environmental Agency:** No Objection

The Environment Agency have provided 4 comments during the course of this application, dated 15th September 2025, 21st August 2025, 29th July 2025, and 24th April 2025. The Environment Agency have noted that stream north of lot 8 is likely hydrological connectivity to the Secondary A Aquifer which forms a part of the Water Framework Directive body, the Arun & Western Streams Hastings Beds. Additional information of testing was therefore requested via condition. This has been provided by the applicant prior to determination to the satisfaction of the Environment Agency. A 'Previously unidentified contamination' condition is requested.

### 3.11 **Southern Water:** Advice

Advice has been provided regarding connection to the public sewer, the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and asset protection.

### 3.12 **WSCC Highways:** Advice

WSCC Highways have provided 3 comments during the course of this application dated 21st August 2025, 10th July 2025, 28th April 2025.

#### *Lot 8 - Anaerobic Digester (AD) and Plant and Livestock Building*

During the course of the application WSCC Highways authority have requested additional information and clarification, including total HGV movements, amendments to visibility splay details and clarification regarding pedestrian access. As per the most recent comment no objection has been raised on highways grounds.

The priority-controlled junction onto the B2210 is proposed to widen to provide visibility splays and allow vehicles to pass. Following the submission of revised details the submitted visibility splays are now shown to be correct including a 1m set back. HGVs turning left out of the site would be required to 'oversail' the opposing traffic lane on exit. The applicant has

demonstrated that propose HGV trips could be very similar to the existing situation, and as such left-turning HGVs oversailing the centreline of Handcross Road would be very similar to the existing situation, or less, dependent on future occupier.

Submitted TRICS outputs demonstrate the proposal would result in a significant increase in traffic movements, however, only a modest increase in HGV movements.

#### Lot 2 - Stonehouse Business Park

The officer has raised no concerns over this aspect of the proposal. It has been noted that the proposed development would result in a de minimis impact on trip generation compared to the extant use on site. Access by non-car modes would, however, remain limited, although only small increase in terms of trips results and from development of the type as largely exists at present.

#### Lot 9 -Jacksons Farm

The officer raised initial concerns regarding the access arrangements and sustainability of the sites location. Following the submission of addition details no objection has been raised subject to a condition securing visibility splays of 2.4 metres from the site vehicular access onto Hammerpond Road.

### 3.13 **Reading Agricultural Consultants (RAC):** Advice Given

RAC have reviewed the application noting that the Stonehouse Farm and its land holding, including Jacksons Farm were purchased by the applicants in 2022. The holding extends for 41 hectares (101 acres) and was historically a dairy farm with a range of agricultural buildings including cattle and sheep breeding, an anaerobic digester and fishing lakes.

RAC is of the view that the applicant's proposal for the redevelopment of the former agricultural unit at Stonehouse Farm and the land holding is acceptable and will make an efficient use of a redundant agricultural unit. It is additionally noted that whilst the proposal includes the creation of habitat, including woodland, the long term management of these habitats remains unclear.

### 3.14 **WSCC Lead Local Flood Authority:** No Objection

WSCC Lead Local Flood Authority have provided 4 comments during the course of this application dated 10<sup>th</sup> December 2025, 11th August 2025, 22nd July 2025 and 25th April 2025.

The officer's initial comment raised the need for updated EA flood risk modelling and 4 additional areas where further information was required.

1. Sufficient groundwater monitoring and infiltration testing results to confirm the Applicant's contention that infiltration will not be possible on site –
2. Evidence that methods of source control have been comprehensively explored, for example French drains, rain gardens or boundary swales for tarmacadam hard standing areas.
3. Further information on the existing surface water drainage network which it is proposed various development proposals will connect to.
4. Plans showing the entire network up to and including any watercourse connections (existing and proposed), with location headwall details

These matters have been resolved to the officer's satisfaction. The officer has requested a number of conditions to secure details of surface water drainage, a sustainable drainage scheme and accordance with these details. Additionally, it has been requested that future

maintenance access for the culvert that connects the northerly and southerly red line boundaries is covered in any subsequent s.106 arrangement.

3.15 **WSCC Rights of Way: No Objection**

Comment received 15<sup>th</sup> July 2025

No Objection has been raised subject to the measures discussed and laid out in the submitted document are fully implemented. ('Lot 8 Public Rights of Way' dated 01/07/2025).

Comment received 29th April 2025

Objection raised, more information required regarding the existing and proposed Right of Way.

3.16 **WSCC Minerals and Waste: No Objection**

The application site is previously developed land and is not anticipated that the proposal would result in any significant degree of mineral sterilisation. In addition, the existing Anaerobic Digester is not identified as safeguarded waste infrastructure within the WSCC Annual Monitoring Report

3.17 **WSCC Fire and Rescue Service: Comment**

Conditions requested regarding securing fire hydrants or stored water supply.

**PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS**

3.19 Representations

15 letters of support have been received from 15 addresses supporting the application on the following grounds:

- Removal of the AD plant
- Conversion of existing buildings and creation of jobs
- Increase in local housing
- Improved visual appearance
- Biodiversity Net Gain Improvements
- Fair mix of commercial and residential properties.
- New owner has engaged with the community
- Support provided reasonable operation hours for rural business units
- We want reasonable times which ideally do not permit Saturday, Sunday pm activities or bank holiday working. Particularly the HGV recovery business.
- Conditions have been requested to limited HGV Movements, noise and light pollution.
- Do not wish 10 dwelling to be sited on Jacksons Farmyard.

No letters of objection have been received, however, public representations requested additional controls are places on hours of working and HGV movements.

3.21 Parish Comments:

**The Lower Beeding Parish Council: Support**

The Lower Beeding Parish Council voted to support the application following an engagement with the owner and adjacent neighbours (present at the Parish Council meeting). There were no objections from the neighbours with full support following a history of poor and inaccurate applications by the previous owner. The PC and neighbours commended the current owner for his liaison with the residents.



3.22 **Member Comments:**

**Cllr Dennis Livingstone:** Support

Cllr Livingstone has made comments in support of the application outlining that the proposal *'is about moving forward with a project that would benefit the community. The proposal would result in a greener future with substantially less noise and disruption that will benefit the nearby residents as well as providing a profitable business which I think will be an example for many other rural enterprises.'*

*The existing Anaerobic Digester plant is noisy, smelly and causes when it is in operation a great deal of stress to residents where it is nearly impossible for them to enjoy their gardens or sleep at night. Its removal is key for residents supporting the application. If it fails, then it will have to be bought back into use together with intensive farming of dairy cattle to service it. I also believe one of the other concerns you may have is in regard to traffic movements, I've been made aware that further information has been provided to demonstrate that there will be less vehicle movements with the AD unit removed and replaced with an alternative business.'*

Cllr Livingstone has additionally, praised the developer for their engagement / consultation with the community and the parish.

#### **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**

**Principle of Development:**

Planning Policy Context

6.1 The development plan relevant to all three aspects of the proposal comprises of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF, 2015), the 'made' Lower Beeding Neighbourhood Plan (LBNP, 2025) and The West Sussex Joint Minerals Local Plan. In accordance with planning law, these documents form the statutory development plan and the starting point for the assessment of the development proposals. The National Planning Policy Framework and accompanying Planning Practice Guidance are material considerations relevant to the development proposals.

- 6.2 The Horsham District Local Plan 2023-40 (the emerging Local Plan or 'eLP') was submitted for examination in July 2024. Following the cancellation of these Hearings by the Local Plan Inspector, the inspector recommended that the eLP be withdrawn. At the time of writing, the Inspector has agreed to hold an Exploratory meeting in early 2026 to review the future progress of the eLP. The eLP has therefore not been withdrawn and remains the Council's own policy position and the policies within it continue to have some, albeit limited, weight at this time.
- 6.3 HDPF 1 (Sustainable Development), 2 (Strategic Development), 3 (Development Hierarchy), and 4 (Settlement Expansion) set out the settlement hierarchy of the District and establishes the Council's main strategy for the location of development across the district, in accordance with the NPPF's sustainable development approach. HDPF Policy 3 specifically outlines the settlement hierarchy of the district and establishes that development will be permitted within defined built-up area boundaries (BUABs). LBNP Policy 10 additionally provides support for windfall residential development on unidentified sites within the BUAB of Lower Beeding.
- 6.4 HDPF Policy 26 (Countryside Protection) provides support for development outside of BUABs where there is an essential need for a countryside location and one of the following criteria are met:
1. Support the needs of agriculture or forestry;
  2. Enable the extraction of minerals or the disposal of waste;
  3. Provide for quiet informal recreational use; or
  4. Enable the sustainable development of rural areas.
- 6.5 HDPF Policy 26 additionally requires proposed to be of a scale appropriate to its countryside character and location, to not lead either individually or cumulatively to a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside, and to and protect, conserves, and/or enhance the key features and characteristics of the landscape character area.
- 6.6 HDPF Policy 28 provides support for replacement dwellings in the Countryside, on a one for one basis and where the replacement dwelling would not be of a disproportionate size to the existing dwelling.
- 6.7 HDPF Policies 7 (Economic Growth), 9 (Employment Development) and 10 (Rural Economic Development), alongside LBNP Policies 18 (Economic Growth) and 17 (Existing Employment Sites) collectively seek to provide support sustainable employment development and Employment uses.
- 6.8 HDPF Policy 7 seeks to support sustainable employment growth including through the redevelopment, regeneration, intensification and smart growth of existing employment sites, the provision of small and start-up units, and the retention of Key Employment Areas, for employment uses; and by identifying additional employment areas to meet the need for appropriate new business activity.
- 6.9 HDPF Policy 9 seeks to protect 'Key Employment Areas' and provides support for small, start-up and move-on business units, and for the appropriate expansion or intensification of existing employment sites and premises within BUABs.
- 6.10 HDPF Policy 10 provides specific support for rural economic development which maintains the quality and character of the area, whilst sustaining its varied and productive social and economic activity. Proposals should be appropriate to their countryside location and should either contribute to the diverse and sustainable farming enterprises within the district or, in the case of other countryside-based enterprises and activities, contribute to the wider rural economy 'contribute to the wider rural economy'. Additionally, HDPF Policy 10 requires proposals to either:

- a) Be contained wherever possible within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion or, in the case of an established rural industrial estate, within the existing boundaries of the estate; or
  - b) Result in substantial environmental improvement and reduce the impact on the countryside particularly if there are exceptional cases where new or replacement buildings are involved.
- 6.11 LBNP 18 (Economic Growth) and LBNP Policy 17 (Existing Employment Sites) provides support for employment uses and proposals which seek to maintain and/or expand existing businesses where they would be in keeping with the character of the area, would not have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of nearby residents, and would not have an unacceptable impact on highways safety.
- 6.12 NPPF Paragraph 85 – 89 relates to economic development, including development in the countryside. NPPF Paragraph 85 sets out that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.
- 6.13 NPPF Paragraph 88 provides that planning policies and decision should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, new buildings, in addition to the development/diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses.
- 6.14 NPPF Paragraph 89 recognises that, in order to meet local business and community needs, sites in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well serviced by public transport. In such circumstances, Paragraph 89 establishes, that it is important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not unacceptably impact local roads and exploits any opportunities to render a site more sustainable. Paragraph 89, further, confirms that the use of previously developed land and sites which are physically well-related to existing settlements should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.
- Principle of Development Lot 8 - AD Plant and Livestock Building
- 6.15 This proposal, 'Lot 8', falls outside the any of the district's defined BUABs and does not form part of Horsham's adopted development plan comprising the HDPF, or the 'made' LBNP. There are no existing employment uses on site, therefore the site is not classified as an existing employment site for the purposes of LBNP Policy 17, nor as a 'Key Employment Area' for the purposes of HDNPF Policy 9. In addition, the proposed Class E(g) and B8 storage, distribution and office uses are not considered to have demonstrated an essential need for a countryside location. The proposal would therefore be contrary HDPF Policies 2, 3, 4 and 26 and would not attract the support of either HDPF Policy 9 or LBNP Policy 17. Accordance with HDPF Policy 10 and LBNP Policy 18 is considered below.
- 6.16 The site comprises of two large agricultural barns, and a surrounding yard / compound. The barns were initially consented as a large dairy / milking barn, and adjoining Anaerobic Digester, and both were associated with the Stonehouse Farm agricultural holding. Neither the barn nor Anaerobic Digester are currently in use / operational, however, it is noted that that the Anaerobic Digester is maintained and could reasonably be brought back into use independently of the agricultural holding.
- 6.17 Whilst there is no existing commercial activity within the Lot 8 site, the applicant has outlined that the existing AD Plant building could benefit from permitted development rights to convert the building into 790sqm mixed commercial space. It is noted however, that this process would require the granting of prior approval by way of formal application. At the time of writing, it has not been demonstrated that the AD Plant building would be eligible for this permitted development right, and no application for this has been submitted. In addition, should prior approval be granted, this would only allow conversion of the AD plant building

to be utilised commercially. The livestock building, by virtue of its scale (over 1,000sqm in floor area), would not benefit from these permitted development rights. As such, no commercial fallback has been satisfactorily demonstrated for the conversion of the Lot 8 site as a whole.

- 6.18 The proposal seeks to convert the site into a commercial development comprising of approximately 2,900 sqm of storage and distribution space, and 2,050 sqm of office space, all contained within the existing buildings. It has been outlined that the intended occupant is 'Artemis Aerospace', a storage / distribution company within the aerospace industry. An online review of the business indicates they currently operate an office in the Wiston area and a separate logistics unit in Ashington. It is outlined that the business is seeking to expand into a larger premises. Given the scale of the proposal and degree of commercial space provided the proposal would likely provide significant economic and employment benefits which should be given significant weight in the planning balance in line with HDPF Policies 7 and 10, LBNP Policy 18 and NPPF Paragraph 85.
- 6.19 Notwithstanding this, HDPF Policy 10 requires proposal for rural economic development to be located within 'suitably located' buildings, and to maintain 'the quality and character of the area'. LBNP Policies 17 and 18 additionally requires proposals to be in keeping with the rural character of the area, and whilst NPPF Paragraphs 88 and 89 recognise that economic development in rural areas, including the conversion of existing buildings, may be appropriate in some instances, development should be sustainable, sensitive to its surroundings and should not have an unacceptable impact on local roads.

In this instance, whilst the proposal seeks to re-use existing buildings, these buildings are of a substantial scale and their conversion would result in a significant degree of commercial floorspace in an isolated and prominent location within the open countryside. It should therefore be demonstrated that the proposal would be 'suitably located', would be sustainable, and sensitive to its surroundings with have an acceptable impact on the countryside setting in accord with Policy 10, LBNP Policy 18 and the NPPF. These matters are discussed under the heading Character, Design and Appearance.

#### Principle of Development Lot 2 - Stonehouse Business Park

- 6.20 As above, this aspect of the proposal, 'Lot 2', falls outside the any of the district's defined BUABs and does not form part of Horsham's adopted development plan comprising the HDPF, or the 'made' LBNP, whilst the site is not classified as a 'Key Employment Area' for the proposes of HDNPF Policy 9. In addition, the proposed light industrial uses are not considered to have an essential need for a countryside location. Notwithstanding this, whilst much of the ongoing commercial use of the site is without the benefit of planning permission, the onsite presence of existing / established business is such that of LBNP Policy 17 is considered relevant in this instance. The proposal would therefore be contrary HDPF Policies 2, 3, 4 and 26 and would not attract the support the support of HDPF Policy 9. Accordance with LBNP Policies 17 and 18 is considered below.
- 6.21 The site comprises of five main barns which were initially developed as part of the Stonehouse Farm agricultural holding, which has now ceased to operate. The barns have a range of historic / temporary permissions for light industrial uses with a number of established businesses currently operating from the site, albeit without the benefit of planning permission at this time. These businesses include HGV repairs, commercial laundry and kitchen / furniture manufacturing. The proposal seeks to formalise / regularise these uses within the existing buildings.
- 6.22 In addition, the proposal seeks to demolish buildings 3 and 5 to be replaced with a single commercial building, comprising 2 commercial units. Building 3 and 5 are both disused agricultural buildings with no ongoing commercial use. The existing buildings have a combined GIA of approximately 520 sqm, and ridge heights of 4.25m (building 3) and 7m

(building 5). By comparison, the proposed replacement building would have a GIA of approximately 315 sqm and a ridge height of 6.5m. As such, the new building is of a comparable scale such that it would not materially increase the degree of built form on the site.

- 6.23 The proposals at Lot 2 would therefore be contained either within existing buildings or in buildings replacing the existing buildings, all within the existing site boundary. The proposal would also generate economic and employment benefits by allowing the diversification of the now redundant agricultural use, permitting the established businesses to continue operating on site, and providing two additional commercial units suitable to 'Small, start-up and move-on business'. This aspect of the proposal is therefore considered broadly in accordance with HDPF Policies 7 and 10, and LBNP Policies 17 and 18 as it can be demonstrated that the proposal would maintain the quality and character of the area and would not result in an unacceptable increase in activity within the countryside.
- 6.24 The proposal also seeks to remove an existing static caravan from within Building 3, which is in a state of disrepair, and to extend the existing office building to provide an alternative combined office space and residential accommodation for an onsite warden. The lawful siting of the existing static caravan as 'ancillary self-contained living accommodation' was accepted within lawful development certificate (DC/21/0725). The proposed wardens accommodation would be provided on a one-for-one basis and would not be disproportionate in scale to the existing static unit. The principle of providing replacement accommodation within the office building would therefore accord with HDPF Policy 28 and is considered acceptable. Notwithstanding this, should the application be approved, it is considered appropriate to tie the occupancy of the wardens' accommodation to the site's commercial operations.

#### Principle of Development Lot 9 - Jacksons Farm

- 6.25 As above, this aspect of the proposal, Lot 9, also falls outside any of the district's defined BUABs and is therefore considered within the open countryside. The site also not been allocated for residential development within the HDPF or LBNP. Additionally, the proposed development of open market dwellings is not considered to have demonstrated an essential need for a countryside location and would not meet any of the additional criteria set within HDPF Policy 26. The proposal would therefore be contrary HDPF Policies 2, 3, 4 and 26 and is considered unacceptable in principle when considered against the adopted development plan.
- 6.26 The applicant has submitted a parallel prior approval application for the conversion of the existing two barns into 8no. dwellings (DC/25/1740) under Class Q of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order. The purpose of this application is to demonstrate that the site benefits from the fallback of being able to be lawfully converted to housing. The application has been refused because the more modern of the two barns is restricted to agricultural use only by way of condition, and therefore is unable to benefit from the Class Q rights to convert to housing. The older of the two barns, which the application showed to be converted into 4n. 3-bed dwellings, was otherwise considered acceptable to convert under Class Q, having regard to its siting, design, transport and highways impacts, noise impacts, contamination risks, and flooding risks.
- 6.27 It is therefore the case that, whilst there is no formal consent to convert the older of the two barns to 4no 3-bed dwellings, in considering application DC/25/1740 it has been established that if applied for separately, prior approval under Class Q would be granted. On this basis, it is considered that there is a realistic a fallback position so as to establish a residential presence on the site.

#### *5-Year Housing Supply and presumption in favour*

- 6.28 The NPPF was updated in December 2024. NPPF paragraph 78 states that for local plans which are more than five years old from their date of adoption, local authorities should identify and update annually a supply of sites to provide a minimum of a 5 years' worth of housing provision, including an additional 5% buffer or a 20% buffer if the most recent Housing Delivery Test score is below 85% delivery over the last three years.
- 6.29 In April 2025, the Council published the latest Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) which revealed that the Council currently has a housing land supply of 1 year against current targets (1st April 2023 - 31st March 2024). In light of this, it is acknowledged that the Council is unable to demonstrate a full 5-year housing land supply, and it is recognised that this forms a material consideration in decision making which triggers the application of the 'tilted balance' at Paragraph 11d of the NPPF.

#### *Shaping Development in Horsham District (SDPAN 2025)*

- 6.30 In light of the Council's inability to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites, as in recognition of the key objective of Government policy to significantly boost the supply of homes, the Council has endorsed a Shaping Development in Horsham District (2025) advice note which now forms a material planning consideration in decision making. The advice contained in the advice note is guidance only and does not form policy and does not alter the statutory decision-making framework.
- 6.31 The note sets out the weight that can be given to current and emerging local policy and has been produced to enable the Council to act proactively to continue to deliver housing in a sustainable manner. For development proposals located outside the defined BUAB, the SDPAN (at paragraph 5.12) echoes the requirements of HDPF Policy 4 and states that applications will be considered positively provided that all of the following criteria are met:
- The site adjoins the existing settlement edge as defined by the BUAB;
  - The level of expansion is appropriate to the scale and function of the settlement the proposal relates to;
  - The proposal demonstrates that it meets local housing needs or will assist the retention and enhancement of community facilities and services;
  - The impact of the development individually or cumulatively does not prejudice comprehensive long-term development; and
  - The development is contained within an existing defensible boundary and the landscape character features are maintained and enhanced.
- 6.32 This proposal would not meet all the above criteria. Specifically due to the proposal's location which is not adjacent to an existing BUAB and does not fall within an existing defensible boundary.

#### Principle of development- summary

- 6.33 *Lot 8: AD building and Livestock building*
- The proposal to formalise and rationalise the commercial operation of the site within an open countryside location, and without an essential need for a countryside location is contrary to HDPF Policies 2, 3, 4 and 26.
  - Significant weight should be given the economic benefit of the scheme.
  - The in-principle acceptability of commercial / economic development in this location comes down to the proposals impact on the countryside location, including the impact on the landscape character, and intensification of activity proposed in the countryside and impact to local highway networks.

6.34 *Lot 2 - Stonehouse Business Park*

- The proposal to formalise and rationalise the commercial operation of the site within an open countryside location, and without an essential need for a countryside location is contrary to HDPF Policies 2, 3, 4 and 26.
- The site has previously held temporary permissions for commercial use, would not materially increase the degree of built form, and all development would be contained within either existing buildings, replacement buildings of similar scale, and within the existing site boundary.
- The proposal would provide economic and employment benefits and would broadly with HDPF Policies 7, 10 and 28 and LBNP Policies 17 and 18.
- The acceptability of the proposal comes down to the proposals impact on the countryside location, including the impact on the landscape character, and intensification of activity proposed in the countryside and impact to local highway networks.

6.35 *Lot 9 - Jacksons Farm*

- The proposal to introduction of an 3no open market dwellings outside the defined BUAB and on a site which has not been allocated for development with the adopted development plan, and without an essential need for a countryside location, is contrary to HDPF Policies 2, 3, 4 and 26.
- The Council is unable to demonstrate a full 5-year housing land supply, and the presumption in favour or 'tilted balance' is therefore engaged.
- Prior approval application DC/25/1740 has established that the conversion of the older of the two barns on the site to 4no 3-bed dwellings would be permitted development under Class Q of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order, albeit this application was refused owing to the other barn that formed part of the application not benefitting from the same Class Q rights. The conversion of the older barn establishes a residential fallback position and is an important material consideration.

6.36 Following the above in principle considerations, it is necessary to consider the proposal as a whole, including the benefits of the development. The following sections of this report consider all other detailed planning considerations, with the final section considering the overall Planning Balance.

**Character, Design and Appearance:**

- 6.37 HDPF Policies 25 and 26 and LBNP Policy 2 seek to protect the natural environment and landscape character of the district, including the landform and development pattern, together with protected landscapes and habitats. Development will be required to protect, conserve and enhance landscape and townscape character, taking account of areas or features identified as being of landscape importance, individual settlement characteristics and settlement separation. HDPF Policy 30 requires proposals to conserved and enhanced the natural beauty and public enjoyment of the High Weald National Landscape.
- 6.38 HDPF Policies 32 and 33 and LBNP Policy 12 seek a high standard of design and layout which must be locally distinctive in character and respect the character of their surroundings. Where relevant, the scale, massing and appearance of development will be required to relate sympathetically with its built-surroundings, landscape, open spaces and to consider any impact on the skyline and important views.
- 6.39 HDPF 10, LBNP 17 and 18, and NPPF Paragraph 89 require commercial activity within the countryside to be 'suitably located', maintain the quality and character of the area, be sensitive to its surroundings and not have an unacceptable impact on local roads. Additionally, HDPF 26 requires proposals to be appropriate to its countryside character and

location and not lead, either individually or cumulatively, to a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside.

- 6.40 NPPF Paragraph 189 states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes. This includes ensuring development within their setting is sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts. In addition, the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 strengthens the duty of relevant authorities, who must now 'seek to further' the statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes, including National Landscapes.

#### Character, Design and Appearance Lot 8 – AD Plant and Livestock Building

##### *Site layout and Design*

- 6.41 This aspect of the application site comprises of 2 barns within a broadly square yard sited centrally between Hammerpond Road and Handcross Road. Whilst both barns are of a substantial scale, the northern dairy barn is significant in its scale. The site's use is agricultural in nature; however, it is noted that the buildings' scale and isolated siting within the centre of the valley already contributes to a degree of landscape harm.
- 6.42 The proposal seeks external and internal alterations to both barns which would be retained at their existing scale. The dairy barn would be re-clad with new access doors and solar panels. The anaerobic digester barn would include a significant increase in glazing, new cladding, doors, solar panels and a main access / porch on the south elevation. Whilst it is noted that the barns in their existing form do not enhance the countryside setting, the proposed works would introduce further harmful commercial and urban character to the site. It is highlighted that the works to the anaerobic digester building would be highly ordered and urban, resulting in a commercial office at odds within the open countryside and highly rural setting.
- 6.43 The remainder of the site would be re-landscaped with a significant degree of hard standing, parking, HGVs turning area and ornamental tree planting. This would create a highly ordered and urban environment which would further reinforce the harmful urbanising impact set out above and would result in a physically and contextually isolated 'block' of built commercial development in the open countryside.
- 6.44 In regard to mitigation, the main livestock barn as approved included tree planting and new hedgerow to the south. These details were secured within consents DISC/20/0293 and DC/19/1122 however they have not yet been delivered on site. The landscape officer has requested these details be included within the current scheme, however this has not been forthcoming. Notwithstanding this, the proposal does include indicative tree planting on the land to the south, which once established, would go some way to screening the proposal from the south and the High Weald National Landscape. Details of this planting could be secured via condition. No clear mitigation is proposed along the north and east elevations and the site would remain prominently viewed from the PROW, and from dwellings along the high ground to the north (Hammerpond Road).
- 6.45 It has additionally been raised by the applicant that several commercial / light industrial uses with a broadly comparable site area can be identified in the local area. By extension, it is argued that clusters of commercial development are not uncharacteristic of the area. Examples include the commercial area adjacent to 'Gatley's Country Store' to the south west, a car garage to the south, light industrial area to the north west and 'Stonehouse Business Park' to the south east. The presence of these sites is noted, however, with the exception of 'Stonehouse business park', no assessment has been made of the intensity of activity each site generates. Notwithstanding this, it is emphasised that each application should be considered on its own merits and the presence of these sites, which may themselves contribute harm to the landscape, does not override the need to conserve and enhance



landscape character. As such, the proposed works to the AD Plant and Livestock Building (Lot 8) should be demonstrated to be acceptable the prevailing rural landscape.

#### *Intensification of activity*

- 6.46 Given the scale of the existing buildings, and the nature of the proposed storage distribution uses, the proposal has the potential to introduce a significant degree of commercial activity to the site through increased activity, light pollution, noise pollution and traffic movements. It is noted that whilst the site is currently non-operational, the agricultural barn and Anaerobic Digester could reasonably be brought back into use at any time. As such, it is considered appropriate to measure any increase in activity against this existing agricultural use.

#### *Vehicle movements*

- 6.47 The application is supported by trip generation assessments for both the existing and proposed use of the site including how this would impact the quantity, type and movement patterns of vehicle traffic. As the site is not currently in operation, the existing traffic movements have been generated based on trip assumptions of trips generated by the operation of the barn, anaerobic digester and management of 220 dairy cattle. This includes trips such as milk collections, feed deliveries, animal welfare and employee movements. A baseline figure of 220 dairy cattle has been used to reflect the total capacity of the existing livestock barn.
- 6.48 Post-development traffic movements have been generated from the TRICS database, and additionally from adjusted local data collated from Stonehouse Farm. These forecasts have been reviewed by WSCC Highways Authority and are considered reasonable.

	Existing	Proposed	Net Change
Vehicle Movements (per day)	37	176	+139
Other Goods Vehicles (per day)	7	8	+1

- 6.49 The proposal would therefore result in a significant net increase of 140 vehicle movements per day, compared to the baseline agricultural use. The submitted TRICS data additionally shows that vehicle movements peak between 18-22 movements per hour in the morning, mid-day and evening peaks. This is an average of 1 vehicle movement every 3 minutes. No peak movements have been provided for the existing use.
- 6.50 In addition, beyond the quantifiable increase in traffic numbers, the proposal would result in a change to the overall character of traffic. As existing, site traffic would include agricultural vehicles and farm traffic, including tractors and machinery. This is traffic which would be expected in a countryside location and to be operating around agricultural buildings. As proposed, a commercial use of the site would be expected to be primarily formed of HGVs, commercial vehicle / vans and commuting employees, all of which are generally out of keeping in rural areas.
- 6.51 It is noted that the only a minor increase in Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGVs) is proposed. This is outlined to be as the 'delivery of aviation parts are undertaken by van-size vehicles', reducing the need for HGVs. Whilst this is acknowledged, and the limited increase in large vehicles is a positive, it is noted that the proposed site layout and building design is geared towards HGV access, and any alternative or future occupier may require a greater number of HGVs. It is noted by officers that planning restrictions on total HGV or vehicle movements for a commercial site may fail to meet the test of a reasonable planning condition set out within NPPF Paragraph 58.
- 6.52 Notwithstanding the proposed increase in traffic volumes, it is noted that no restrictions are currently placed on the site's hours of operation as an agricultural barn. As such, the applicant's position is that the existing barn and AD plant could foreseeably be permitted to operate on a 24-hour basis. In contrast, proposed commercial use seeks to operate

between 07:00-19:00 hours; these hours could be secured via a suitable worded planning condition.

#### Noise

- 6.53 The application is supported by an Acoustic Assessment and Addendum which assesses the noise impact of the proposal from the residential receptor at Hillcrest Farm (the property which fronts the Handcross Road immediately at the site entrance). Recording taken directly adjacent to Hillcrest Farm shows the existing ambient soundscape / baseline soundscape to be 59dB – 60dB LAeq,T. This is mainly generated from road traffic noise along Handcross Road. Break out noise from the site, when experienced adjacent to Hillcrest Farm would be 24dB LAeq,T and would not be audible above the baseline soundscape. In addition, vehicle movement along the track ‘in a worst-case hour’ are predicted to be 44dB at Hillcrest Farm. This is also below the recorded ambient soundscape and would ‘not likely be audible’. It is noted that all recording took place outside, and therefore noise experienced within this dwelling would be expected to be lower.
- 6.54 Noise from the public right of way has also been modelled, finding that the existing use would be ‘noticeable’ at 70/93dB LAeq,T, and the proposed B2/B8 would be quieter at 47dB LAeq,T.
- 6.55 The Council’s Environmental Health Officers have additionally reviewed the details submitted and have requested a number of planning conditions including details of cumulative acoustic impact of on-site plant / machinery, details of mitigation / attenuation measures, and the implementation of any measures prior to operation. It has additionally been noted that all operations, including deliveries, should be restricted to between 07:00am – 19:00pm Monday to Sunday. These hours also reflect the operational needs of the proposed occupant.
- 6.56 In addition to changes to the volume of noise, it is noted that the proposal would also result in a material change to the character of noise within the countryside. Where the existing noise would be agricultural in nature, including machinery, livestock and vehicles, the proposal would introduce new and ongoing commercial noises, such as reversing alarms, loading/unloading etc and human activity. Given the acoustic modelling and conditions set out above, it is not considered that this would harm the amenity of residents along Handcross Road or Hammerpond Road. Irrespective of this, a change to the character to the soundscape would be experienced to users of the public right of way and would result in a degree of harm to the site’s and surrounding area’s rural character.

#### Light

- 6.57 The Council Landscape officer has additionally noted the impact of light spill from the site. As existing a degree of external lighting / flood lighting would be expected. Whilst this could reasonably take place on a 24/7 basis, due to the management of cattle, the scale of lighting associated with the agricultural use would not normally be significant, or harmful to the rural setting.
- 6.58 The proposal would introduce a significant degree of glazing with the potential for increase in light spill. It is also anticipated the central yard, parking and loading areas would require external lighting, this is in addition to light emitted from vehicle traffic. This increase in light spill, albeit only at certain times of the year, would nevertheless be harmful to the site’s rural character. Whilst no specific lighting details have been provided at this stage, a scheme of external lighting could be sought via condition. In addition, the site would operate exclusively between 07:00-19:00 hours, and as such, the impacts of external lighting and/or light emitted from windows and vehicle headlights would be limited primarily to winter evening within reduced daylight hours. These measures would go some way to mitigating the potential for harmful light pollution.

- 6.59 As such, the proposal would result in an increased light pollution which would result in a degree of landscape harm during nighttime hours. Whilst this could be mitigated and controlled to an extent via planning condition, the proposal would still result in a degree of landscape harm during nighttime hours at certain times of the year.

#### *Summary*

- 6.60 In summary, it is acknowledged that the barns exist in situ and already contribute a degree of landscape harm. The proposal would introduce urbanising features within the built environment through building alterations, hardstanding, and landscaping. Additionally, the proposal would result in an intensification of activities within the countryside, including a substantial rise in traffic volume, changes in traffic character, the introduction of commercial noise, and an increase in light pollution. These impacts would cumulatively be at odds with the rural setting and harmful to the landscape character and the tranquillity of the countryside. This urbanising impact would be prominent from the north of the site and the public right of way. This aspect of the proposal therefore fails to protect, conserve or enhance the quality and character of landscape, would not be in of a design sympathetic to the sites surroundings, and would result a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside contrary to HDPF 10, 25, 26, 30, 32, 33 and LBNP Policy 12, 17 and 18.

### Character, Design and Appearance Lot 2 - Stonehouse Business Park

#### *Site layout and Design*

- 6.61 This aspect of the application site is located north of Handcross Road, directly opposite the High Weald National Landscape (HWNL). The site, as existing, has an agricultural / utilitarian character with existing buildings sited sporadically around the site and in varying states of repair. A hedgerow and mature trees run along the southern site boundary, however, the site remains apparent from the road / National Landscape.
- 6.62 The proposal seeks to rationalise the site layout and remove two dilapidated barns to be replaced by a new commercial building. The new building (building 3) would be of a typical industrial scale and appearance and would be consistent with the site. It is note that the front elevation is indicated to be timber clad and that the building would be set back within the site and would not be prominent from the public realm. This is considered positive and would mitigate any potential views from the HWNL to the south. The proposal also seeks an extension to the existing office building to form a Warden / Manager office and accommodation. This would approximately double the buildings footprint, whilst retaining a single storey with double / twin gable roof. Notwithstanding the proposed extension, the building would remain of a modest scale, and appropriately designed to the setting. Final details of all proposed materials could be secured via a suitable worded planning condition.
- 6.63 The remaining changes to the site's layout are modest and would be in keeping with the site's existing utilitarian character. It is noted that the site has an existing commercial character and defined site boundary. The proposal would be in keeping with this character and would not extend the beyond the site boundary into undeveloped countryside. The landscape officer has outlined that the existing boundary vegetation, including the mature oaks on the southern boundary, is a key landscape features and should be retained and enhanced as part of the proposal. Whilst there remain some discrepancies between the existing and proposed vegetation / trees shown on the site plan, it is considered final details of tree planting, and enhancements to boundary vegetation could be secure via a suitable worded planning condition.

#### *Other impacts*

- 6.64 In this instance, the proposed seeks to introduce 2 addition commercial units which would result in the intensification of commercial activity onsite. The application is accompanied by

TRICS data demonstrating that this would result in a net increase of 2no two-way trips within the am peak, and 1no two-way trip within the pm peak. It is therefore not considered that the proposal would result in a significant increase in traffic movements. It is additionally noted that the additional proposed commercial building would be set back and contained within the site's existing boundary. Given the minor scale of the increased floorspace proposed, there is not considered to be an unacceptable increase in commercial activity or external noise above and beyond the site's existing activities.

- 6.65 It is noted that the ongoing commercial activities on site are not currently restricted to hours of operations. This has been referenced within public representations. Should the application be approved, the Council's Environmental Health Officer has advised that appropriate hours of operations would be between 07:00am – 19:00pm Monday to Saturday, and 08:00am – 16:00pm Sundays and Bank Holidays. This is consistent with the operational needs of the businesses as set out within the planning statement and could reasonably be secured via a suitably worded planning condition.
- 6.66 With the above conditions in place the proposals in this location are not considered to result in an unacceptable increase in activity or noise impact in the countryside given their current (albeit now unlawful) uses and their proximity to traffic noise from the nearby Handcross Road.

#### *Summary*

- 6.67 In summary, with the above conditions in place, the proposals for Lot 2 are considered in keeping with the Lot 2 site's existing character and would not increase the prominence of the site within the landscape, and would not result in any landscape harm to the wider countryside setting, including the High Weald National Landscape. In addition, this aspect of the proposal would not result in an unacceptable increase in activity in the countryside, or harm to rural character from noise given the site's location and current uses. This aspect of the proposal would therefore broadly accord with HDPF Policies 10, 25, 26, 32, 33, LBNP Policies 12, 17 and 18 and NPPF Paragraph 189.

#### Character, Design and Appearance Lot 9 - Jacksons Farm

##### *Site layout and Design*

- 6.68 This aspect of the proposal seeks to replace existing agricultural buildings with 3no large detached dwellings. The site is located on an area of high ground which is prominently viewed from the south, including within the setting of the HWNL, from the PRow 1708, and Handcross Road. The Council's Landscape Officer has highlighted that a Landscape Visual Assessment has not been provided to assess the impact of the proposal.
- 6.69 The dwellings would face onto Hammerpond Road and be of a contemporary design with prominent recessed gables on the front and rear elevations, a large glazed balcony on the rear and a material palette of cedar cladding, black timber cladding, zinc cladding, black brick, and black-framed windows.
- 6.70 The landscape officer has noted that the scale and arrangement of dwellings would be broadly reflective of Hammerpond Road, which is characterised by large dwellings set back from and fronting onto the road.
- 6.71 The Council's Arboricultural Officer has additionally noted that the proposal's relationship with the tree line along the northern boundary would result in pressures to maintain the trees from future residents and harm to the rural character the site's boundary with Hammerpond Road.
- 6.72 Further to this, the Landscape officer has outlined the need to preserve the High Weald National Landscape Dark Skies areas. It is noted that the total degree of glazing has been

reduced during the course of the application and that external lighting could be controlled via a suitably worded planning condition. Given the distance of the houses from the National Landscape of around 500m, it is not considered that light spill from rear windows would be so detrimental as to warrant further mitigation.

#### *Summary*

- 6.73 In summary, the scale and arrangement of dwellings reflects the settlement pattern along Handcross Road. The proposal would have a domesticating influence generating a degree of landscape harm however in this instance it is considered that screening / planting along the southern boundary could be secured via condition. With this planting in place, it is not considered that the harm proposed would constitute significant landscape harm such as to conflict with HDPF policies 25, 26, 32, 30, 33, LBNP Policy 12 and NPPF Paragraph 189.

#### **Highways Impacts:**

- 6.74 HDPF Policy 40 states that development will be supported if it is appropriate and in scale to the existing transport infrastructure, including public transport; is integrated with the wider network of routes, including public rights of way and cycle paths, and includes opportunities for sustainable transport. HDPF Policy 41 states that adequate parking and facilities must be provided within developments to meet the needs of anticipated users. HDPF Policy 33(8) further requires, where appropriate, the incorporation of convenient, safe, and visually attractive areas for the parking of vehicles and cycles without dominating the development or its surroundings.
- 6.75 LBNP 17 and 18 provide support to maintain and/or expand existing businesses and for employment uses which would not have unacceptable impact on the local road network.
- 6.76 NPPF Paragraph 117 outlines that proposal should give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements, address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility, minimise conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, allow for the efficient delivery of goods, and enable plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles. NPPF Paragraph 116 states that proposals should only be refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or severe residual cumulative impacts on the road network.

#### Highways Impacts Lot 8 – AD Plant and Livestock Building

- 6.77 This aspect of the proposal is proposed to be accessed via an existing access track onto Handcross Road (B2210). The proposal seeks alteration to the existing access which would widen the access, introduce a 4m curb radii, and ensure suitable visibility splays of 129m x 2.4m westbound, and 121m x 2.4m eastbound. WSCC Highways Authority have confirmed that these visibility splays would be sufficient.
- 6.78 Swept path analysis has also been provided demonstrating that HGVs could access the site and could pass at the site's access. It is noted, however, that HGVs turning left out of the site would be required to 'oversail' the opposing traffic lane on exit. This matter has been reviewed by WSCC Highways Authority who have concluded that whilst the submitted TRICS data outlines that the proposal would result in a net increase of 139 vehicle movements per day, HGV movements would remain broadly unchanged. As such, the occurrences of HGV oversailing would remain broadly similar to, or less than, existing. WSCC Highways Authority are therefore satisfied that the proposed access and increase in vehicle movements would not result in a highways safety issue. Notwithstanding this, it is acknowledged that a future occupier of the site may place an increased reliance on HGVs resulting in an overall increase in HGV movements, and an increased occurrence of oversailing.

- 6.79 Regarding internal arrangements, the proposal seeks to provide 44 parking spaces, of which 2 would be accessible. It is additionally noted that there is additional space within the site to accommodate any overspill parking.
- 6.80 It is noted that the site would be primary accessible via car, however, there is a bus stop adjacent to the site access providing connection into Horsham Town Centre. It is additionally noted that the PRow is proposed to be rerouted to avoid conflict with the access road. Whilst an assessment of the proposed PRow changes is made under the heading 'Public Right of Way', from a highway safety perspective the presence of this PRow is considered sufficient to ensure safe pedestrian access into the site. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with HDPF 40 and 41, LBNP 18 and NPPF Paragraph 116.

#### Highways Impacts Lot 2 - Stonehouse Business Park

- 6.81 The aspect of the proposal is sought to be access via the existing gated access onto Handcross Road (B2210). The application is supported by a transport technical note which includes existing and proposed TRICs data. WSCC Highways Authority have reviewed the proposal noted that the access and parking arrangement would not be impacted by the proposal. Submitted TRICs data indicated that the net increase in commercial floorspace would result in a minor increase in two-way traffic movements from 29 to 31 in the morning peak, and from 14 to 15 in the afternoon peak. WSCC Highways have therefore raised no concerns regarding this aspect of the proposal on highways safety grounds.
- 6.82 It is noted that the site would not be easily accessible via public transport and would therefore be highly reliant on private car. Notwithstanding this, the proposed works would not result in a significant intensification of use, over and above the ongoing vehicle movements on site. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable and would accord with HDPF 40, LBNP 17 and 18 and NPPF Paragraph 116.

#### Highways Impacts Lot 9 - Jacksons Farm

- 6.83 This aspect of the proposal is proposed to be access via two existing access points onto Hammerpond Road, which would be retained without modifications. The applicant has provided TRICS data setting out that the existing agricultural use would generate use 24 vehicle movements per day and that the proposed residential use would generate 15 vehicle movements per day. The proposal is therefore considered a less intensive use with a reduction of 9 vehicle movements per day.
- 6.84 Given the proposal would result in a net decrease in traffic movements, including a reduction in farm traffic, WSCC Highways Authority are satisfied the existing access point are acceptable. However, the officer has outlined that the site frontage and visibility splays should be improved and has requested a condition securing visibility splays of 2.4 metres from the site vehicular access onto Hammerpond Road.
- 6.85 Regarding parking, each dwelling is proposed to have 2 driveway spaces and a double garage, equating to a total provision of 3 spaces per dwelling. This is considered sufficient to meet WSCC guidance. EV charging provision is also proposed. WSCC Highways Authority are therefore satisfied that parking provision is appropriate that the proposal would not result in unacceptable impacts on highways safety in accordance with HDPF Policies 33(8) and 41 and NPPF Paragraph 116.
- 6.86 It is noted, however, that the application site is in an isolated location with a lack of facilities and services in the wider community and absence of provision for non-car modes beyond cycle parking. The site's location is therefore not considered to be sustainable and would fail to accord with Policy 40 and NPPF Paragraph 117.

### **Housing Mix and Affordable Housing:**

- 6.87 HDPF Policy 16 outlines that proposals should deliver a range of house types, sizes, and tenures to meet the needs of the district's communities as evidenced in the latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment. In this instance, the proposal seeks to provide 3no five-bed dwellings at Jacksons Farm (Plot 9). Given the small number of homes proposed a proportion of affordable homes is not required in this instance, per Policy 16. Furthermore, whilst it is unfortunate that the proposal seeks only large five-bed homes, given the scale of the proposal, strict accordance with the SHMA would not be reasonable in this instance.

### **Residential Amenity:**

- 6.88 HDPF Policy 33(2) states that permission will be granted for development that does not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of the occupiers/users of nearby properties and land.

#### Residential Amenity Lot 8 - AD Plant and Livestock Building

- 6.89 The closest residential dwellings to the AD Plant and Livestock Building (Lot 8) is Hillcrest Farm, which is located adjacent to the sites access onto Handcross Road (B2110). Other properties nearby sit on elevated ground to the north of the site, fronting Hammerpond Road.
- 6.90 Impacts of noise, light pollution and traffic movements have been assessed under the heading 'Character, Design and Appearance'. This section concludes that whilst there is unlikely to be significant or unacceptable increases in noise or light pollution, there would be a significant increase in the total number of vehicles by 139 vehicle per day.
- 6.91 Given the siting of Hillcrest Farm adjacent to the access, the intensification of movements would likely be keenly experienced by residents. It is noted that Hillcrest Farm fronts Handcross Road and therefore already experiences a significant degree of passing traffic. Notwithstanding this, the siting of the access is such that traffic, including HGVs would be required to linger outside of the property in order to turn into the access. It is therefore considered that the intensity of activity proposed, in close proximity to a residential dwelling, would result in unacceptable harm to the amenity of residents. This aspect of proposal therefore fails to accord with HDPF Policy 33(2).

#### Residential Amenity Lot 2 - Stonehouse Business Park

- 6.92 The closest residential dwellings to 'Stonehouse Business Park' (Plot 2) are 'The Old Farmhouse' and 'Meadowcroft' to the west. The proposal would result in an intensification of the site's usage, however, as outlined under the heading 'Character, Design and Appearance' this is not considered to be substantially above existing activities and would not be expected to result in a loss of amenity to neighbouring residents. In addition, the replaced building would be set back within the site, away from residential dwellings, and would broadly occupy the footprint of existing agricultural buildings. This aspect of the proposal is therefore considered to accord with HDPF Policy 33(2) and would not result in the unacceptable loss of neighbouring amenity.

#### Residential Amenity Lot 9 -Jacksons Farm

- 6.93 The closet residential dwellings to Jacksons Farm (Plot 9) are 'Jacksons Farmhouse' to the west, 'Keepers' to the east and a dwelling directly opposite associated with the Saw Mill. The proposed dwellings would be set back from the eastern and western boundaries and are not considered to result in any unacceptable effects of overshadowing or overbearing impacts. It is noted that each dwelling is proposed to have a large glazed balcony on the first floor rear (southern) elevation. These balconies would look south into the open countryside, and whilst a degree of overlooking may achieved into neighbouring gardens at acute angle, this would not be into the immediate private amenity space of gardens. It is therefore not considered that there would be any unacceptable overlooking or loss of privacy. This aspect of the proposal is therefore considered to accord with HDPF Policy 33(2), and would not result in the unacceptable loss of neighbouring amenity.

Construction Environmental Management Plan

- 6.94 The Environment Health Officer has additionally outlined that site clearance, preparation and construction has the potential to create noise, dust and construction traffic movements which would be harmful to the amenity to neighbouring residents across all three aspects of the proposal. These harmful impacts could be minimised and controlled within a Construction Environmental Management (CEMP) secured within a suitable worded planning condition.

**Ecology:**

- 6.95 HDPF Policy 31 and LBNP Policy 3 state that development will be supported where it demonstrates that it maintains or enhances the existing network of green infrastructure. Development proposals will be required to contribute to the enhancement of existing biodiversity and should create and manage new habitats where appropriate. LBNP Policy 1 further requires proposals to protect and where possible provide net gains in biodiversity and enhance the ecological network in the Parish will be supported.
- 6.96 The applicant has submitted an Ecological Impact Assessment (EIA) (CSA Environmental, February 2025) and Protected Species Precautionary Working Methods Statement (CSA Environmental, July 2025) which review all three aspects of the proposal as a whole. These reports have been reviewed by the Council's Ecologist who is satisfied that sufficient ecological information has been provided and has raised no objection subject to several planning conditions.
- 6.97 It is noted that, the proposal demolition of Buildings 3 and 4 at the 'Stonehouse Business Park' (Lot 2) have been assessed for any potential impact to bats. Whilst these buildings have a 'low' bat roost potential, a dusk emergence survey has been undertaken on these buildings, finding no evidence of bat roosts. In addition, it is noted that the remaining buildings across the three proposal sites are identified as having 'negligible' bat roost potential, and no trees will be impacted by the works. The County Ecologist has agreed that no further surveys for bats are required.
- 6.98 In addition, the proposed works to the Anaerobic Digester Plant and Main Livestock Building (Lot 8) would impact hedgerows which provide connection into the wider landscape and are suitable for dormice. This includes the loss of approximately 28m of hedgerow along the access track and the replanting / extension of a hedgerow on site. The Ecologist has reviewed the submitted Protected Species Precautionary Working Methods Statement and is satisfied that a sufficient mitigation is detailed to minimise potential impacts, and a European Protected Species licence will not be required. The methods set out within this report would be secured via a suitable worded planning condition.
- 6.99 The Ecologist has raised no further area of concerns, however, has recommended several conditions to be secured with any planning permission. These include securing the Precautionary Method Statement for mobile protected species, as set out within the Sections 5.80 and 5.90 – 5.93 of the EIA, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), a Wildlife Friendly Lighting Strategy and two presence/absence surveys for Barn Owls within the existing Anaerobic Digester Building.
- 6.100 The proposal has also been reviewed by NatureSpace who have assessed the potential impact on Great Crested Newts. Whilst all three, sites fall within different risk zones, NatureSpace have agreed with the finding of the EIA that a Non-Licensed Method of Works for Great Crested Newts is appropriate in this instance, and could be secured via a suitable worded planning condition.
- 6.101 Given the above, with these conditions in place, the proposal is not considered to an unacceptable impact on protected species or their habitat and is therefore considered to accord with HDPF Policy 31 and LBNP Policies 1 and 3.



**Arboriculture:**

- 6.102 HDPF Policy 31 and LBNP Policy 3 state that development will be supported where it demonstrates that it maintains or enhances the existing network of green infrastructure. Development proposals will be required to contribute to the enhancement of existing biodiversity and should create and manage new habitats where appropriate. LBNP Policy 1 further requires proposals to protect and where possible provide net gains in biodiversity and enhance the ecological network in the Parish will be supported.
- 6.103 The proposal has been reviewed by the Councils Arboricultural Officer who has provided advice. It has been highlighted that the proposal would not require the removal of any significant trees of stature at any of the three sites. The residential curtilage of dwellings within Jackson Ridge (Lot 9) would, however, encroach on trees along Hammerpond Road. This would result in a degree of disturbance to RPAs and would create a future pressure for pruning / tree works along this boundary. This impact is considered harmful to the total character of the area, however, should permission be granted additional planting could be requested by way of long-term mitigation.
- 6.104 The Council's Landscape Officer has additionally noted discrepancies within the submitted plans and the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) at both AD and Plant (Lot 8) and Stonehouse Business Park (Lot 2). It is highlighted that not all boundary trees have been included within the AIA. Notwithstanding this, the proposed works at both these sites do not fall adjacent to the site's boundary, or existing mature trees. It is therefore considered that these discrepancies could be addressed within a Tree Protection and Arboricultural Method Statement to be secured via a suitable worded planning condition.

**Drainage and Flood Risk:**

- 6.105 HDPF Policy 38 requires that development follows a sequential approach to flood risk management, giving priority to sites with the lowest risk of flooding. Development, further, must be designed to make development safe without increasing flood-risk elsewhere and incorporate sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) wherever feasible.
- 6.106 Environment Agency flood risk modelling does not identify any known risks of surface water or fluvial flooding across any of the 3 application sites, however, it is noted that the proposal includes the additional of new built form and significant areas of hardstanding. In summary the submitted drainage details outline that:
- Lot 8 - AD Plant and Livestock Building is proposed to include 2no SuDS basins to the west of the buildings and exocellular attenuation tanks to the north. The proposal would connect to the existing drainage pipe that exits the site and outfalls directly to the watercourse to the north. Foul Water is proposed to be managed within the existing
  - Lot 2 - Stonehouse Business Park is proposed to drain into a SuDS Basin to the north west of the site which would discharge by gravity to the existing watercourse to the northeast.
  - Lot 9 - Jacksons Farm is proposed to rely on an engineered / piped drainage solution which drain surface water to the south of the site via a drainage pipe and into the existing watercourse to the south.
- 6.107 These details have been reviewed in full by the WSCC Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) team who have raised no objection subject to a number of planning conditions to secure details of surface water drainage, a sustainable drainage scheme, and accordance with these details. In addition, as the new connection point for drainage from Jacksons Farm (Lot 9) is located outside of the red line boundary (NB it extends some 360m to the watercourse to the south, all within the applicant's 'blue line' current land ownership) a s106 legal agreement is required to secure the future maintenance access for the lifetime of the development.

- 6.108 It is noted that the proposal includes a reliance on engineered / piped drainage solution, particularly at Jacksons Farm (Lot 9). This matter was initially raised by WSCC LLFA, who outlined the need to explore source control methods. The applicant has subsequently provided justification for the proposed drainage solutions to the satisfaction of the LLFA.
- 6.109 Regarding the treatment of Foul Waste, the AD Plant and Livestock Building (Lot 8), and Stonehouse Business Park (Plot 2) propose to utilise and where necessary upgrade existing packaged sewerage treatments plants. Jacksons Farm (Lot 9) proposes to introduce three new packaged sewage treatment plants, one per dwelling, with a shared / combined outflow that takes the treated effluent to the watercourse at the bottom of the valley. The capacity of these treatments plans and any requirements for upgrade falls under the Building Regulations.
- 6.110 With the above conditions and necessary S.106 agreement in place the proposal is considered to accord with HDPF Policy 38.

**Heritage and Archaeology:**

- 6.111 HDPF Policy 34 relates to Cultural and Heritage Assets and states that applications should make a positive contribution to the character and distinctiveness of the area and ensure that development in Conservation Areas is consistent with special character of the area.
- 6.112 None of the three application site areas fall within conservation area, or within the setting of any designated heritage assets. The proposal has also been reviewed by the County Archaeologist who has noted that proposal does not involve extensive deep ground disturbance except within areas that will have already disturbed by existing development. No concerns are therefore raised on heritage grounds and the proposal is considered to accord with HDPF policy 34.

**Public Right of Way:**

- 6.113 The proposal seeks to reroute the existing Public Right of Way (PRoW) (Footpath 1708) which currently runs along the access track between Handcross Road (B2110), the AD plant / livestock barn (Lot 8), before continuing north to Hammerpond Road and Jacksons Farm (Lot 9). The proposal seeks to amend the PRoW to run to the west of the access track as a 5ft wide 'mown grass path'. The PRoW would then cross the access track adjacent to the boundary fence / gate of Lot 8 and would continue past the site to the east before rejoining the existing alignment of the PRoW.
- 6.114 Given the significant increases in vehicle movements proposed, the rerouting of the PRoW of the track is welcomed. A number of measures have also been proposed to ensure the safety of PRoW users at the proposed crossing point. These include maintaining visibility splays, the introduction of pedestrian crossing signage and traffic calming measures. These details have been reviewed by the WSCC Public Rights of Way Officer who has raised no objection, subject securing the measures set out within the submitted 'Lot 8 Public Rights of Way' document.
- 6.115 Notwithstanding this, the proposed increase in vehicle movements and activity in the countryside would have the potential to impact upon the enjoyment and amenity of users of the PRoW. Whilst the submitted right of way document states that the proposal "will not result in a significant increase in vehicular traffic beyond what can already lawfully occur in connection with the existing use of the site", this is inaccurate. As previously outlined the proposal would result in a net increase of 139 vehicle movements per day, and a material change in the character of traffic movements. The public right of way would run adjacent to the site boundary and therefore would experience this increase in activity prominently.
- 6.116 The proposal also includes the creation of a circular permissive footpath, this is considered a benefit of the scheme, however, as this falls outside of the red line boundaries of the application a Section 106 agreement would be required to secure this.

**Contaminated Land:**

- 6.117 Each of the three application areas raise the potential for significant contamination risks arising from their previous uses, including agricultural uses, housing of livestock, storage of slurry, the Anaerobic Digester and where ground has been raised.
- 6.118 The application is accompanied by site investigations which have taken place across the three sites. These have been reviewed by both the Council's Environmental Health Officers. Following review, a number of areas remain where Officers are not yet satisfied, including the scope of sampling and the potential for ground gases. Further investigation has therefore been requested to fully address the risks from contamination to future site users. The Environmental Health Officer has indicated these investigations could be secured via suitably worded planning condition.
- 6.119 The Environmental Agency have additionally reviewed the proposal, specifically reviewing the potential for contamination from Lot 8. These concerns were specifically raised given the potential for contaminated land from the historic use of the Anaerobic Digester and the presence of below ground tanks on site. It was noted by the Environment Agency that the proposal seeks drainage features within existing areas of hard standing / raised ground and the site is likely hydrological connected to the Secondary A Aquifer which forms a part of the Water Framework Directive body, the Arun & Western Streams Hastings Beds. The applicant has subsequently proved testing sufficient to overcome these concerns. The Environment Agency has therefore raised no objection, subject to a condition require a remediation strategy to be agreed in the event previously unidentified contamination is identified across any of the three sites.
- 6.120 It is therefore considered that with appropriately worded conditions in place the potential for contamination could be suitably managed.

**Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG):**

- 6.121 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 may not be begun unless a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority and the planning authority has approved the Plan.
- 6.122 The Biodiversity Gain Plan must show how the development will achieve the required minimum 10% BNG using the statutory biodiversity metric tool and must demonstrate how the habitats will be managed and maintained for 30 years, starting from the date the development is completed.
- 6.123 In this instance, a site metric has been submitted which covers all three aspects of the proposal. The metric outlines that an overall net gain of 27.65% in area habitats (+1.28) and 23.05% net gain in hedgerows (+2.60 units). The Council's BNG Ecologist has noted that trading rules have not been met for bramble and mixed scrub and, therefore, on-site habitat plan amendments or purchasing of habitat bank units will be required. These amendments, or an appropriate off-site solution, could be secured and finalised by way of the standard BNG planning condition.

Conservation Covenant:

- 6.124 The applicant has provided details of a conservation covenant which would cover much of the remainder of the agricultural holding (52 acres) which falls outside of the red line boundaries subject to this application. This covenant would secure the land as a registered Habitat Bank for the sale of biodiversity credits for by developers who wish to secure off site

biodiversity net gain. The applicant has outlined that this would present a benefit to the scheme, and that in the event the applicant was approved a Section 106 legal agreement could be agreed to ensure the conservation covenant was enacted, and the land secured as a gain site.

- 6.125 It has additionally been outlined that, in the event this application is refused, the applicant would not wish to proceed with the conservation covenant. This is on the basis that the agricultural holding would need to continue operating to support the ongoing function of the AD plant. No clear or convincing evidence of this has been provided, and it is not considered by officers that the progression of a conservation covenant, and the ecological benefits this would provide, should be materially linked or dependent on the outcome of this application.

**Water Neutrality:**

- 6.126 A 2021 Position Statement from Natural England identified that it could not be concluded with the required degree of certainty that new development in the Sussex North Water Supply Zone would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Arun Valley SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites. As a consequence, and to comply with the legal duties set out in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (known as the Habitat Regulations), all new development since has been required to demonstrate water neutrality.
- 6.127 On 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025 Natural England formally withdrew the 2021 Position Statement, citing a package of measures that they were satisfied would safeguard the Arun Valley sites. Principal amongst these measures is a reduction in the Southern Water abstraction licence 'by March 2026'. However, given the licence change has not yet taken place Horsham District Council, as competent authority under the Habitats Regulations, cannot yet be certain that new development will not result in adverse impacts on the Arun Valley sites.
- 6.128 To ensure development can come forward as water neutral in the meantime, the Council has agreed with Natural England to use the significant water savings made by Southern Water in 2024/25 through their programme of leakage reduction (amongst other measures). This has generated some 3,240,000 litres per day of water savings that can now be attributed to new development without increasing water abstraction in the Arun Valley beyond baseline. These savings were previously to be used to launch the Sussex North Water Certification Scheme (SNWCS), however following the withdrawal statement SNWCS will no longer be launching. Natural England standing advice dated 10<sup>th</sup> November 2025 raises no objection to using these savings to enable development to come forward. The standing advice clarifies that it functions as Natural England's formal response pursuant to Regulation 63(3) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 to all relevant planning applications which seek to achieve water neutrality using the above Southern Water savings.
- 6.129 Officers have undertaken an Appropriate Assessment which demonstrates that the anticipated increase in mains water consumption from this development, alongside all other development granted since the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025, will not exceed 3,240,000 litres per day.
- 6.130 Accordingly, Officers consider that the proposed development will not have an Adverse Effect on the Integrity of the Arun Valley Site, either alone or in combination with other plan and projects, thereby complying with Regulations 63 and 70 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, HDPF Policy 31, and paragraph 193 of the NPPF.

**Minerals and Waste:**

- 6.131 The application site is located within a Minerals Safeguarding Area for Brick Clay as defined in the WSCC Joint Minerals Local Plan 2018 Policy M9. The WSCC Minerals and Waste team have reviewed the application advising that as all three aspects of the proposal relate to previously developed land, it is not anticipated that the proposal would result in any significant degree of mineral sterilisation. All three aspects of the proposal are therefore considered to accord with Policy M9 of the WSCC Joint Minerals Local Plan.

- 6.132 Additionally, Anaerobic Digester's are not identified as safeguarded waste infrastructure within the WSCC Annual Monitoring Report. No objection is therefore raised.

**Other Matters:**

Public representations

- 6.133 It is recognised that the applicant has actively engaged with members of the community and the parish council on this proposal and the proposal has generated public support including from the parish council.
- 6.134 It is noted, however, that a degree of public representations centre around the historic management of the site, and the actions of the previous landowner. These matters are not material planning consideration in this instance therefore any grant of planning permission should not be on the basis that the current owner is not the previous owner. Instead, the application must be assessed on the merits of the proposal and the suitability of the development being proposed within the application site in line with local and national planning policy.

Split decision / partial approval

- 6.135 The applicant has expressed that the proposal is made up of three distinct / severable elements allowing the issuing of a split decision via the granting of planning permission to only part of the development proposed. This matter has been reviewed by officers.
- 6.136 Paragraphs 012 and 013 of the Guidance on the Use of Planning Conditions provide guidance on modifying applications with the use of planning conditions, and limiting the granting of planning permission to only part of the development proposed. i.e. issuing a split decision.
- 6.137 Paragraph 013 outlines that the Secretary of State and Inspectors have express powers to issue split decisions, however, this power is not expressly given to Local Authorities, who are advised to seek amended details from the applicant prior to a decision being made. Paragraph 013 additionally notes that in the exceptional circumstance a Local Authority considers a split decision appropriate, planning conditions could be used to grant permission for only part of the development where all aspects of the development are clearly distinguishable.
- 6.138 In this instance, the application comprises of three application sites, and three proposals which are clearly distinguishable, albeit various aspects of the proposal such as drainage and BNG have been considered across the wider site as a whole.
- 6.139 Notwithstanding this, Paragraph 012 of the same guidance outlines that planning conditions should not be used to modify the development in a way that makes it substantially different from that set out in the application. In this instance, each aspect of the proposal accounts for approximately 1/3 of the application and therefore, each aspect is considered significant aspect of the application in and of itself. It is additionally noted that each aspect is expressly set out within the proposal development wording. Any condition seeking to restrict part of the proposal (issue a split decision) would therefore result in the omitting upwards of a third of the proposal. This would substantially alter the consent from that set out in the application and is not considered to meet the tests of a reasonable planning condition.
- 6.140 Therefore, whilst it is acknowledged that each aspect of the proposal is distinct, it is not considered that the LPA is in a position to reasonably issue a split decision.

## **Planning Balance:**

### Lot 8 - AD Plant and Livestock Building

- 6.141 Lot 8 is located outside of a BUAB, without an essential need for a countryside location and without an allocation within the adopted development framework, contrary HDPF Policies 2, 3, 4 and 26.
- 6.142 HDPF Policies 7 and 10, LBNP Policy 18 and NPPF Paragraphs 85 - 89 provide support for economic development, including rural economic development, development outside of settlement boundaries and the expansion of existing business. The proposal would re-use existing buildings and would result in significant economic and employment benefits via the creation of approximately 2,900 sqm of storage and distribution space, and 2,050 sqm of office space. These benefits are substantial and should be given significant weight in the planning balance in line with HDPF Policy 7 and 10, LBNP Policy 18 and NPPF Paragraph 85.
- 6.143 Notwithstanding this, HDPF Policies 10 and 26, LBNP Policy 18 and NPPF Paragraphs 88 and 89 require commercial activity within the countryside to be 'suitably located', maintain the quality and character of the area, be sensitive to its surroundings and not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and to not increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside.
- 6.144 In this instance, it is considered that the design and appearance of the proposal including the alterations to buildings, landscaping and degree of hardstanding proposed would introduce an urbanising and harmful influence to the otherwise rural character of the landscape, resulting in a contextually isolated 'block' of built commercial development in the open countryside. In addition, the proposal would result in a net increase of some 139 Vehicle Movements per day with peak vehicle movement of approximately one every 3 minutes and a material change to the character of traffic movements (HGVs, smaller lorries, and cars compared to farm traffic). This increase in the nature and volume of traffic is considered to present a significant increase and intensification in the overall level of activity in the countryside which would be at odds with, and harmful to, the rural quality and character of landscape. In addition, the proposal would result in material changes to noise and light spill from the site. Whilst these harms are considered modest, and could be partially controlled via condition, a degree of cumulative harm would remain particularly experienced by users of the PRoW and by residents located adjacent to the site's access.
- 6.145 All other matters including Highways Safety, BNG, Heritage, Contaminated Land and Ecology have been found to be acceptable or could reasonably be reasonably addressed via a suitably worded planning condition.
- 6.146 Given the above, it cannot be considered that the application site is 'suitably located' to accommodate the degree of commercial activity proposed in this instance. The proposal therefore fails to accord with HDPF Policies 10, 25, 26, 32 and 33, LBNP Policies 2, 12, and 18 and NPPF Paragraphs 89. The benefits of the proposal would therefore not outweigh the harm. This aspect of the proposal is therefore considered unacceptable.

### Lot 2 - Stonehouse Business Park

- 6.147 Lot 2 is located outside of a BUAB, within an open countryside location, and without an essential need for a countryside location and without an allocation within the adopted development framework, contrary to HDPF Policies 2, 3, 4 and 26.
- 6.148 HDPF Policy 10, LBNP Policies 17 and 18 and NPPF Paragraphs 85 – 89 provide support for economic development, including rural economic development, development outside of settlement boundaries and the expansion of existing business. The proposal would result in economic and employment benefits and all commercial development would be contained

either within existing suitability located buildings or replacement buildings of similar scale, all within the boundary of the site. The proposal is considered to present a minor intensification the site's usage (albeit uses without the benefit of current planning permission), beyond ongoing activities, and would not result in unacceptable harm to the quality and character of the area either via the introduction of built form or the intensification of activity in the countryside.

- 6.149 It is additionally noted that the site has several historic temporary permissions for commercial use which is a material consideration in establishing the acceptability of the ongoing commercial use of the site.
- 6.150 The proposed 'wardens accommodation' would present a one-for-one replacement to the existing residential accommodation (caravan) on site and would provide a betterment to the site's layout. This aspect of the proposal is therefore in accord with HDPF Policy 26 and considered acceptable in principle.
- 6.151 All other matters including Highways Safety, Neighbouring Amenity, Design, Landscape Impact, BNG, Heritage, Contaminated Land and Ecology have been found to be acceptable or could reasonably be addressed via a suitably worded planning condition.
- 6.152 Given the above, the proposal would accord with HDPF Policies 10, 25, 26, 28, 32 and 33, LBNP Policies 2, 12, 17 and 18 and NPPF Paragraphs 88 and 89. The economic and employment benefits of the proposal are therefore considered to outweigh the harms identified and this aspect of the proposal is therefore considered acceptable.

#### Lot 9 Jacksons Farm

- 6.153 Lot 9 is located outside of a BUAB, within an open countryside location, and without an essential need for a countryside location, and without an allocation within the adopted development framework, contrary HDPF Policies 2, 3, 4 and 26.
- 6.154 The applicant has submitted a parallel prior approval application for the conversion of the two existing barns at Jacksons Farm into 8no. dwellings (DC/25/1740) under Class Q of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order. Whilst the application was refused because the more modern of the two barns is restricted to agricultural use only by way of condition, in considering the application it has been established that the older of the two barns, which the application showed to be converted into 4no. 3-bed dwellings, would benefit from the Class Q rights. On this basis, notwithstanding the absence of a formal consent, it is considered that there is a realistic a fallback position so as to establish a residential presence on the site in the form of 4no. 3-bed dwellings.
- 6.155 The proposal would result in a degree of landscape harm, notably from the introduction of urbanising and domesticating features to the rural setting. It is acknowledged, however, that the siting and scale of the dwellings would be characteristic of others along this part of Handcross Road. However, due the isolated location of the Lot 9 site, the proposal fails to demonstrate the scheme would be sustainably located adjacent to existing services and facilities, or that the site would be well connected via non-motorised transport.
- 6.156 All other matters including Highways Safety, Neighbouring Amenity, BNG, Heritage, Contaminated Land and Ecology have been found to be acceptable or could reasonably be addressed via a suitably worded planning condition.

#### *Tilted Balance*

- 6.157 This report has acknowledged that the Council is unable to demonstrate a full 5-year housing land supply, and it is recognised that this forms a material consideration in decision making which triggers the application of the 'tilted balance' at Paragraph 11d of the NPPF. In

accordance with Paragraph 11d, the Council is required to grant permission unless either (or both) of the following limbs apply:

(i) the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

(ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination '

#### *Lower Beeding Neighbourhood Plan*

- 6.158 NPPF Paragraphs 13 and 14 outline the continued relevance of Neighbourhood Plans in situations where the presumption of favour or 'tilted balance' applies. Paragraph 14 states:

*'in situations where the presumption (at paragraph 11d) applies to applications involving the provision of housing, the adverse impact of allowing development that conflicts with the neighbourhood plan is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, provided the following apply:*

*a) the neighbourhood plan became part of the development plan five years or less before the date on which the decision is made; and*

*b) the neighbourhood plan contains policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement (see paragraphs 69-70).'*

- 6.159 In this instance, the LBNP was made in October 2025 and contains policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement. Criteria (a) and (b) are therefore complied with. Notwithstanding this, the site falls outside of the BUAB and does not form an allocation within the LBNP, and the LBNP does not include a policy which specific precludes development outside of the BUAB or requiring that development outside of BUABs to be delivered in accordance with HDPF policies. As such, and given the LBNP is silent on how development outside of BUABs is to be considered, it follows that a housing development outside of the BUAB cannot be in conflict with this neighbourhood plan. As there is no conflict with the neighbourhood plan, Paragraph 14 of the NPPF is not engaged and the presumption in favour of sustainable development therefore continues to apply.

- 6.160 The proposal would provide 3no open market dwellings. This benefit provides only a modest housing supply contribution and is, therefore, afforded limited weight. Notwithstanding this, it is noted that a residential fall back position exists on site as established within DC/25/1740. As such, given the presence of the fallback prospect of 4no. 3-bed dwellings on the site, it is not considered that the adverse impacts of allowing this aspect of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. On balance, this aspect of the development is considered acceptable.

#### **Conclusions and Final Planning Balance:**

- 6.161 The application comprises of three aspects, across three red line boundaries. This report has sought to assess the acceptability of each aspect in tern; however, it is highlighted that the proposal must be considered as a whole. In this instance, the proposed works to Stonehouse Business Park (Lot 2) and Jacksons Farm (Lot 9) have been found acceptable, however, works to the AD and Plant and Livestock Building (Lot 8) have been found to be unacceptable.
- 6.162 When the benefits are harms of all three aspects of the proposal are considered as a whole, the benefits of the proposal, namely the significant economic and employment benefit across Lots 8 and 9, and the provision of 3No dwellings would not outweigh the harms. It is, therefore, recommended that planning permission be refused. The precise reasons for the Council's refusal are provided below.



## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **7.1 To refuse planning permission for the following reasons:**

1. The proposed conversion of the Anaerobic Digester and Livestock barn within Lot 8 to commercial use would result in a harmful urbanising impact and a significant increase and intensification in the overall level of activity in the countryside. The proposals within Lot 8 would therefore fail to be sensitive to its surroundings and would be at odds with, and harmful to, the otherwise rural quality and character of landscape contrary to the overarching spatial strategy of the development plan outlined at Policies 2, 10, 25, 26, 32 and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015), Lower Beeding Neighbourhood Plan (2014-2031) Policies 2, 12, and 18 and National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Paragraph 89.
2. The proposed development has not been accompanied by a completed s106 Legal Agreement, thereby does not secure a Travel Plan for the commercial components of the proposal, the appropriate Travel Plan monitoring fee, or ensure maintenance access is maintained to the offsite drainage components for the lifetime of the development. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies 38 and 40 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

### **Note to Application**

The applicant is advised that this decision does not officially endorse the wider site masterplan document submitted with the application given the wider masterplan includes development that would be subject to separate planning consent. It has however been taken into consideration in the determination of this application insofar that the Council is satisfied that the proposed uses within the masterplan would likely not prejudice the operation of the current proposals, and vice versa.