



DELEGATED APPLICATIONS - ASSESSMENT SHEET

APPLICATION NO./ADDRESS:

DC/25/0053

Land To The West of, South Hill Farmhouse, Storrington Road, Thakeham, Pulborough, West Sussex, RH20 3EN

DESCRIPTION:

Erection of 5no. detached dwellings with associated access, car ports and landscaping.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

T/3/84	Excavation of banking to improve visual egress of vehicles from site onto public highway (From old Planning History)	Application Permitted on 09.05.1984
T/29/94	Conversion of redundant barn and outbuildings to 1two-bedroomed residential unit Site: South Hill Storrington Road Thakeham	Application Permitted on 17.08.1994
T/39/99	Vehicular access Site: South Hill (Land Adj) Storrington Road Thakeham	Application Permitted on 17.09.1999
T/33/02	Conversion of existing house into 2 dwellings Site: South Hill Storrington Road Thakeham	Application Permitted on 03.07.2002
T/98/02	First floor extension and conversion of single dwelling into two and provision of garages Site: South Hill Storrington Road Thakeham	Application Permitted on 24.01.2003
DC/04/2216	Erection of 1 detached dwelling and garage	Withdrawn Application on 18.11.2004
DC/06/1567	First floor extension, subdivision of dwelling to create 2 dwellings and double garage	Application Refused on 05.09.2006
DC/23/1777	Erection of 5No. residential dwellings with associated access, car ports, and landscaping.	Application Refused on 15.05.2024

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

The application site comprises enclosed agricultural land currently used for horticultural purposes. The site is bound to the south and west by agricultural fields, with a ribbon of residential development located immediately to the east.

The application site is located within an Archaeological Notification Area and within the Red Zone for Great Crested Newts.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION

The proposed development would be arranged north to south and would comprise 5no. detached two storey dwellings. The proposed development would be accessed from the north with the access track extending along the eastern boundary of the site. Each dwelling would benefit from an area of hardstanding for parking, with private amenity space provided to the west. The proposed dwellings would

extend over two storeys and would incorporate hipped roofs and gables features. The dwellings would vary in appearance with a range of local materials proposed.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Horsham District Planning Framework (2015):

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

Thakeham Parish Neighbourhood Plan:

Thakeham1 – A Spatial Plan for the Parish
Thakeham6 – Design
Thakeham7 – Heritage Assets
Thakeham9 – Development in the Countryside
Thakeham10 – Green Infrastructure and Valued Landscapes

Thakeham Parish Design Statement

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF requires that all development plans complete their reviews no later than 5 years from their adoption. Horsham District Council is currently in the process of reviewing its development plan however at this stage the emerging policies carry only limited weight in decision making. As the HDPF is now over 5 years old, the most important policies for the determination of this application must be considered as to whether they are 'out of date' (NPPF paragraph 11d). This includes, for applications involving the provision of housing, whether the Council can demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites (NPPF footnote 8).

The Council is currently unable to demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites, with the supply currently calculated as being 2.9 years. The presumption in favour of development within Paragraph 11d) of the NPPF therefore applies in the consideration of all applications for housing development within the District (unless footnote 7 or Paragraph 14 applies to relevant applications), with Policies 2, 4, 15 and 26 now carrying only moderate weight in decision making.

All other policies within the HDPF as itemised above have been assessed against the NPPF and are considered to be consistent such that they continue to attract significant weight in decision making.

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 9: Water Neutrality
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 15: Settlement Coalescence
Strategic Policy 17: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
Policy 18: Local Green Space
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
Strategic Policy 37: Housing Provision
Strategic Policy 38: Meeting Local Housing Needs
Policy 40: Improving Housing Standards in the District

Supplementary Planning Guidance:

Planning Obligations and Affordable Housing SPD (2017)
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule (2017)

Planning Advice Notes:

Facilitating Appropriate Development
Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

REPRESENTATIONS AND CONSULTATIONS RESPONSES

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

Consultations:

INTERNAL CONSULTATIONS

HDC Environmental Health: Comments

Given the historic agricultural use of the site, a land use which Environmental Health considers potentially contaminating, and the likely presence of made ground soils associated with the current development on the site we are of the view that the ground on the site has the potential to be contaminated.

Given the above and taking into account the proposed residential use of the site, a land use that is sensitive to the presence of contamination, to ensure the site is suitable for residential development the application should be supported by a preliminary contamination risk assessment (PCRA), undertaken by a suitably competent and experienced environmental consultant.

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) plan will be recommended as a condition.

HDC Waste and Recycling: No Objection

HDC Landscape Architect: Holding Objection / Advice

In the absence of a landscape and visual appraisal (LVA) to demonstrate otherwise, the loss of existing boundary vegetation associated with the development proposals has an adverse effect on the visual

amenity of the receptors on Duke's Hill, as well as an eroding effect on the rural landscape character of the area, contrary to Policy 25 of the HDPF.

Key concern lies with the level of tree removal on the northern boundary to facilitate the construction of the maintenance path to the substation. This will expose the development to view from Duke's Hill, considerably changing the lane from rural to a much more suburban setting. Furthermore, the current layout provides no scope for enhancement planting within the boundary, as the bank is outside of the red line boundary.

In addition, note the site meets the minimum threshold for multi-functional greenspace provision, as identified in the Horsham District Open Space, Sports & Recreation Review 2021. Therefore, to mitigate aforementioned adverse effects, recommend providing Natural Greenspace within the northern part of the site.

Strategic objectives of the Landscape Design Strategy include the retention and protection of existing trees and hedgerows. Therefore, advise that the maintenance path is relocated, as a minimum, to the outside of the existing RPAs but working alongside the open space requirements.

Alternatively, the access path could be moved alongside the existing hedgerow in the northern parcel and the northern boundary trees fully retained and reinforced with further tree planting.

Note that development currently encroaches the Construction Exclusion Zones as indicated in the Tree Survey and Site Proposals. Given the undeveloped nature of the site, it is recommended the layout is modified to avoid these areas in order to retain and protect existing trees and hedgerows.

The increase in overall level of activity in the countryside location, and additional light and noise pollution incurred as a result of the development, is contrary to Policy 26 of the HDPF and would detract from the tranquillity and sense of place of the rural countryside setting, exacerbated further by the loss of boundary vegetation.

OUTSIDE AGENCIES

Archaeology Consultant: Comment

The site has medium potential for Prehistoric, Roman and medieval remains and a high potential for early medieval remains to be present within the Site and that further archaeological investigations are required to clarify the nature, extent and significance of any archaeological deposits. In this case it would be reasonable to secure the work with an archaeological condition.

Drainage Consultant: Comment

The proposed surface water drainage strategy does not allow the satisfactory management and disposal of surface water from the site. The proposed discharge rate is not suitably restricted. As the surface water is to be combined with foul water via a proposed combined sewer, and discharging to an existing foul sewer, there is a risk of the drainage network becoming overwhelmed and could present a contamination risk. Consultation with Southern Water is required and approval is required prior to connection.

Ecology Consultant: No Objection

Have reviewed the Ground Level Tree Assessment Report (aLyne Ecology Ltd., March 2024), Hazel Dormouse Mitigation & Compensation Strategy (aLyne Ecology Ltd., March 2024) and Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (aLyne Ecology Ltd., January 2023), supplied by the applicant, relating to the likely impacts of development on designated sites, protected & Priority species and habitats, and identification of appropriate mitigation measures.

Note from the Ground Level Tree Assessment Report (aLyne Ecology Ltd., March 2024) that the trees with potential roost features for an individual number of bats (PRF-Is) (T6 - hybrid Black Poplar, T7 - Goat Willow and T14 - Horse Chestnut) will all be retained within the development. Understand that the remaining trees have no potential roost features and therefore agree that no further surveys for bats are required.

The site lies approximately 9.1km southeast of The Mens Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (Sussex Bat Special Area of Conservation Planning and Landscape Scale Enhancement Protocol) and therefore falls within the 12 km Wider Conservation Area for the SAC. The qualifying feature for the SAC is Barbastelle bat, but there are no records for this species within 2km of the site (Sussex Biodiversity

Information Service (SBISx) – accessed under licence) and no European Protected Species Mitigation Licences (EPSML) have been granted for this species within 2km of the site.

There are approximately 30 records for bats within 2km of the site including Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Myotis sp., Serotine and Noctule (SBISx – accessed under licence). Two EPSML have been granted within 2km of the site a) for Brown Long-eared and Common Pipistrelle bat 1.4km southwest of the site in 2015; and b) for Brown Long-eared bat 1.9km southeast of the site in 2016. The site lies 14.7km southeast of Ebernoe Common SAC and is therefore outside the 12km Wider Conservation Area for this SAC and lies 4.3km east of Arun Valley SAC, SPA and Ramsar site.

The habitats on site include modified grassland, scrub, a line of trees, hedgerows and broadleaved trees. It appears from the submitted documents that a line of trees (trees T33 to T54) and a hedgerow will be removed (Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (aLyne Ecology Ltd., January 2023)). However, gaps in retained hedgerows will be interplanted with native species; hedgerows will be managed to form an 'A' profile; buffer zones of grassland will be planted adjacent to hedgerows; a species-rich hedgerow will be planted on the western boundary; a wildlife pond will be planted with native aquatic species; a SuDS will be created; a biodiverse roof will be installed; wildflower mix will be used in open spaces; and the scrub and remaining trees will be retained on the boundaries (Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (aLyne Ecology Ltd., January 2023)). Therefore, there will be no severance to the flight lines of foraging or commuting bats from the SAC and habitat connectivity within the site will be maintained.

As Barbastelle bats may use this habitat, support the recommendation that a Wildlife Friendly Lighting Strategy is implemented for this application (Ground Level Tree Assessment Report (aLyne Ecology Ltd., March 2024) and Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (aLyne Ecology Ltd., January 2023)), to avoid impacts from light disturbance. This should be secured by a condition of any consent and implemented in full. Therefore, technical specification should be submitted prior to occupation, which demonstrates measures to avoid lighting impacts to foraging / commuting bats, which are likely to be present within the local area.

Support the implementation of the Hazel Dormouse Mitigation & Compensation Strategy (aLyne Ecology Ltd., March 2024) as the hedgerows on site provide potential to support this species, there is connectivity to woodland within the wider landscape and there are Dormouse records within 2km of the site. This should be secured by a condition of any consent.

Also support the implementation of the Precautionary Method Statement for amphibians in Section 7.4 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (aLyne Ecology Ltd., January 2023).

Satisfied that there is sufficient ecological information available for determination. This provides certainty for the LPA of the likely impacts on designated sites, protected and Priority species & habitats and, with appropriate mitigation measures secured, the development can be made acceptable.

The mitigation measures identified in the Ground Level Tree Assessment Report (aLyne Ecology Ltd., March 2024), Hazel Dormouse Mitigation & Compensation Strategy (aLyne Ecology Ltd., March 2024) and Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (aLyne Ecology Ltd., January 2023), should be secured by a condition of any consent and implemented in full. This is necessary to conserve and enhance protected and Priority species. The finalised measures should be provided in a Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) - Biodiversity to be secured as a pre-commencement condition of any consent. Also support the proposed reasonable biodiversity enhancements for protected, Priority and threatened species, which have been recommended to secure net gains for biodiversity, as outlined under Paragraph 187d and 193d of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024). The reasonable biodiversity enhancement measures should be outlined within a separate Biodiversity Enhancement Layout and should be secured by a condition of any consent.

This will enable LPA to demonstrate its compliance with its statutory duties including its biodiversity duty under s40 NERC Act 2006 (as amended) and delivery of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain.

Natural England (Water Neutrality): No Objection

In order to mitigate these adverse effects and make the development acceptable, the following mitigation measures are required / or the following mitigation options should be secured:

- The delivery, management and maintenance of any measures identified in the applicant's water neutrality statement that are required to ensure that the proposed development will not result in increased levels of abstraction within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone.

Natural England (Mens SAC): No response received

Southern Water: Comment

Southern Water requires a formal application for a connection to the public sewer to be made by the applicant or developer.

WSCC Highways: No Objection

The site fronts onto and gains access from B2139 Duke's Hill which is a two-way single carriageway road, subject to 60 miles per hour speed restriction near to site access. The existing access takes the form of a vehicle crossover access (VCO) which will be retained and widened to accommodate the proposed uses. The access at the entrance will be 5.0 metres wide which reduces to 4.8 metres towards the internal access. A short 2.0 metres footway is proposed on the western side of the site entrance. It is proposed that the access drive would be surfaced with asphalt in continuity with Storrington Road / Duke's Hill. The LHA advise the provision of a raised speed table at the site entrance to warn the driver of an access ahead.

A 7-day Automatic Traffic Counter (ATC) speed survey was carried out in December 2022 which recorded 85th percentile speeds of 33.0 mph northwest bound, and 33.6 mph southeast bound. In accordance with Manual for Streets (MfS) guidance, for the recorded 85th percentile speeds, there is a requirement of 2.4 metres x 53 metres and 2.4 metres x 52 metres visibility splays towards northwest and southwest respectively. These splays are achievable within the full extent of the publicly maintainable highway. The LHA advise that the required visibility splays are always kept free of any obstruction from vegetation. It is noted that a stepped level bank followed by a rising embankment near to site entrance enhances the visibility splays.

An inspection of data supplied to WSCC by Sussex Police over a period of last five years reveals that there has been no incident of personal injury reported near to the site access. This indicates the site access has been operating in a safe manner in its current form.

Duke's Hill does not benefit from footways, but the stepped level bank provides a pathway for pedestrians to nearby bus stops and other areas. The nearest bus stops to the site are located to the southeast of the site. The LHA acknowledge that the site benefits from limited public transport accessibility as is anticipated in a rural location.

Car and cycle parking provision for the development has been provided in accordance with WSCC's Parking Standards. Each dwelling will be provided with 3 nos. car parking spaces within driveways and garages. Sustainable travel is encouraged by the provision of safe and secure parking spaces for 2 nos. bicycles within the curtilage of each dwelling.

Delivery and servicing are carried out on site. Swept path diagrams included within the TN show a large refuse vehicle can turn within site using the turning head to the south of the site and egress in forward gear which indicate the site access is fit to accommodate large vehicles.

The nationally recognised TRICS database has been interrogated to estimate the person trips associated with the proposed development. It is estimated that 3 nos. two-way vehicular trips are generated each during morning and evening peak hours. Given that the site access has operated safely over many years without any reported personal injury accidents near to the site access, the slight increase in vehicular trips is not considered to be of a material concern.

The Local Highway Authority (LHA) do not consider that this proposal would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety or result in 'severe' cumulative impacts on the operation of the highway network; therefore, is not contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), paragraphs 114 - 117, as revised December 2023. Therefore, there are no transport grounds to resist this proposal.

WSCC Fire and Rescue: Comment

Currently the nearest hydrant to the proposed properties is 190 metres away. The supply of water for firefighting for a domestic premises should be within 175 metres.

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS:

Representations:

1 letter of Objection has been received and this can be summarised as follows:

- Traffic
- No need for additional housing
- Lack of infrastructure services to support development

Parish Comments:

Thakeham Parish Council: Strong Objection

- The site lies on a prominent ridgeline location, visible from public footpaths over a wide area, and such housing would cause visual damage with a detrimental effect on the rural landscape.
- The site is outside the BUAB and the building line of relatively small houses along this stretch of the B2139. The linear layout north to south whilst the existing housing is more orientated east to west. The site projects into the countryside and the green space between Thakeham and West Chiltington. This area is indeed a 'valued landscape' as per TNP Policy 10 and development here will be visible from the main footpath between the 2 villages. TPC disagree that it will have a 'negligible effect on the wider landscape' (6.42).
- The proposal is for five very large houses which will be visible on the skyline to many areas of our parish. This would in no way be mitigated by a hedging buffer as the houses would be much higher than the hedges. It is not "a negligible effect on the wider landscape".
- Does not respond 'positively to the surrounding locality in careful consideration of form and design' (6.20).
- 5 bedroom houses are not in demand and are not part of Thakeham's assessed housing needs. They are suburban houses in a purely rural setting.
- The drive exiting the proposed development to the B2139 is to be tarmacked. It is a sloping drive. Water will cascade down it then run down the B2139 causing further erosion to the edges of the high banks to the south. This should be avoided at all costs.
- The Ecology Reports are near expiry
- It transpires that the on-site development at South Hill Farm cannot fully mitigate biodiversity damage. The applicant proposes off-setting with habitat works at Danefold Farm, West Grinstead, using the Biodiversity Impact Calculation (BIC) scheme. BIC methodology requires the offset to be an equivalent area of habitat of the SAME distinctiveness or higher. Question whether the 2 sites, in distinct locations 10 miles apart, comply. The proposed offsetting does not seem to have like-for-like correspondence.
- Water Neutrality strategy is uncertain
- Safety of access and traffic levels
- Loss of employment opportunities in the horticultural business

Member Comments:

None received

HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUALITY:

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.

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.

PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development:

The application site is located outside of any designated built-up area and is therefore located within the countryside in policy terms. It is however recognised that the site is located approximately 100m to the north-west of the built-up area boundary of Thakeham.

Policy 2 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) sets out the main growth strategy, focusing development in the main settlements. The HDPF outlines that the proposed settlement hierarchy is the most sustainable approach to delivering housing; where new development is focused in the larger settlements of Horsham, Southwater and Billingshurst; and limited new development is directed elsewhere, and only where it accords with an adopted Neighbourhood Plan. Specifically, Policy 3 of the Horsham District Planning Framework seeks to retain the existing settlement pattern and ensure that development takes place in the most sustainable locations as possible.

Policy 4 of the HDPF refers to the expansion of settlements outside the built-up area, and states that such development is only supported where: the site is allocated in the Local Plan or in a neighbourhood Plan and adjoins an existing settlement edge; the level of expansion is appropriate to the scale and function of the settlement type; the development is demonstrated to meet the identified local housing needs; the impact of development individually or cumulatively does not prejudice comprehensive long term development; and the development is contained within an existing defensible boundary and the landscape and townscape character features are maintained and enhanced.

Thakeham1 of the Thakeham Parish Neighbourhood Plan defines the built-up area boundaries of Thakeham. Development plan policies for development in the countryside apply outside the built-up area boundaries. Proposals must not undermine the visual and physical integrity of the gap between the built-up area of Thakeham and the new development at Abingworth Nurseries.

Paragraph 73 of the NPPF states that small and medium sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, are essential for Small and Medium Enterprise housebuilders to deliver new homes, and are often built-out relatively quickly. To promote the development of a good mix of sites local planning authorities should, among other things, seek opportunities through decisions to support small sites to come forward for community-led development for housing and self-build and custom-build housing, support the development of windfall sites through their decisions, giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes; and work with developers to encourage the sub-division of large sites where this could help speed up the delivery of homes.

Paragraph 83 of the NPPF states that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby.

Paragraph 84 of the NPPF outlines that planning decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances apply:

- a) there is an essential need for a rural worker, including those taking majority control of a farm business, to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside;
- b) the development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets;
- c) the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting;
- d) the development would involve the subdivision of an existing residential building; or
- e) the design is of exceptional quality, in that it:
 - i. is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and
 - ii. would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.

As the site is located outside of any defined built-up area boundary, Policies 3 and 4 of the HDPF are of significant weight in the determination of the application. As stated within Policy 3 of the HDPF, development will be permitted within towns and villages that have defined built-up areas; with

development in the countryside more strictly controlled through the provisions of Policy 4. This policy states that development outside of built up areas will only be supported where the site is allocated in the Local Plan or in a Neighbourhood Plan and adjoins a settlement edge. The pre-application site is not identified in the Local Plan and is not allocated within an adopted Neighbourhood Plan. The proposed development would not therefore accord with the spatial strategy expressed through Policies 3 and 4 of the HDPF, and is considered unacceptable in principle.

In this countryside location, the proposal is also considered against Policy 26 'Countryside Protection' which protects the countryside against inappropriate development unless it is considered essential and appropriate in scale; whilst also meeting one of four criteria. This criteria includes: supporting the needs of agriculture or forestry; enabling the extraction of minerals or the disposal of waste; providing for quiet informal recreational use; or enabling the sustainable development of rural areas. The proposed development would not meet any of this criteria, nor is it considered to be essential to the countryside location.

The proposed development would not accord with the spatial strategy as set out in Policies 2, 3, 4 and 26 of the HDPF and would therefore be unacceptable in principle.

Design and Appearance:

Policies 25, 32, and 33 of the HDPF promote development that protects, conserves and enhances the landscape and townscape character from inappropriate development. Proposals should take into account townscape characteristics, with development seeking to provide an attractive, functional and accessible environment that complements the locally distinctive character of the district. Buildings should contribute to a sense of place, and should be of a scale, massing, and appearance that is of a high standard or design and layout which relates sympathetically to the landscape and built surroundings.

Policy Thakeham6 of the Thakeham Parish Neighbourhood Plan states that the scale, density, massing, height, landscape design, layout, and materials of all new development proposals, should reflect any architectural or historic characteristics of particular merit in, and the scale of the surrounding buildings and in the wider area. Policy Thakeham 10 continues that development proposals will be supported provided they protect and retain, and wherever possible, enhance green infrastructure and valued landscape features of the Parish.

The application site comprises enclosed agricultural land currently used for horticultural purposes. The site is bound to the south and west by agricultural fields, with a ribbon of residential development located immediately to the east.

The proposed development would be arranged north to south and would comprise 5 no. detached two storey dwellings. The proposed development would be accessed from the north with the access track extending along the eastern boundary of the site. Each dwelling would benefit from an area of hardstanding for parking, with private amenity space provided to the west. The proposed dwellings would extend over two storeys and would incorporate hipped roofs and gables features. The dwellings would vary in appearance with a range of local materials proposed.

The proposed development would form a book-end to the existing ribbon of residential development, with the proposed dwelling positioned in a linear arrangement. The proposed dwellings would sit within the enclosed field, with the built form extending no further than the cluster of dwellings and associated buildings positioned to the east of the site. It is recognised that there is no definable build pattern, albeit that the dwellings are principally arranged to address the public highway and at various set backs. It is however noted that there are examples of backland development within the immediate surroundings.

Given the context of the surroundings, and the relationship of the site with the nearby built form, it is not considered that the proposed development would result in adverse harm to the landscape character of the area. The proposed dwellings would be of a scale, form, and appearance that would appropriately reflect the character and visual appearance of the surrounding built form, and it is not therefore considered that the proposal would result in visual harm.

As such, while the strong concerns of the Parish Council are noted, for the above reasons and taking into account the reasons for refusal associated with the preceding application on the site, it is considered a reason for refusal on the grounds of landscape character and / or visual amenity would not be warranted.

Residential Amenity:

Policy 32 of the HDPF states that development will be expected to provide an attractive, functional, accessible, safe, and adaptable environment that contribute a sense of place both in the buildings and spaces themselves. Policy 33 continues that development shall be required to ensure that it is designed to avoid unacceptable harm to the amenity of occupiers/users of nearby property and land.

The proposed development would be arranged to provide sufficient space between each of the dwellings, with sufficient space retained between the dwellings and the existing residential properties.

For these reasons, it is not considered that the proposal would result in harm to the amenities of nearby residential properties and users of land, in accordance with the above policies.

Highways Impacts:

Policies 40 and 41 of the HDPF promote development that provides safe and adequate access, suitable for all users.

The proposed development would incorporate an access to the north-eastern corner of the site, with an access track extending along the eastern boundary. Each dwelling would benefit from an area of hardstanding for parking and turning, with dedicated garaging also provided.

Following consultation with WSCC Highways, it is considered that sufficient visibility would be available from the site access, where there is no indication that the site access has been operating unsafely. Sufficient parking would be available for each dwelling to accommodate anticipated needs, and it is not anticipated that the number of vehicle movements would adversely impact the function and safety of the highway network.

For the above reasons, the proposed development is considered to benefit from safe and adequate access and would not result in harm to the function and safety of the highway network, in accordance with the above policies.

Ecology:

Policy 31 of the HDPF states 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.

The Applicant has submitted a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report by aLyne Ecology Ltd dated January 2023, a Ground Level Tree Assessment Report by aLyne Ecology Ltd dated March 2024, and a Hazel Dormouse Mitigation and Compensation Strategy by aLyne Ecology Ltd dated March 2024. These outline that trees with potential roost features for an individual number of bats will be retained within the development. The trees and hedgerow proposed to be removed have no potential roost features, where gaps in the retained hedgerows would be interplanted with native species, buffer zones of grassland planted, species-rich hedgerow planted, wildflower mix used in open spaces, and a wildlife pond created.

Following consultation with the Council's Ecologist, the mitigation and enhancement measures are considered acceptable, and no ecology concerns are raised.

Water Neutrality:

The application site falls within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone as defined by Natural England which draws its water supply from groundwater abstraction at Hardham. Natural England has issued a Position Statement for applications within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone which states that it cannot be concluded with the required degree of certainty that new development in this zone would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Arun Valley SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites.

Natural England advises that plans and projects affecting sites where an existing adverse effect is known will be required to demonstrate, with sufficient certainty, that they will not contribute further to an existing adverse effect. The received advice note advises that the matter of water neutrality should be addressed in assessments to agree and ensure that water use is offset for all new developments within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone.

The Applicant has submitted a Water Neutrality Statement by Bluesky Unlimited dated 27.11.2024. The Statement outlines that the proposal relates to the erection of 5no. 5-bed detached dwellings, where it is

proposed to achieve a water demand of 75.3 litres per person per day through the installation of water efficient fixtures and fittings, including rainwater harvesting. Based upon an occupancy of 3.09, each dwelling would result in a water demand of 232.67 litres per day. This would result in a total water demand across the development of 1,163.38 litres per day.

The application site comprises cleared land previously having included a number of polytunnels and associated structures. The Statement is accompanied by several Water Service Statements dated between 10.02.2020 and 13.08.2020, 18.02.2021 and 17.05.2021, 25.02.2022 and 17.05.2022, and 08.08.2022 and 17.11.2022. These average a total water demand of 1,004 litres per day. The water consumption figures are within the last 3 years, and are therefore considered acceptable to evidence an existing baseline.

As outlined above, the proposed baseline across the development is 1,163.38 litres per day. Given the existing baseline, 159.38 litres per day is required to be offset. It is proposed to purchase 159 water credits through a Water Credit Scheme provided by Nicholls Licensing and Consulting. Appendix C of the Water Neutrality Statement outlines that this Water Credit Scheme would be purchased from the development of a borehole at South Lodge Hotel. The offsetting site has an overall water demand of 19,999 cubic metres of water a day, based upon the hotel, spa, and restaurant contained at the site. A total of 2no. bore holes would be drilled to supply the site, with the supporting information demonstrating that the first bore hole (which would provide the calculated demand of 19,999 cubic metres of water) would provide a consistent supply. The Water Neutrality Statement has confirmed that the development has been allocated credits through the South Lodge Hotel Water Credit Scheme to meet the demand of the proposed development.

The mitigation measures proposed would reduce the water consumption of the proposed residential development. Subject to the water strategy as proposed within the Water Neutrality Statement, along with conditions to secure the mitigation measures and a Legal Agreement to secure the offsetting, it is considered that there is no clear or compelling evidence to suggest the nature and scale of the proposed development would result in a more intensive occupation of the dwelling necessitating an increased consumption of water that would result in a significant impact on the Arun Valley SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. The grant of planning permission would not therefore adversely affect the integrity of these sites or otherwise conflict with policy 31 of the HDPF, NPPF paragraph 194 and the Council's obligations under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Other Matters:

Contaminated Land:

Following consultation with the Environmental Health Officer, it is considered that the historic agricultural use of the site is potentially contaminating, and there is a likely presence of made ground soils associated with the current development on the site. It is therefore considered that the ground on the site has the potential to be contaminated.

On this basis, and in taking account the proposed residential use of the site, which is a land use sensitive to the presence of contamination, it is considered that a Preliminary Contamination Assessment by a suitably competent and experienced environmental consultant is required. It is considered that this could be reasonably secured by a Pre-Commencement Condition.

Climate Change:

Policies 35, 36 and 37 require that development mitigates to the impacts of climate change through measures including improved energy efficiency, reducing flood risk, reducing water consumption, improving biodiversity and promoting sustainable transport modes. These policies reflect the requirements of Chapter 14 of the NPPF that local plans and decisions seek to reduce the impact of development on climate change.

Should the proposed development be approved, the following measures to build resilience to climate change and reduce carbon emissions:

- Requirement to provide full fibre broadband site connectivity
- Dedicated refuse and recycling storage capacity
- Cycle parking facilities

- Electric vehicle charging points

Subject to these conditions the application will suitably reduce the impact of the development on climate change in accordance with local and national policy.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG):

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

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. Off-site gains and significant on-site enhancements will be secured over this period by way of a Legal Agreement.

The Applicant has submitted a Biodiversity Metric which demonstrates a 12.14% net gain in habitat units and a 11.57% net gain in hedgerow units is achievable by way of onsite biodiversity gains and registered offsite biodiversity gains. A legal agreement has been completed to secure the maintenance and monitoring of the significant onsite biodiversity gains and registered offsite biodiversity gains for the required 30 years.

Planning Balance and Conclusions:

The application site has been subject of a previous planning refusal under reference DC/23/1777 which was refused for the following reasons:

- 1 The proposed development would be sited within an unsustainable location in the countryside, outside of a defined built-up area boundary, and on a site not allocated for housing development within the Horsham District Planning Framework, or a made Neighbourhood Plan. Furthermore, the proposed development is not essential to its countryside location. Notwithstanding the absence of a five-year land housing supply, and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) at paragraph 11(d), it is not considered that there are any material considerations in this instance which would outweigh harm arising from conflict with Policies 1, 2, 3, 4 and 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).
- 2 Insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate with a sufficient degree of certainty that the proposed development would not contribute to an existing adverse effect upon the integrity of the internationally designated Arun Valley Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area and Ramsar sites by way of increased water abstraction, contrary to Policy 31 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015), Paragraphs 185 and 186 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023), its duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), and s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (Priority Habitats & Species).

At the time of the previous application, the Council could not demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply, where paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF states that where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, planning permission should be granted unless the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or 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. It was however recognised that Footnote 7 to Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF states that the policies referred to are those in the Framework relating to habitat sites.

Insufficient information had been submitted to demonstrate with a sufficient degree of certainty that the proposed development would not contribute to an existing adverse effect upon the integrity of the internationally designated Arun Valley Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area and Ramsar sites by way of increased water abstraction, contrary to Policy 31 of the Horsham District

Planning Framework (2015) and the relevant paragraphs of the NPPF. As such, the tilted balance derived from paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF did not apply.

The current application has addressed the matter of water neutrality, where the strategy comprises the purchase of private water credits to offset the demand arising from the development. It has therefore been demonstrated with sufficient certainty that the development would be water neutral, and to this effect, the tilted balance of paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF is engaged.

The proposed development would not accord with the overarching spatial strategy as set out in Policies 2, 3, 4, and 26 of the HDPF. It is however recognised that these policies are not fully compliant with the NPPF. Given the housing shortfall identified, the conflict afforded with these policies must be afforded reduced weight. In order to support decision-making within this context, the Council have published a Facilitating Appropriate Development document which recognises that given the 5-year housing land position and the principles behind Policy 4 of the HDPF, applications that meet all of the following criteria will be supported:

- The site adjoins the existing settlement edge as defined by the built-up area boundary;
- 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 with 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.

The application site is situated adjacent to the built-up area of Thakeham but does not adjoin the settlement edge. The proposal relates to the provision of 5no. 5-bed dwellings, where no evidence has been provided to demonstrate that this would meet a local housing need. The development would therefore fail to meet all of the criteria as listed above. On the balance of all material considerations, it is recommended that planning permission be refused.

Recommendation: Application Refused

Reason(s) for Refusal:

- 1 The proposed development would be sited within an unsustainable location in the countryside, outside of a defined built-up area boundary, and on a site not allocated for housing development within the Horsham District Planning Framework, or a made Neighbourhood Plan. Furthermore, the proposed development is not essential to its countryside location. Notwithstanding the absence of a five-year land housing supply, and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) at paragraph 11(d), it is not considered that there are any material considerations in this instance which would outweigh harm arising from conflict with Policies 1, 2, 3, 4 and 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

POSITIVE AND PROACTIVE STATEMENT

Statement pursuant to Article 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received, in order to be able to, where possible, grant permission.

Plans list for: DC/25/0053

(The approved plans will form Condition 1 on the Decision Notice of all Permitted applications)

Schedule of plans/documents **not approved**:

Plan Type	Description	Drawing Number	Received Date
Location plan	Site Location Plan Drawing	LP REV B	14.01.2025
Block plan	Site Context Plan	CP REV A	14.01.2025
Site plan	Proposed Site Plan Drawing	001 REV F	14.01.2025
Site plan	Colour Site Plan Drawing	C001 REV B	14.01.2025
Elevation plan	Proposed Internal Site Section & Street Elevation	005 REV A	14.01.2025
Details plan	Proposed Site Access Visibility Splays	23-118-SK01 Rev A	14.01.2025
Details plan	Proposed Site Access Swept Path Analysis	23-118-TR01	14.01.2025
Details plan	Plan of Tree Constraints	NONE	14.01.2025
Elevation & Floor plan	Plot 1 Proposed Plans & Elevations	010 REV A	14.01.2025
Elevation & Floor plan	Plot 2 Proposed Plans & Elevations	011 REV A	14.01.2025
Elevation & Floor plan	Plot 3 Proposed Plans & Elevations	012 REV A	14.01.2025
Elevation & Floor plan	Plot 4 Proposed Plans & Elevations	013 REV A	14.01.2025
Elevation & Floor plan	Plot 5 Proposed Plans & Elevations	014 REV A	14.01.2025
Site plan	Landscape Masterplan	LLD2823-LAN-DWG-010 Rev 01	14.01.2025
Supporting Docs	Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Strategy by JUDWAA dated September 2023	NONE	14.01.2025
Details plan	Exceedance Flow Plan	PL-SK-103	14.01.2025
Supporting Docs	Archaeological Desk Based Assessment by HCUK Group dated January 2023	8484A	14.01.2025
Supporting Docs	Hazel Dormouse Mitigation & Compensation Strategy by aLyne Ecology dated 14.03.2024	NONE 001	14.01.2025
Supporting Docs	Landscape Design Strategy by Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology dated 01.09.2023	LLD2823-LAN-REP-00 Rev 00	14.01.2025
Supporting Docs	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report by aLyne Ecology dated 26.01.2023	NONE 001	14.01.2025
Supporting Docs	Ground Level Tree Assessment Report by aLyne Ecology dated 12.03.2024	NONE 001	14.01.2025
Supporting Docs	Sustainability and Energy Statement by bluesky Unlimited dated 11 September 2023	NONE	14.01.2025
Supporting Docs	Transport Note by Magna Transport Planning Ltd dated July 2023	22/118/24A	14.01.2025
Supporting Docs	Water Offsetting Scheme by Nicholls Water Credits dated 30.08.2024	NONE	14.01.2025

Supporting Docs	Tree Survey & Report by Jonathan Rodwell dated January 2023	B/0413/22	14.01.2025
Supporting Docs	Water Neutrality Statement by bluesky Unlimited dated 24 November 2024	NONE	14.01.2025

DELEGATED

Case Officer sign/initial Tamara Dale Date: 01.08.2025

Authorising Officer sign/initial Guy Everest Date: 04.08.2025