

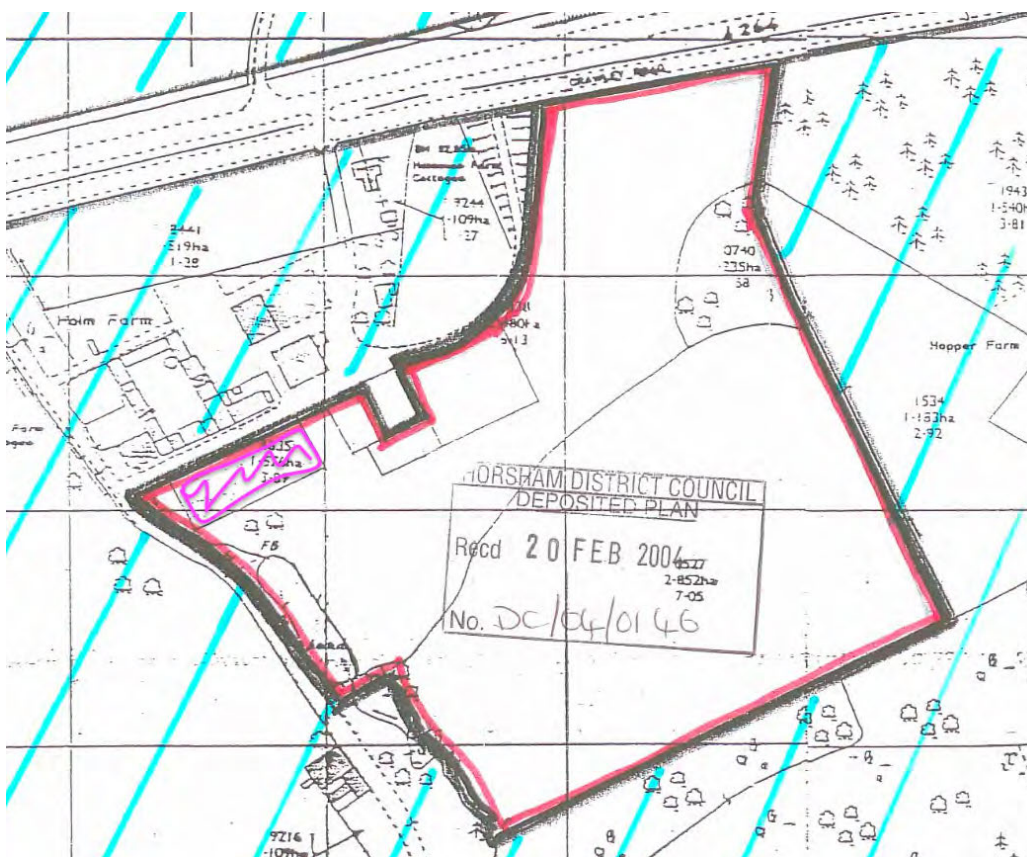
# Design and Access Statement

## Introduction

This application seeks to reconfirm the carrying out of activities consented by DC/04/0146 inside a replacement agricultural building on the same footprint consented by DC/22/2184.

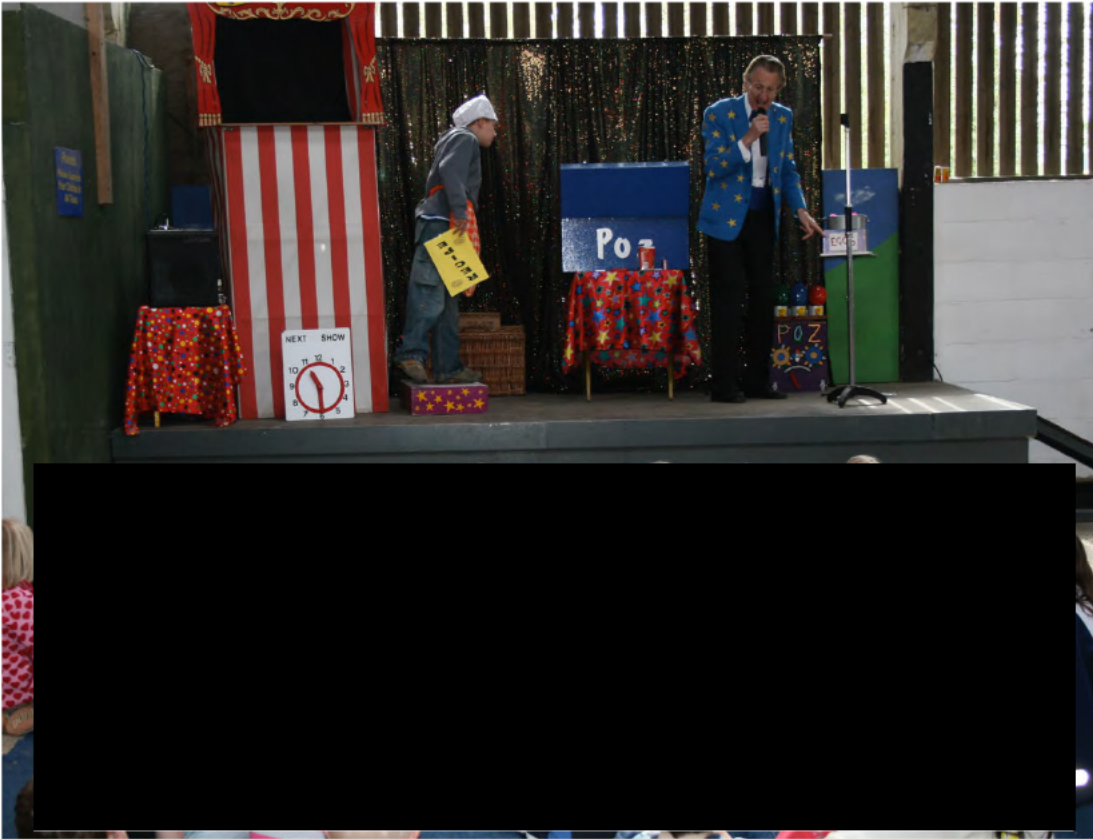
## History

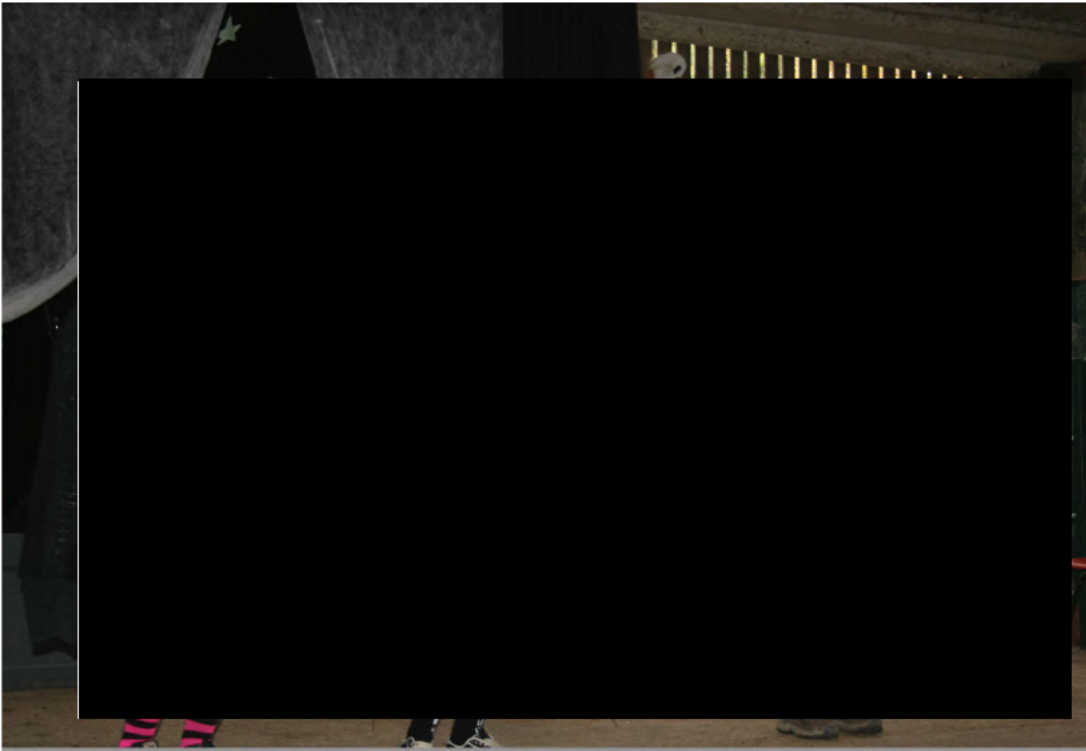
In 2004 DC/04/0146 consented the “continued use of farm buildings and land to open educational farm [...]” for the land defined within the red line in the below map:

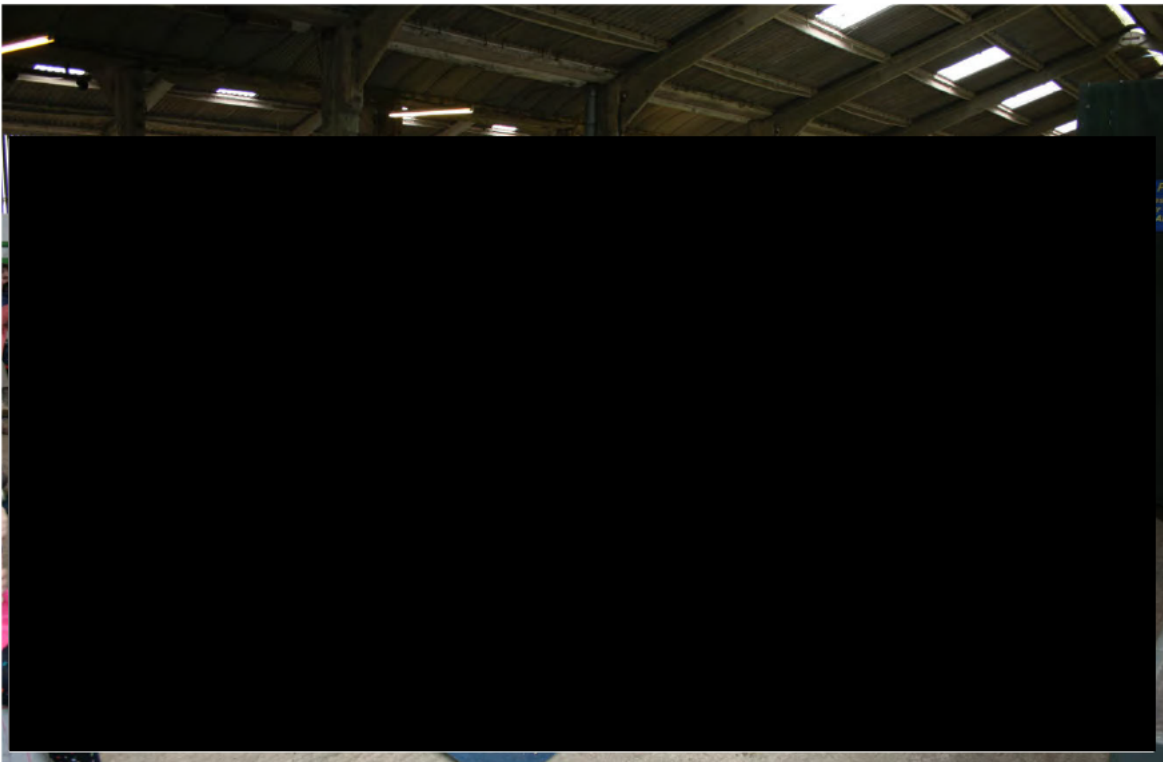
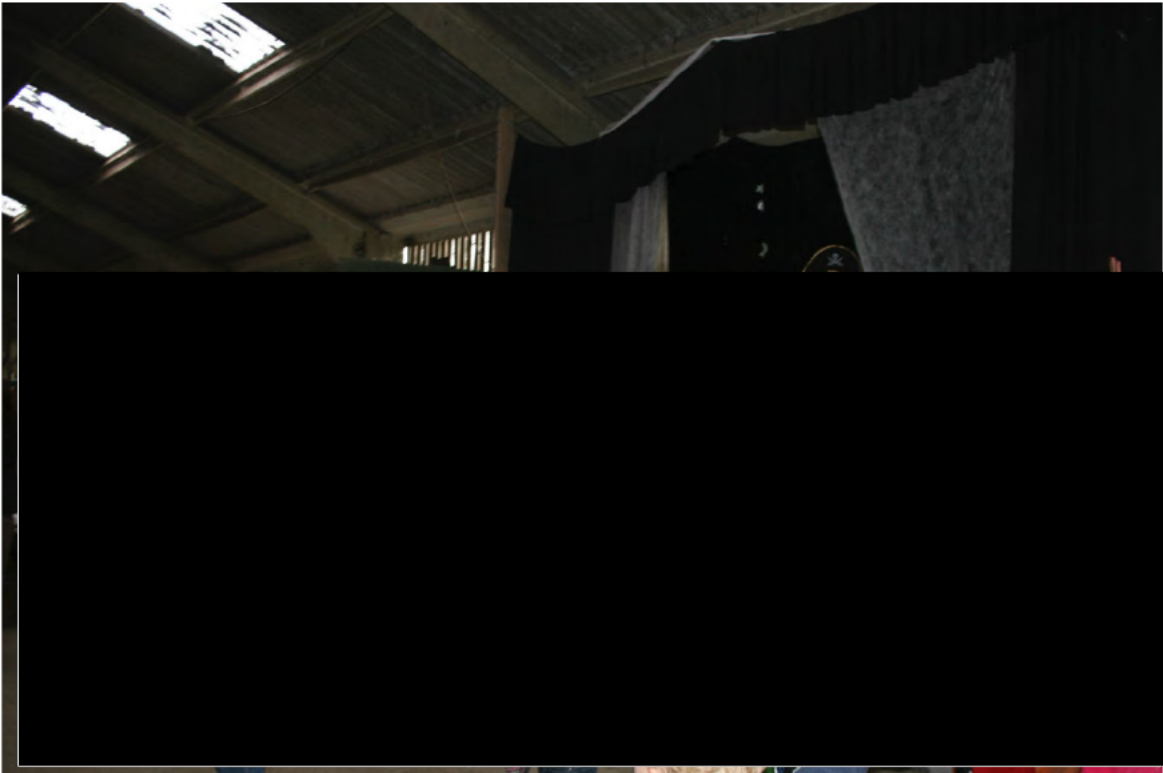


The concrete and asbestos agricultural building outlined and hatched in magenta inside the red line, was our animal barn which housed livestock since 1982.

From the period 1995 to 2013 this building was also a key part of the open educational farm enterprise known as Holmbush Farm World. As well as housing animals it hosted a mini toy tractor area, the Hogspudding castle adventure playground, a stage for theatre shows & performances for children, and a small office for our staff:







However by 2022 the 40 year-old building was no longer fit for purpose - the concrete structure was spalling badly and the asbestos roof was no longer waterproof and beyond economic repair (see photos):



Planning application DC/22/2184 was submitted in 2022 to replace the barn with another building on exactly the same footprint with the same use.

The application questionnaire made clear there was to be no change of use:

Please describe details of the proposed development or works including any change of use

The proposal is for a rebuild of the farm's livestock building, which is a 1980's precast concrete building now in an advanced state of decay with extensive water ingress. The replacement building will be a hot-dipped galvanized steel structure erected on the same location.

There will be no change of use.

However, when the application was consented in 2023 it included a restrictive condition (4) which stated that:

*The building hereby permitted shall be used solely for agricultural purposes as defined in Section 336(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.*

#### Condition 4

We believe the inclusion of condition 4 of DC/22/2184 was unreasonable because the new building falls inside the red line of the extant planning permission DC/04/0146 which had already consented the use of agricultural buildings inside the red line for activities related to an open educational farm.

Despite Holmbush Farm World scaling back in 2013, it was confirmed on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2025 by the council during post-application advice PE/25/0110 that the permission DC/04/0146 was still extant:

*[...] myself and other officers have attended the site in recent years and dealt with planning applications that clearly demonstrates that the agricultural operations are still on going. Furthermore, no other planning application has been granted or implemented which would supersede the 2004 permission. As such, the use could continue to operate as per the 2004 application (DC/04/0146)*

#### Proposal

This application seeks re-confirmation of the ability to continue to use the whole building as part of an open educational farm, and for the addition of a mezzanine floor along 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the building. The mezzanine will be for the purposes of:

- a) Small farm office with printer, photocopier, hot-desk PC.
- b) Farm meeting room for workshops with agronomists, staff training, industry trade groups.
- c) Spaces for education and entertainment associated with the open educational farm consented under DC/04/0146

- d) Spaces for education and collaboration associated with the promotion of sustainable energy technology on farms, farm-scale microgrids, farm-scale battery energy storage, and the like (the building itself having an industry-leading built-in solar PV roof – no other roof underneath).

You will note the last point d) - a request to use the space to promote sustainable energy technologies. The new building in fact has a built-in solar photovoltaic roof, which means that there is no roof under the solar panels – the solar panels are the roof.

The barn should generate over 200kW of power on a sunny summer's day and we will be using this energy amongst other things to power the ultra-rapid electric vehicle chargers we are installing in our car park for the public to use, and for which the farm received a grant from Horsham District Council.

Almost all ultra-rapid chargers at motorway service stations draw energy from the grid rather than generating it onsite, so we believe we are creating a ground breaking showcase for how farm and small industrial microgrids can work in the future. We are a working example of how otherwise-unused roof space can generate large quantities of useful green electricity for the benefit of the public, also de-stressing the national grid.

We now have a fully functional showcase to share with others and the classroom spaces on the mezzanine of the solar-clad barn are the perfect place to take visitors and demonstrate this concept in action and to discuss related themes.

In the last three months we have had visits to the barn from several other large estates looking to do similar things, a delegation from China's largest LTO battery manufacturer GREE regarding battery storage, and also John Milne - Horsham's MP, who is very active in parliament around the topic of battery energy storage.

Following Keir Starmer's visit to Beijing last week, we have had a request this week from the Department for Business and Trade to bring another Chinese delegation down next month.

Therefore, it would seem appropriate that we are also able to host these kinds of visitors, a use which arguably isn't even distinct from the open educational farm in the first place, but rather an expansion of it.