

MME PLANNING SERVICES

Permission in Principle (PIP) application for the
demolition of existing buildings and erection of up to 4no
dwellings.

at

Barnards Nursery, Rock Road, Washington, West
Sussex, RH20 3BH

Planning Statement

Ref: P-064

September 2025

Version 1



Figure 1: Site Location

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 We are instructed to prepare and submit Permission in Principle (PIP) application for the demolition of all buildings and erection of up to 4no dwellings at Barnards Nursery, Rock Road, Washington, West Sussex, RH20 3BH.
- 1.2 While it is noted that the application is submitted as a PIP, where matters in relation to location of the site, the type of land use proposed and the amount of development are the only considerations, this statement sets out the proposed scheme with regard to the following aspects: the planning history of the site, the development proposals, the relevant planning policy, the planning merits of the scheme and how the proposals comply with the Council's policies.

2. Site, Surroundings and Background

- 2.1 The application site is located to the eastern side of Rock Road, Washington, outside of any defined built-up area boundaries. As such, the site is designated as countryside in policy terms. Notwithstanding the above, the site is located approximately 450m away from the defined built-up boundary of Storrington and Sullington which is considered to be a Small Town / Larger Village, as per the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF).

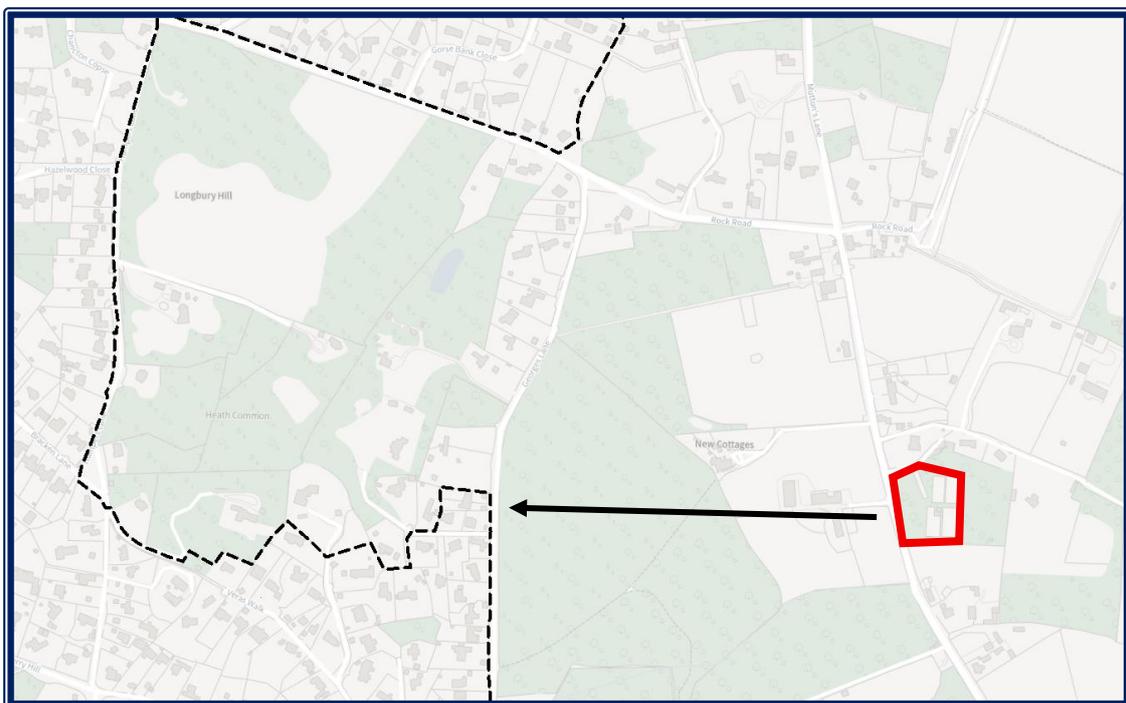


Figure 3: Plan showing relationship of the site with the Built-Up Area Boundary (dashed black line).

2.2 Settlements such as Storrington and Sullington have a good range of services and facilities, strong community networks and local employment provision, together with reasonable rail and / or bus services. This type of settlement acts as hubs for smaller villages to meet their daily needs, but also have some reliance on larger settlements / each other to meet some of their requirements.

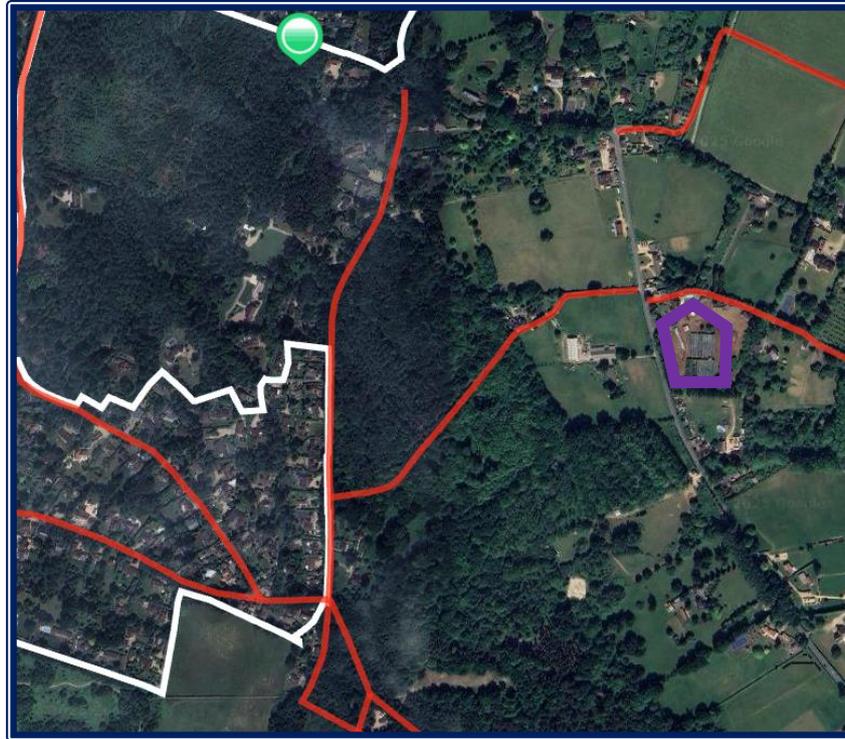


Figure 4: Map showing relationship of the site (in purple) with existing Public Rights of Way (PROW) (red lines) connecting the site directly into the Built-Up Area Boundary (white line / area).

2.3 Although designated as a countryside location, the site is surrounded by residential development, with existing dwellings located to the north, south and east, as well as to the west on the opposite side of Rock Road. As such, the site is not considered to be in an isolated rural location. In addition, as detailed within Figure 4 above, there is a Public Right of Way (PROW) which connects the site directly to the built-up area of Storrington and Sullington to the west. Given the location of the site and its setting in relation to the built-up area, it is therefore considered that the site is in a sustainable location.

2.4 Access currently exists to the site via a private access from Rock Road at the northwest corner of the site. The application red line area, as indicated on the submitted plans, extends to approximately 0.49ha. The existing site comprises a number of glasshouses / buildings.

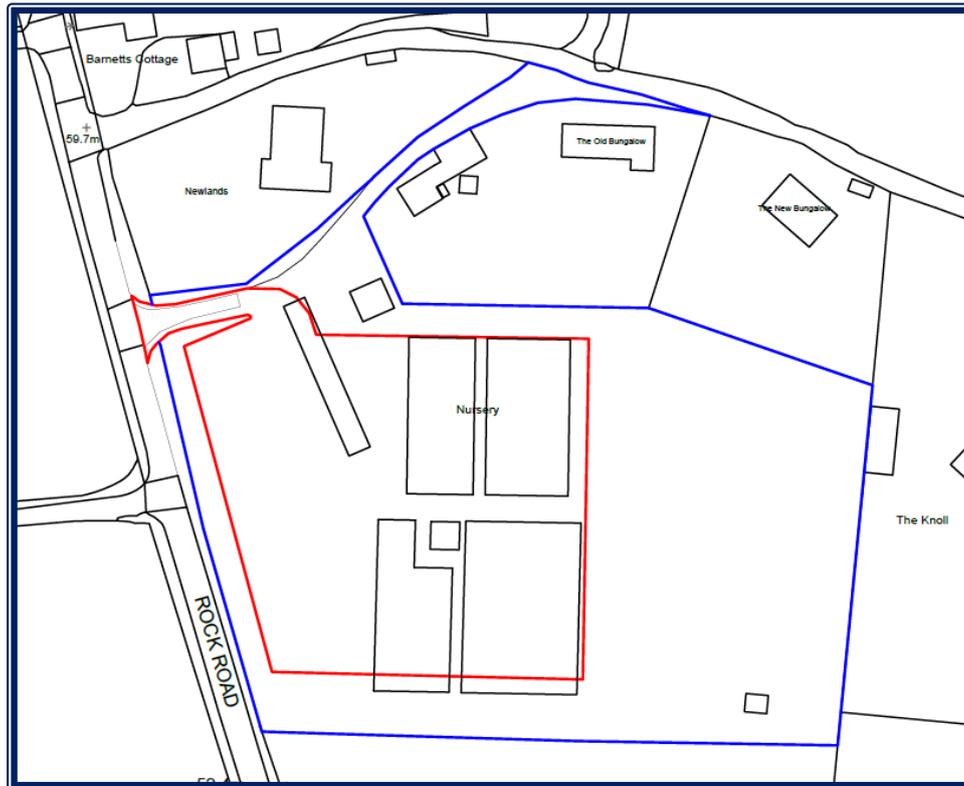


Figure 5: Site Location Plan

3. Planning History

3.1 Planning Application – Ref: DC/20/0113 – Installation of timber clad barn doors and timber cladding externally, replacement of existing roofing sheets and installation of new foundations to existing building(s) with other internal alterations – Decision: Refusal, 31/03/2020.

Planning Application – Ref: DC/20/0883 – Restoration of glasshouses – Decision: Approval, 10/07/2020.

Prior Notification – Ref: DC/20/1363 – Prior Notification for Change of Use of Agricultural Building to residential (C3) to form 4no dwellings – Decision: Deemed Consent, 24/09/2020, Appeal: Allowed.

Prior Notification – Ref: DC/21/1519 – Prior Notification for Change of Use of Agricultural Building to residential (C3) to form 4no dwellings – Decision: Prior Approval Required and Refused, 17/08/2021

Reg 77 / HRA Application – Ref: HRA/21/0004 – Application under Regulation 77 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 in respect of Prior Approval consent DC/20/1363 – Decision: Refused, 01/06/2022.

4. Proposals

- 4.1 As detailed above, PIP is sought for the demolition of the existing buildings on site and erection of up to 4no dwellings. The proposals, while full and final specifications would be reserved for the technical details stage, would consist of a combination of single and two-storey dwellings, which is considered to be in keeping with the character of the area, which consists of a mixture of dwellings.
- 4.2 As evident from the submitted indicative plans, the proposed use of the site for residential purposes is considered to be acceptable given existing residential properties to the south, north and east, and to the west of the site on the opposite side of Rock Road. The location of the site is therefore considered to be appropriate for housing. The indicative site plans provided show how up to 4no dwellings would be comfortably accommodated on the site.

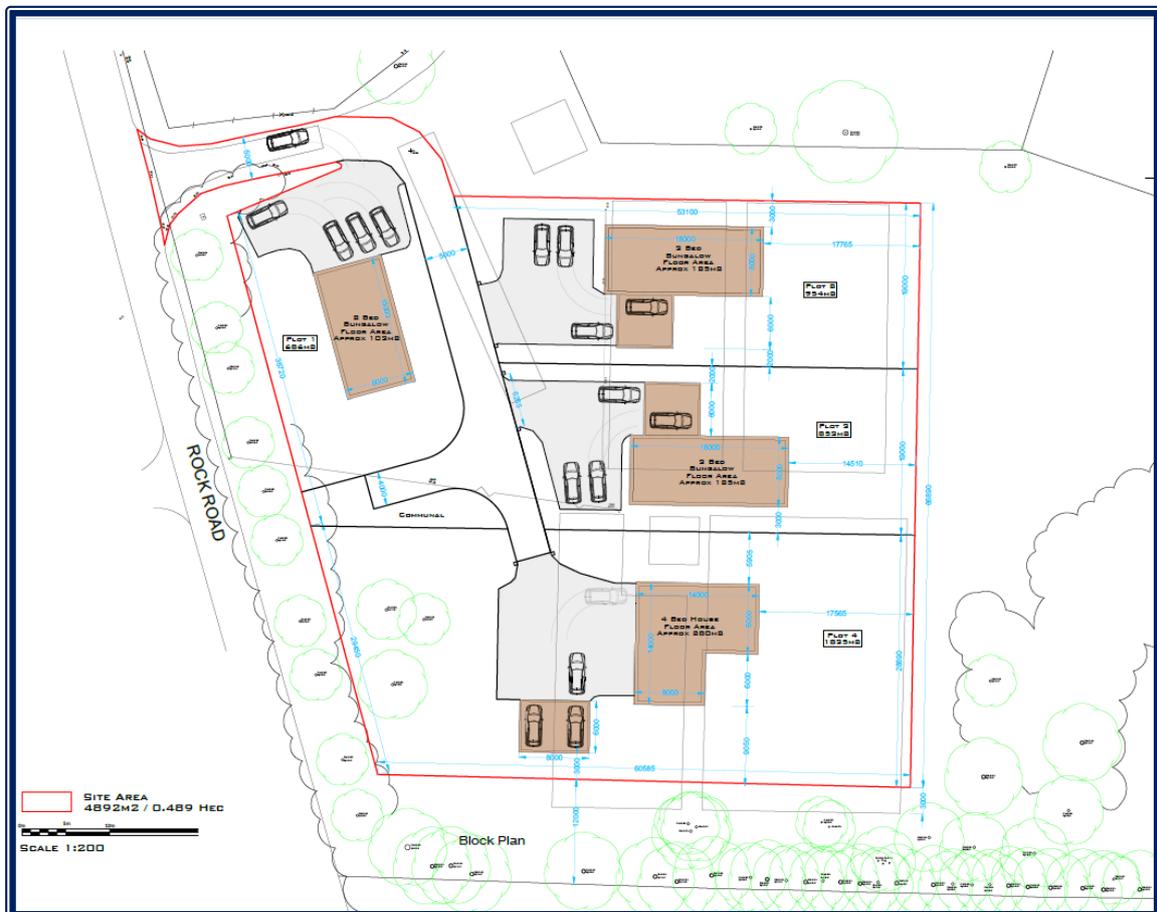


Figure 3: Indicative Site Plan

5. Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024) and National Guidance

- 5.1 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework for the preparation of local plans for housing and other development. The NPPF should be read as a whole.
- 5.2 Running throughout the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Sustainable development is achieved through three main objectives which are – economic, social and environmental.
- 5.3 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that for decision-taking, this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay. 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 policies of the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provide a clear reason for refusing the development proposed, or, any adverse impact of doing so would 'significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits' when assessed against the policies of the NPPF when taken as a whole (NPPF paragraph 11 d).

Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) (2015)

- 5.4 Paragraph 34 of the NPPF requires that all development plans complete their reviews no later than 5 years from their adoption. Horsham District Council has submitted its new local plan for examination, however at this stage, the emerging policies carry only limited weight in decision making.
- 5.5 A Local Development Scheme (LDS) was published in February 2025 by the Council. The LDS sets out the production timetable for the New Local Plan anticipated to be adopted April 2026. Notwithstanding the above, as the HDPF is now over 5 years old, the most important policies for determining this application are now considered to be 'out of date'. This position is further highlighted given that the Horsham District Local Plan examination hearing meetings scheduled for January 2025 were cancelled by the appointed Inspector, and in April 2025 advised that the Plan be withdrawn due to concerns about its legal compliance.

5.6 The Council is currently unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites. 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, with Policies 2, 4, 15 and 26 now carrying limited weight in decision making.

5.7 While considered to be out of date, the main HDPF policies relevant to this application are as follows:

- 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 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 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

Storrington, Sullington & Washington Neighbourhood Plan (2019)

5.8 While also considered to be out of date, the Neighbourhood Plan policies relevant to this application are as follows:

- Policy 1: A Spatial Plan for the Parishes
- Policy 8: Countryside Protection
- Policy 14: Design
- Policy 17: Traffic & Transport

Planning Advice Note(s) (PAN)

5.9 Relevant PAN's to this application are as follows:

- Facilitating Appropriate Development
- Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

6. Planning Considerations

Location of Site

- 6.1 The HDPF spatial development strategy as contained within policies 2, 3 & 4 directs development to sites within built-up area boundaries, encourage the effective use of brownfield land, and aim to manage development around the edges of existing settlements in order to protect the rural character and landscape.
- 6.2 The site is located outside of the built-up area and is not allocated within Horsham's adopted development plan (comprising in this case the HDPF and the Storrington, Sullington and Washington Neighbourhood Plan), noting again that these are now out of date. As a result, residential development in this location would conflict with the requirements of Policies 2 and 4 (Settlement Expansion) of the HDPF. The site is also not in an isolated location therefore the opportunities afforded by Paragraph 84 of the NPPF do not apply in this instance.
- 6.3 Notwithstanding the above, the Council is currently unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, with the latest Authority Monitoring Report (April 2025) detailing a supply of only 1 year. Therefore, the tilted balance contained in paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF is engaged.
- 6.4 While the Council has submitted the New Horsham District Local Plan for examination, as detailed above, the appointed Inspector has advised that the new Local Plan be withdrawn (April 2025) and the process is re-started. As such, the weight given to the above policies and the New Local Plan is therefore limited to none at this stage.
- 6.5 In addition, the Council has failed its most recent Housing Delivery Test, with the December 2024 test results demonstrating that the Council has only delivered 62% of its housing target in the preceding three years. This itself also triggers the presumption in favour of sustainable development under Paragraph 11(d). This is irrespective of a Council's five-year housing land supply position.

- 6.6 It is noted that limited weight should be attached to the conflict with Policy 26 in respect of development outside of built-up area boundaries given that the deficient housing supply position dictates that these boundaries are out of date. As such, the fact that a site may lie outside of the built-up area boundary does not, in and of itself, constitute a reason to refuse the application.
- 6.7 Further to the above, Paragraph 14 of the NPPF notes that “in situations where the presumption (at paragraph 11(d)) 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”.
- 6.8 The Storrington, Sullington and Washington Neighbourhood Plan is now more than five years old. Therefore, Paragraph 14 of the NPPF does not apply and the presumption in favour of sustainable development would not be affected in this instance.
- 6.9 In addition to the above, while considered to be out of date, there is support for the development within the Storrington, Sullington and Washington Neighbourhood Plan. Policy 4 of the Neighbourhood Plan states that -
- “Development proposals outside the Built up Area of Washington will be supported on any allocated site(s) and within the area within and around Montpelier Gardens / Luckings Yard as shown on Inset Plan 4 or if it results in the reuse of previously developed land on land outside the South Downs National Park provided the proposal accords with other policies in the Development Plan”.
- 6.10 The site is located approximately 0.5km away from Montpelier Gardens / Luckings Yard and is therefore considered to comply with this policy. While it is acknowledged that the site is not technically designated as previously developed land, the site contains historic structures / buildings. As detailed above, the site is surrounded by residential development on all sides. Given this character and the context, the development is therefore considered to represent infill development on land which has existing structures / building in place.

- 6.11 As set out above, the site is located in close proximity to the built-up area of Storrington and Sullington, with convenient access to essential facilities and public transport links. The site is linked directly to the built-up area via a PROW to the west, allowing for convenient access on foot which would take approximately 10 minutes. Rock Road also connects directly to the built-up area to the north of the site, allowing for opportunities for cycling, for example. It is also highlighted that there is a PROW which adjoins the site and runs to the west into Spring Gardens Nursery where there is a farm shop and café present, which would also provide day-to-day essentials for future occupiers of the dwellings.
- 6.12 It is therefore considered that there is opportunity for future residents of the indicative proposals to utilise the facilities in Storrington and Sullington and surrounding areas by alternative methods of transport and would not be unduly reliant on private vehicles for day-to-day needs. In terms of its location, the site is therefore considered to be sustainable.
- 6.13 It is noted that there are relatively recent examples within the Parish of Washington which granted permission for new build residential dwellings outside of a defined built-up area boundary and in close proximity to the application site. These include application reference DC/21/1689, granted in May 2024 and application reference DC/22/0867, granted in June 2024.
- 6.14 In addition, it is noted that there are a number of recent decisions which have granted residential developments outside of the defined built-up areas elsewhere within the District where the context and scenarios were very similar. Examples include reference numbers DC/22/0495 and DC/22/2250 which each sought permission for 1no dwelling and were granted at appeal in August 2023 and March 2024 respectively, and DC/23/2278 which sought permission for 8no dwellings and was granted by the Council's planning committee in April 2024.
- 6.15 The Inspector within the appeal decision in relation to application reference DC/22/0495 states "I have attached limited weight to the conflict with HDPF Policy 26 in respect of development outside of built-up area boundaries. The housing shortfall dictates that those boundaries are out of date. I consider that some weight can still be given to the strategy set out within HDPF Policy 2, in terms of the general locations of new development, but the fact that a site may lie outside of the built-up area boundary does not, in and of itself, constitute a reason to refuse planning permission".

- 6.16 While it is acknowledged that every application and site context should be considered on its own merits, taking into account the current situation of the Council in terms of its 5-year housing supply and the above examples, there is an expectation that a consistent approach is applied to decision making.
- 6.17 It is highlighted that these permitted dwellings were located a significant distance away from any defined built-up areas. The above examples clearly show, that notwithstanding the distances to the respective settlement boundaries, given the lack of 5-year housing supply, the tilted balance is engaged and the principle of residential development in this location is acceptable.
- 6.18 Up to 4no additional dwellings would contribute significantly towards the much-needed supply of houses. Small sites can often be built out relatively quickly and there would be economic benefits arising from construction and spend in the local economy.
- 6.19 In summary, given the lack of a 5-year housing supply, the location of the site in close proximity to the built up area of Storrington and Sullington, and relevant recent examples of housing developments permitted outside of settlement boundaries, the location of the is considered to be acceptable for housing.

The type of land use proposed

- 6.20 As detailed above, the application proposes the use of the site for residential development. The proposed use of the site for residential purposes is also considered to be acceptable, given existing residential properties to all sides of the site, with the indicative proposals essentially representing infill residential development on a site which is already developed.
- 6.21 Policy 3 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) states that development will be permitted within towns and villages which have defined built-up areas. Any infilling will be required to demonstrate that it is of an appropriate nature and scale to maintain characteristics and function of the settlement, in accordance with the settlement hierarchy.
- 6.22 The direct surroundings of the site to the north, south, east and west, and the wider locality is characterised primarily by residential development. The site is well contained with extensive foliage to the boundaries, particularly to the east fronting onto Rock Road, where the proposed dwellings would be predominantly screened from public views.

- 6.23 Given the spatial context of the site, which sits within close proximity to a number of residential dwellings, it is considered that a residential use would be an appropriate use of the site. In addition, given the location of the site in very close proximity to the built-up area of Storrington and Sullington, it is considered that the site is appropriate for residential development.
- 6.24 The application site lies in close proximity to a built-up area, and there are existing residential properties surrounding the site, with the application seeking to develop the site for residential purposes. Such development and use is considered to be commensurate with the character and uses within the immediate and wider vicinity, and would therefore represent an appropriate form of development.

The amount of development

- 6.25 Policy 25 of the HDPF seeks to protect the natural environment and landscape character of the District, including the landform, 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. In addition, development will be supported where it maintains and enhances the Green Infrastructure Network.
- 6.26 Policies 32 and 33 of the HDPF require development to be of a high standard of design and layout. Development proposals 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.
- 6.27 The application site measures to an area of approximately 0.49 hectares. The wider surroundings are generally characterised by detached dwellings set within varying sized plots. While reserved for later consideration, the proposed dwellings would be of a mixture of single and two storeys in their design. This is considered to reflect the mixture in built form character within the vicinity and limit any perceived landscape harm, with the extensive soft landscaping enclosing the site to the east, ensuring that the indicative built form would not appear prominently from public vantage points. It is noted that the site is adjoined by a PROW, however any views of the site from this vantage point would not be harmful or unexpected in this context.

- 6.28 The indicative plans clearly show that the quantum of development would be appropriate, with the proposed dwellings comfortably accommodated within the site area. The indicative plans also show that the proposed dwellings would also be positioned in the approximate locations of existing built form on the site.
- 6.29 The indicative plans also indicate that sufficient space would be available for an appropriate build pattern, vehicular access, and gardens, and that existing landscape features such as trees within the site and to the boundaries, would be retained. The indicative proposals would also be acceptable in terms of impact on neighbouring amenity and demonstrate an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, ranging from 2no to 4no bedrooms.
- 6.30 It is considered that the application site could accommodate between up to 4no dwellings comfortably, with the site capable of providing an appropriate layout and configuration. As detailed above, there are a number of existing structures / buildings present on site. It is considered that the indicative proposals would not harm the landscape character or visual amenities of the locality.
- 6.31 Overall, the indicative proposals would represent appropriate development within this setting and would be in accordance with Policies 25, 32 and 33 of the HDPF.

Water Neutrality

- 6.32 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.
- 6.33 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.

- 6.34 The application is supported by a detailed Water Neutrality Statement which sets out through the use of efficient fixtures and fittings and rainwater harvesting using the roof areas of the proposed dwellings / buildings, that the proposed development would be water neutral. Full details are set out within the Water Neutrality Statement and are not repeated in this statement to avoid duplication of the information.
- 6.35 The grant of PIP would not therefore adversely affect the integrity of these sites or otherwise conflict with Policy 31 of the HDPF, NPPF paragraph 180 and the Council's obligations under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

7. Summary and Conclusion

- 7.1 Overall, given the position of the Council with regards to its 5-year housing land supply, the location of the site in close proximity to the built-up area and facilities, the uses within the immediate and wider vicinity, the appropriate quantum of development proposed and recent decisions relating to residential development outside of built-up areas, the proposal represents an appropriate form of development in this location.
- 7.2 It is considered that the application site could comfortably accommodate up to 4no dwellings. The indicative proposals would be acceptable in terms of design and impact on the setting, and would not appear prominently within this context given the residential nature of the surroundings, existing screening and the existing built form on site. The proposed development would also be water neutral, as evidenced within the submitted supporting information.
- 7.3 As such, while now considered to be out of date, the proposals would be in accordance with Policies 4, 25, 26, 31, 32 and 33 of the HDPF and therefore, the Local Planning Authority is respectfully asked to grant PIP accordingly.