



SOUTHWATER PARISH COUNCIL

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The Planning Inspectorate
Template Quay House
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24 June 2026

Dear Sirs

Planning appeal reference: 6009890

Local planning authority reference: DC/25/2133

Site: Beckley Stud, Reeds Lane, Southwater, West Sussex RH13 9DQ

Proposal: Erection of a storage building (retrospective)

Southwater Parish Council wishes to make representations in respect of the appeal against Horsham District Council's refusal of planning application DC/25/2133.

The Parish Council maintains its objection to the proposal and respectfully requests that the appeal is dismissed.

The application seeks permission for the erection of a new storage building and associated hardstanding, together with the retention of existing installed hardstanding. The Council's officer report identifies that the proposed building would measure approximately 45 metres by 35 metres, with an eaves height of 5.5 metres and a ridge height of 8.47 metres. This would amount to a very substantial new commercial storage building within the countryside.

The Parish Council supports Horsham District Council's decision to refuse planning permission and agrees with the reasons for refusal. In particular, the Parish Council agrees that:

1. The development would not be essential to its countryside location and, by reason of its scale and design, would be detrimental to the rural landscape character and tranquillity of the site and surrounding area, including the amenity of nearby Public Rights of Way, and would fail to result in substantial environmental improvements. The development is therefore contrary to Policies 10, 25, 26, 32 and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework 2015 and Policies SNP16 and SNP21 of the Southwater Neighbourhood Plan.

2. It has not been demonstrated that the scale of the development would not lead to unacceptable harm to neighbouring amenity by way of the increased level of activity on the site and related vehicular movements. The development is therefore contrary to Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework 2015 and Policy SNP16 of the Southwater Neighbourhood Plan.

The Parish Council considers that these reasons remain sound and should be upheld.

The appellant's Supporting Statement reinforces, rather than overcomes, the Parish Council's concerns.

The Parish Council has reviewed the appellant's Business Appraisal and Justification Statement dated 18 May 2026. The Parish Council does not consider that this document overcomes the reasons for refusal. On the contrary, the statement confirms the Parish Council's central concern: the appeal proposal is not a modest rural or equestrian facility, but a substantial intensification of commercial storage, warehousing, dispatch, and logistics activity in the countryside.

The appellant states that Beckley Stud functions as the *"central operational and logistical hub for the UK business,"* including stock dispatched to sub-distribution centres, direct-to-consumer online orders, and approximately 50% of European product distribution. The statement also records that, during April 2026, 2,983 orders and 52,500 product units were dispatched from Beckley Stud, with 44,401 inbound product units delivered to the site. These figures demonstrate the scale and intensity of the distribution operation now taking place from this rural site.

That evidence directly conflicts with the basis on which the development is said to be acceptable under countryside policies. HDPF Policy 26 requires proposals outside built-up area boundaries to be essential to their countryside location, of a scale appropriate to countryside character and location, and not to lead individually or cumulatively to a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside. The appellant's own figures show a significant logistics and distribution operation, with substantial inbound and outbound product movements and future growth aspirations. This is not a low-key countryside use.

The Supporting Statement also confirms that the proposal is intended to accommodate further business growth. It states that the existing facilities are no longer sufficient, that the business seeks to maintain greater stock levels, that the proposal would allow for future growth, and that the acquisition of the Horse First brand has consolidated additional product lines to Beckley Stud, increasing storage requirements and distribution activity. These statements demonstrate that the proposed building would not merely rationalise the existing rural use; it would facilitate further commercial expansion and further intensified activity at the site.

The Parish Council considers this to be contrary to HDPF Policies 25 and 26. Policy 25 seeks to protect the natural environment and landscape character of the district against inappropriate development, including the cumulative impact on landscape, settlement character, and the natural environment. Policy 26 seeks to protect the rural character and undeveloped nature of the countryside. A substantial warehouse and

dispatch building serving national and international markets is not consistent with these objectives.

Conflict with Southwater Neighbourhood Plan

The appellant's Supporting Statement refers to Southwater Neighbourhood Plan policies and suggests that the appeal proposal is supported by policies relating to the local economy. The Parish Council does not agree.

Southwater Neighbourhood Plan SNP21 supports employment development in identified Parish Employment Areas, particularly Southwater Business Park. Outside Key Employment Areas and Parish Employment Areas, SNP21 supports only small-scale business units where they are in accordance with the development plan. Beckley Stud is not within Southwater Business Park or an identified Parish Employment Area. The proposed 45m x 35m storage building is not a small-scale business unit. It is a substantial commercial storage and logistics building in the countryside.

The appellant's reliance on business growth and employment therefore does not make the proposal acceptable under SNP21. The policy does not provide blanket support for the expansion of commercial warehousing in rural locations. Any such proposal must still comply with the wider development plan, including countryside protection, landscape, design, amenity, and transport policies. For the reasons set out by Horsham District Council and the Parish Council, the proposal does not do so.

The Supporting Statement also conflicts with SNP1. SNP1 requires development proposals, individually and cumulatively, to make a positive contribution to the Plan's core principles and to grow beyond built-up area boundaries only in accordance with the development plan. The appeal proposal is outside the built-up area boundary and would materially increase commercial activity in the countryside. It would not maintain the rural-urban relationship which the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to protect.

The development is also in conflict with SNP16. SNP16 requires high quality design which responds to its context, avoids unacceptable impacts on residential amenity, and does not introduce unacceptable light spillage or glare. The proposed building, because of its size, massing, commercial appearance, hardstanding and associated operational activity, would not respond positively to the semi-rural character of this part of Southwater. The appellant's assertion that the building has been carefully designed does not overcome the fundamental issue that a building of this scale and function is unsuitable in this countryside location.

The countryside location

The Parish Council considers that the appellant has not demonstrated an essential countryside need.

The Supporting Statement repeatedly relies on the company's identity, ethos, customer perception, and brand association with Beckley Stud. Those considerations may be commercially desirable to the business, but they do not amount to an essential planning need for a large storage and distribution building in the countryside.

The statement explains that products are manufactured elsewhere by UK manufacturers, that the company has an existing Netherlands base, and that the Netherlands base has sufficient capacity to fulfil UK orders and absorb operational activities currently undertaken at Beckley Stud. The Parish Council considers this highly relevant. It demonstrates that the proposed logistics and storage operation is not inherently dependent on the countryside location at Beckley Stud. The appellant's position is, in effect, that Beckley Stud is preferable for brand, identity, operational and commercial reasons. That is not the same as being essential to the countryside.

The Parish Council accepts that Equine America is an equestrian-related business. However, the storage, warehousing, picking, packing, and dispatching products to national and international markets is a commercial logistics function. Such activity does not require a rural site. It could take place in an industrial estate, business park, or other appropriately designated employment location, where the local road network, built form and planning policy context are better suited to such activity.

Loss of equestrian character

The appellant's Supporting Statement also confirms the Parish Council's concern that the equestrian character of the site has materially diminished.

The statement confirms that breeding activities have been relocated to a separate property in Forest Green, Surrey, that professional riders now undertake production and training off-site from an earlier stage, and that the existing stables and sand school are no longer essential to the operation. It further confirms that the building subject to the appeal would be located on the former sand school.

This is significant. The previous appeal decision treated the earlier storage building as related to wider equestrian use at Beckley Stud. The present proposal is materially different. The appellant now confirms that key equestrian facilities are no longer essential to the operation and that the site's function is increasingly centred on product storage, distribution, office, marketing, and customer engagement activity.

The Parish Council considers that this supports Horsham District Council's conclusion that the proposal would change the balance of uses across the site. Rather than being an equestrian-led rural facility, Beckley Stud would be increasingly dominated by non-equestrian commercial storage and distribution activity. That is precisely the harm identified in the Council's refusal reasons.

Previous appeal decision and restrictive conditions

The Parish Council accepts that there has been a previous appeal decision relating to Beckley Stud. However, that decision should not be treated as establishing a general principle that further commercial storage and distribution buildings are acceptable on the site.

The previous appeal related to a substantially smaller storage building. The Horsham District Council's officer reports that the earlier building was approximately 560 sqm. By contrast, the current proposal would have a footprint of around 1,575 sqm. The present proposal is therefore on a materially different scale.

The previous appeal decision was also subject to a range of restrictive conditions. These included:

- controls limiting the approved building to the storage and distribution of equine-related products only;
- limiting employee numbers across the appeal site to no more than 12 employees in connection with the equestrian use;
- requiring details of surface water disposal;
- requiring packing and unpacking to take place only inside the building;
- prohibiting retail sales;
- preventing outdoor storage of plant, machinery, produce, crates, packing materials or waste;
- limiting lorry deliveries and collections;
- prohibiting articulated vehicle deliveries;
- controlling operating hours; and
- restricting external lighting.

Those conditions demonstrate that the previous Inspector recognised the sensitivity of this rural location and the need to strictly control the impacts associated with commercial activity at the site. The current appeal proposal would materially intensify that activity and would undermine the carefully controlled basis on which the previous appeal was allowed.

The appellant's own Supporting Statement refers to approximately 20 people employed within Horsham District. This exceeds the 12-employee limitation imposed by the previous appeal decision. The Parish Council considers this further evidence that the current operation has already moved beyond the limited scale previously considered acceptable and that the appeal proposal would further intensify commercial activity in a sensitive rural location.

The previous appeal decision supports, rather than weakens, the case for dismissal of the present appeal. It shows that any commercial use at Beckley Stud must be carefully limited and controlled. The present proposal would exceed the scale and intensity of the development previously considered and would change the balance of uses across the site.

Landscape character

The Parish Council agrees with the Council's conclusion that the development would be harmful to the rural landscape character and tranquility of the site and surrounding area.

The building would be large, utilitarian, and commercial in character. It would be visible from surrounding lanes and nearby Public Rights of Way, particularly during winter months when deciduous vegetation provides less screening. The Council's Landscape Architect identified concerns arising from the scale of the proposal and the incremental change already experienced at the site.

The development would be located within a rural landscape characterised by wooded ridges, ghylls, hedgerows, pasture fields, dispersed settlement, and rural lanes. The proposal would not conserve the strongly rural and unspoilt character of this area. Instead, it would contribute to the incremental urbanisation and commercialisation of a countryside site.

The proposed building would dominate the existing buildings at Beckley Stud, which are more reflective of a rural equestrian enterprise. Its scale and appearance would erode the rural character of the site and would introduce a form of development more akin to a commercial storage or logistics building than a building genuinely required for rural or equestrian purposes.

The Parish Council also remains concerned about the extent of hardstanding. The officer report notes that the hardstanding covers a substantial area and is subject to enforcement action requiring its removal, together with the storage containers sited above it. The retention of this hardstanding would further consolidate commercial activity and would facilitate additional outdoor storage or operational activity, with consequential harm to landscape character and visual amenity.

Traffic generation

The Parish Council remains concerned that the proposed development would increase traffic movements and general commercial activity on Reeds Lane and the surrounding rural lane network.

The appellant has submitted a Transport Statement with the appeal documentation. However, the Parish Council considers that this document does not adequately assess the appeal proposal now before the Inspector. The Transport Statement is dated June 2022 and was prepared in connection with the earlier proposal for the retention of an existing green steel-clad building for storage and distribution use by Equine America UK. It expressly assessed a proposed B8 storage and distribution building of approximately 540 sqm. By contrast, the current appeal proposal relates to a substantially larger new storage building of approximately 1,575 sqm, together with associated hardstanding and the retention of existing installed hardstanding.

The Transport Statement therefore appears to assess a materially different and much smaller development. Its conclusions should consequently be given limited weight in the determination of this appeal.

The Transport Statement also relies on assumptions that are inconsistent with the appellant's current case. It states that the land-use change would not result in any additional staff working on site and that the existing informal parking arrangements for 7 staff would be appropriate. It also states that daily vehicle trips are unlikely to change because the levels of on-site staff are not due to increase. However, the appellant's current Supporting Statement refers to approximately 20 people employed within Horsham District and presents the site as the central operational and logistical hub for the UK business, including substantial inbound and outbound product movements. The current proposal would therefore plainly involve a greater scale and intensity of activity than that assessed in the 2022 Transport Statement.

The Parish Council considers this inconsistency significant. The previous appeal decision imposed a condition limiting employee numbers across the appeal site to no more than 12 employees in connection with the equestrian use. The appellant's current evidence suggests that the operation has already moved beyond that previously controlled level. The current proposal would further intensify activity and would undermine the carefully restricted basis on which the earlier appeal was allowed.

The Transport Statement itself identifies constraints which reinforce the Parish Council's concerns. It describes Reeds Lane as a narrow single-track road subject to the national 60mph speed limit. It also confirms that the nearest bus stop is approximately 1.5km from the site access and that the nearest footway is located on Southwater Street, approximately 500m west of the site. These matters demonstrate that the site is poorly suited to an intensified commercial storage and distribution use and is not well located for sustainable travel by staff, visitors or service users.

The Transport Statement forecasts approximately 29 two-way daily vehicle trips for the smaller 540 sqm proposal and describes any increase in LGV trips as slight. The Parish Council considers that this assessment cannot reasonably be applied to the present proposal, which is almost three times the size of the building assessed in the Transport Statement and is expressly intended to support increased storage capacity, operational consolidation and future growth. The current proposal has not been supported by a robust, up-to-date, proposal-specific transport assessment which properly considers the current scale of the building, the level of employment, the volume and type of deliveries, the frequency of LGV and HGV movements, customer or visitor movements, staff travel, and cumulative impacts with other development and commercial activity at Beckley Stud.

This omission is especially important given the rural character of the highway network. Reeds Lane and the surrounding lanes are not equivalent to roads serving an industrial estate or business park. They are rural lanes forming part of the countryside setting of Southwater. Additional delivery, servicing and staff movements would harm the tranquillity, character and amenity of the area, particularly for nearby residents and users of local Public Rights of Way.

The Parish Council also considers that the Transport Statement's reliance on a lack of recorded personal injury collisions near the site does not address the wider planning harm. The issue is not limited to highway safety or capacity in the narrow technical sense. The Council's second reason for refusal concerns neighbouring amenity arising from increased activity and related vehicular movements. The Parish Council considers that increased commercial traffic, servicing, staff movements, loading, unloading and operational activity would result in unacceptable harm to the rural character of the area and to neighbouring amenity, even if the Local Highway Authority did not identify a severe highway capacity impact in relation to the earlier, smaller scheme.

The submitted Transport Statement also does not overcome the proposal's conflict with HDPF Policy 33, which requires development to avoid unacceptable harm to the amenity of occupiers and users of nearby property and land, and with Southwater Neighbourhood Plan SNP16, which requires development to respond positively to its context and avoid unacceptable impacts on residential amenity. Nor does it

demonstrate compliance with HDPF Policy 40, which seeks development that is appropriate in scale to existing transport infrastructure, located where there is a choice of transport modes, and able to minimise conflicts between traffic, cyclists and pedestrians.

The Parish Council therefore agrees with Horsham District Council's conclusion that it has not been demonstrated that the scale of the development would avoid unacceptable harm to neighbouring amenity by way of increased activity on the site and related vehicular movements. The Transport Statement does not provide a sound basis for allowing the appeal. Rather, its age, its relationship to a previous and much smaller proposal, and its inconsistent assumptions about staff numbers and activity reinforce the Parish Council's view that the current appeal proposal is unsuitable for this rural location.

Surface water drainage and SuDS

The Parish Council remains concerned that insufficient information has been provided in relation to surface water drainage.

The applicant has referred to a SuDS system to manage surface water, but the Parish Council has been unable to identify a complete drainage strategy sufficient to demonstrate how surface water would be managed for this development. The Lead Local Flood Authority also noted that it could not locate a drainage strategy on the planning portal.

Given the scale of the proposed building and the extent of hardstanding, surface water drainage is a fundamental matter. The development has the potential to alter surface water flows at the site. It should therefore be supported by a clear drainage strategy demonstrating the discharge hierarchy, runoff rates and volumes, water quality treatment, exceedance routing, maintenance arrangements, and long-term responsibility for the SuDS system.

The Parish Council does not consider that this matter should be left to condition in the circumstances of this appeal. The absence of a detailed drainage strategy adds to the Parish Council's concern that the proposal has not been properly assessed and that its environmental impacts have not been adequately addressed.

Cumulative and piecemeal development

The Parish Council is particularly concerned about the cumulative impact of development at Beckley Stud. The officer report identifies a piecemeal approach to development on the site, with multiple applications, different red line boundaries and separate controls. This raises legitimate concerns about incremental creep, the planning unit, and the cumulative impact on the countryside, neighbouring amenity, and the rural lane network.

The present proposal should not be viewed in isolation. It would form part of a wider pattern of commercial intensification at the site. The loss of the sand school, the proposed conversion of stables to offices, the retention of hardstanding and the erection of a large storage building would, in combination, move the site further away

from a rural equestrian enterprise and towards a commercial storage and logistics operation.

The appellant's own Supporting Statement confirms this direction of travel. It refers to the existing stable yard being subject to a pending planning application for conversion to office use, identifies the sand school as disused, and confirms that stables and the sand school are no longer essential to the current operational model. These matters reinforce the Council's conclusion that the site is no longer primarily equestrian-led and that the appeal proposal would further shift the balance towards commercial storage and distribution.

This cumulative change is harmful and contrary to the objectives of countryside protection policies in the Horsham District Planning Framework and the Southwater Neighbourhood Plan.

Planning conditions would not overcome the harm

The Parish Council does not consider that planning conditions could make the development acceptable.

The harm arises from the principle, scale, location, and cumulative impact of the development. Conditions cannot overcome the fact that the proposal would not be essential to its countryside location, would result in a substantial increase in built form and hardstanding, would erode rural character and tranquility, and would intensify commercial activity on a sensitive rural site.

The previous appeal decision demonstrates that strict controls were necessary even for a much smaller building. The current proposal would substantially exceed that scale and would increase the intensity of use. It would not be reasonable or effective to rely on further conditions to control the impacts of a development that is, in principle and by reason of its scale, inappropriate for this countryside location.

Conclusion

Southwater Parish Council respectfully requests that the Inspector dismisses the appeal.

The development would not be essential to its countryside location. It would be harmful to the rural landscape character and tranquility of the site and surrounding area, including the amenity of nearby Public Rights of Way. It would fail to deliver substantial environmental improvements, would result in overdevelopment of the site, would intensify commercial activity and vehicle movements, and would risk unacceptable harm to neighbouring amenities.

The appellant's own Supporting Statement reinforces these concerns. It describes Beckley Stud as the central operational and logistical hub for the UK business, handling substantial inbound and outbound product movements and supporting future growth. It also confirms that key equestrian activities have moved off-site, that the sand school and stables are no longer essential to the current operational model, and that the proposal would support further commercial expansion. These matters underline the

proposal's conflict with HDPF Policies 25, 26, 32 and 33 and Southwater Neighbourhood Plan Policies SNP1, SNP16 and SNP21.

The proposal is materially different from the earlier appeal scheme and should not benefit from the same reasoning. The earlier proposal was for a significantly smaller building and was subject to restrictive conditions controlling the use, employee numbers, deliveries, operating hours, and external activity. The current proposal would exceed those limits and would materially change the balance of use at Beckley Stud.

For these reasons, and for the reasons set out in Horsham District Council's decision and officer report, Southwater Parish Council asks that the appeal be dismissed and planning permission.

Yours faithfully

Southwater Parish Council

SOUTHWATER PARISH COUNCIL



ARMED FORCES MAIL
17 JUL 2026

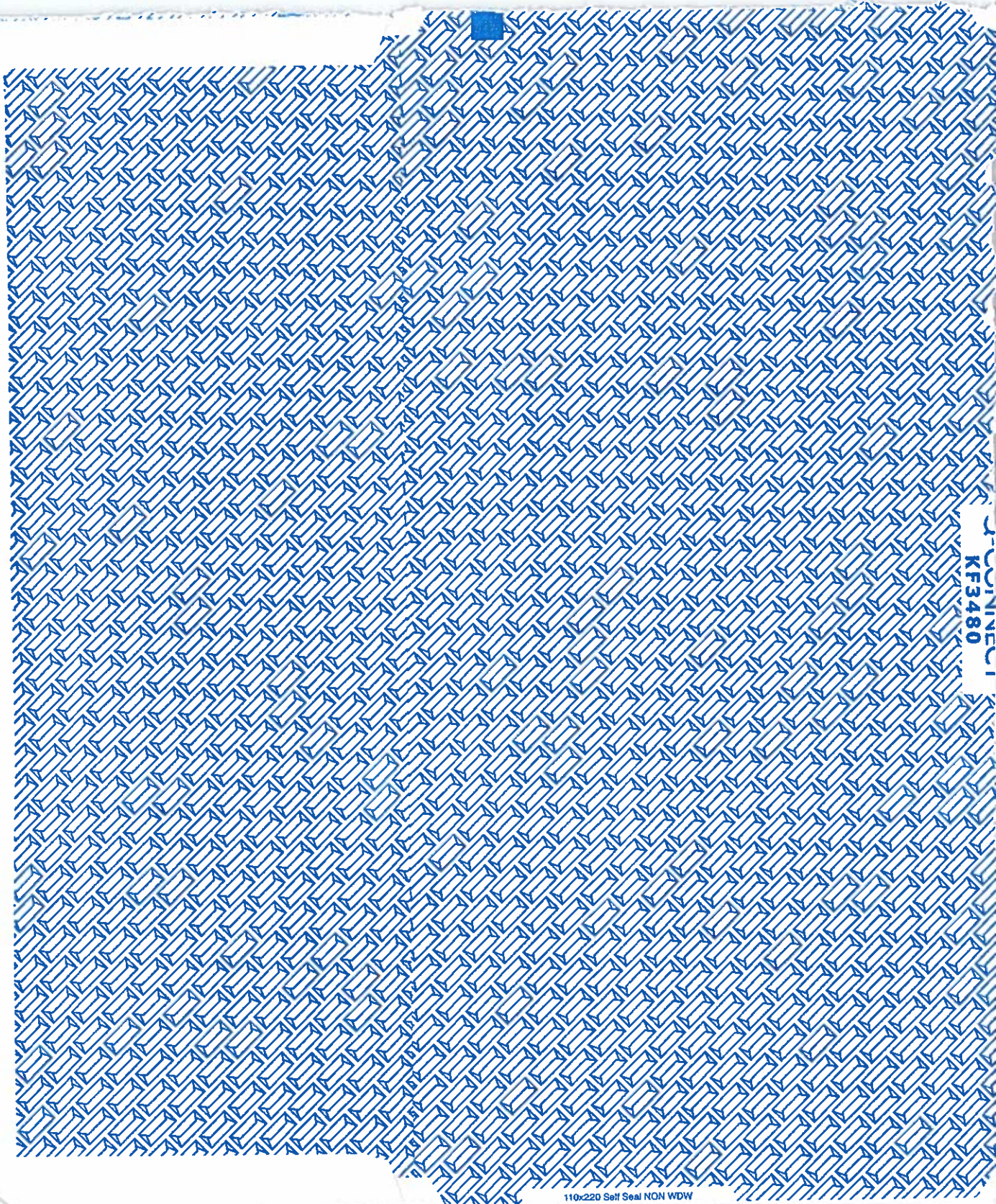
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