DELEGATED APPLICATIONS - ASSESSMENT SHEET

APPLICATION NO./ADDRESS:
DC/25/0173
Westons Farm, Westons Hill, Itchingfield, West Sussex, RH13 0BD

DESCRIPTION:
Erection of a glasshouse.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

DC/23/2263	Overhead Lines. Transformer to be upgraded from existing single pole construction to an H pole.	NO OBJECT Overhead Line on 25.03.2024
DC/24/0114	Demolition of building and erection of replacement agricultural garage/store. Construction of a new infill section to boundary wall. (Full Application)	Application Permitted on 14.05.2024
DC/24/0115	Demolition of building and erection of replacement agricultural garage/store. Construction of a new infill section to boundary wall(Listed Building Consent).	Withdrawn Application on 14.05.2024
DC/24/0269	Minor external alterations to elevations.	Application Permitted on 29.04.2024

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE
The application site comprises a parcel of land within Westons Farm, adjacent to an existing glasshouse and other agricultural buildings associated with the operation of the farm. Westons Farm shop is located to the south west of the site. Access to the site is gained from Weston's Hill to the west.

The site is bounded by agricultural fields to the north, south, east and west. The site lies outside of any designated Built Up Area Boundaries and as such is located in the countryside in planning policy terms. Westons Farmhouse, located to the west of the site is a Grade II Listed Building.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION
Planning permission is sought to erect a rectangular glasshouse measuring 18.29m length, 12.19m width and 4.07m height to the ridge. The walls will consist of glass panels supported by an aluminium frame. The east and south elevations will include double sliding doors to access the internal space.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES
The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Horsham District Planning Framework (2015):
Policy 1 - Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development
Policy 3 - Strategic Policy: Development Hierarchy
Policy 7 - Strategic Policy: Economic Growth
Policy 9 - Employment Development
Policy 10 - Rural Economic Development
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 40 - Sustainable Transport
Policy 41 - Parking

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 9: Water Neutrality
Strategic Policy 11: Environmental Protection
Strategic Policy 13: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
Strategic Policy 14: Countryside Protection
Strategic Policy 17: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
Strategic Policy 19: Development Quality
Strategic Policy 20: Development Principles
Policy 21: Heritage Assets and Managing Change within the Historic Environment
Strategic Policy 24: Sustainable Transport
Policy 25: Parking
Strategic Policy 30: Enhancing Existing Employment
Policy 31: Rural Economic Development

Neighbourhood Plan:
Itchingfield Parish have produced a neighbourhood plan which have been subject to successful Examination but cannot proceed to Referendum because of the legal requirements in relation to Water Neutrality and the Habitat Regulations. The following policy is of significant weight subject to water neutrality being demonstrated: -

Policy 12: Design of housing

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 Conservation: No Objection

OUTSIDE AGENCIES
Archaeology Consultant: No Objection

Great Crested Newt Consultant: No Objection, Advisory

Natural England: No Objection - Subject to Appropriate Mitigation Being Secured

Representations:
None received.

Parish Comments:
Itchingfield Parish Council 'recommends this planning application for approval.

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:

Policy 26 of the HDPF relates to countryside protection and enhancement, stating that outside built-up area boundaries, the rural character and undeveloped nature of the countryside will be protected against inappropriate development. Proposals must be essential to its countryside location and meet certain criteria which includes supporting the needs of agriculture.

It is set out in the submitted planning statement that the proposed glasshouse would support the functioning and growth of Westons Farm by providing more space and facilities for the tenant farmer to grow produce and plants on site, such as cucumbers, tomatoes and lettuce. The intention will be for the produce to be sold at the Westons Farm Shop, adjacent to the site.

It is accepted that the proposed glasshouse has potential to support the day to day running and income for the Farm Shop and the wider agricultural business. The sustainable growth of businesses in rural areas such as Westons Farm is supported by paragraph 88 of the NPPF which sets out that planning decisions should enable 'the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural business' and would similarly accord with Policy 26 of the HDPF.

Design and Appearance:

Policy 25 of the HDPF states that the Council will support development that, amongst other things, conserves the rural landscape. Policies 32 and 33 of the HDPF seek to ensure that development promotes a high standard and quality of design in order to enhance and protect locally distinctive characters. The policies also seek to ensure that the scale, massing and appearance of development relates sympathetically with the built surroundings, landscape, open spaces and routes within and adjoining the site, including any impact on the skyline and important views.

Policy 12 of the Barns Green and Itchingfield Neighbourhood Plan states that development proposals shall, where possible and consistent with other policies in this Plan, be of high quality design and layout; respect the character and scale of the surrounding buildings and landscape; incorporate the use of local materials which are appropriate; and positively respond to the local vernacular character of the Parish.

The proposed glasshouse would be viewed against the context of the existing glass house and agricultural buildings. It is considered that due to the nature of the site, and its layout the proposed glasshouse would not result in additional harm to the rural setting, or to the setting of the nearby listed building. The proposed glasshouse will be utilitarian in appearance which is commonplace in rural areas and will mirror the design of the existing glasshouse adjacent to the site. The site is sufficiently screened to the west and south by well-established agricultural buildings, to the north by an existing hedgerow and to the east by a row of trees. The proposed development does not impact any surrounding trees or vegetation, and the modest height of the glasshouse will have no harmful impact on the surrounding landscape. The proposal is considered to adhere to Policies 25, 32, 33 and 34 of the HDPF.

Impact on Amenity:

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

It is considered that the siting and layout of the proposed glasshouse outbuilding together with its intended use and the resulting relationship with adjoining properties would be sufficient to prevent any unacceptable harm to neighbouring amenity. It is noted that no neighbouring representations of concern or objection have been received.

Highways Impacts:

Policy 41 of the HDPF states that adequate parking must be provided within developments to meet the needs of anticipated users.

The site has established vehicular and pedestrian access as well as sufficient parking for cars and farm vehicles. The proposal would not be expected to result in a significant increased number of users to or from the site, and therefore there would be no adverse impact on highways.

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 Applicant has submitted a Biodiversity Metric which demonstrates a net gain of 53.67% for habitat units is achievable. The net gain reflects the replacement of a small extent of modified grassland with a new glasshouse building, and enhancement of the remaining onsite grassland to other neutral grassland by wildflower seeding. This would be secured through the BNG condition.

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 proposes to offset the future water use via a bespoke Rainwater Harvesting System (RHS) at Sluetts Farm. It has been demonstrated that this system has a remaining excess capacity of 2,345 litres/day, and this would be sufficient to offset the 916 litres / day increase in water demand which would arise from this proposed development. Natural England was consulted and considers that the proposed measures are acceptable subject to the delivery, management and maintenance of the measures identified in the applicant's water neutrality statement being secured. This would be secured by way of a s106 agreement, which would ensure that the proposed development will not result in increased levels of abstraction within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone.

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 180 and the Council's obligations under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Other Matters:

The development is within the red Impact Risk Zone for Great Crested Newts, as modelled by district licence mapping. However, it is considered that this proposed development would present a low risk to great crested newts and/or their habitats.

Conclusion:

The proposal is considered to comply with relevant local and national planning policies and is therefore recommended for approval.

Recommendation: Application Permitted

Conditions:

2 **Standard Time Condition**: The development hereby permitted shall begin before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

3 **Pre-Occupation Condition**: The development hereby permitted shall not be brought into use until evidence has been submitted to and been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority that the approved water neutrality strategy (set out in the Water Neutrality Statement, ref. 688769 REV.2, Dated 31/01/2025) has been implemented in full.

Reason: To ensure the development is water neutral to avoid an adverse impact on the Arun Valley SACSPA and Ramsar sites in accordance with Policy 31 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015), Paragraphs 179 and 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021), its duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), and s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (Priority Habitats & Species).

4 **Regulatory Condition:** The materials to be used in the development hereby permitted shall strictly accord with those indicated on the approved plans and application form.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

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

Reason: The site lies in an area where, in accordance with Policy 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) development unrelated to an essential rural activity would not normally be permitted.

NOTE TO APPLICANT
Biodiversity Net Gain Condition
Paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 states that planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to the "biodiversity gain condition" which means development granted by this notice must not begin unless:

(a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and
(b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan if one is required in respect of this permission is Horsham District Council.

This permission will require the submission and approval of a Biodiversity Gain Plan before development is begun.

For guidance on the contents of the Biodiversity Gain Plan that must be submitted and agreed by the Council prior to the commencement of the consented development please see the link:

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/submit-a-biodiversity-gain-plan

Statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements
There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply. These can be found at Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 74-003-20240214 of the Planning Practice Guidance, which can be found at

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-netgain

Irreplaceable habitat
If the onsite habitat includes irreplaceable habitat (within the meaning of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat Regulations 2024) there are additional requirements for the content and approval of Biodiversity Gain Plans.

Great Crested Newts
The applicant is reminded that, under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), it is an offence to (amongst other things): deliberately capture, disturb, injure, or kill great crested newts; damage or destroy a breeding or resting place; intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a resting or sheltering place. Planning permission for a development does not provide a defence against prosecution under this legislation. Should great crested newts be found at any stage of the development works, then all works should cease, and a professional and/or suitably qualified and experienced ecologist (or Natural England) should be contacted for advice on any special precautions before continuing, including the need for a licence.

The following recommendations are also provided to further reduce the likelihood of impacts on this species:

- Any vegetation in the construction area will be kept closely mown during the course of the construction work.
- Any trenches left overnight should be covered or provided with ramps to prevent GCN from becoming trapped.
- Any building materials such as bricks, stone etc. should be stored on pallets to discourage GCN from using them as shelter.
- Any demolition materials should be stored in skips or similar containers rather than in piles on ground.

If the applicant wishes to completely avoid any risks relating to great crested newts, they have the option to enquire for their Council's District Licence, which provides full legal cover for any impacts to great crested newts and therefore removes the risk of having to stop works if great crested newts are found on site. More details on the District Licensing Scheme operated by the council can be found at www.naturespaceuk.com .

If at any point during construction works any great crested newts are identified, then the following instructions must be strictly adhered to:

- Stop all works immediately and leave the area
- Inform an ecologist immediately who will provide further guidance / instructions
- Do not try to handle or rescue a great crested newt
- Do not resume construction works until advised it is safe to do so by an ecologist

It should be noted that if an individual great crested newt is found at any point during the works, a European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) or District Licence (DL) may be required to permit works that would potentially cause disturbance and otherwise commit an offence under the relevant legislation.

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/25/0173

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

Schedule of plans/documents **approved**:

Plan Type	Description	Drawing Number	Received Date
Location plan		001 REV P3	04.02.2025
Block plan	Existing	002 REV P1	04.02.2025
Block plan	Proposed	003 REV P1	04.02.2025
Floor plan	Proposed	010 REV P1	04.02.2025
Elevation plan	Proposed South	012 REV P2	04.02.2025
Elevation plan	Proposed East	013 REV P2	04.02.2025
Elevation plan	Proposed North	014 REV P2	04.02.2025
Elevation plan	Proposed West	015 REV P2	04.02.2025
Roof plan		011 REV R1	04.02.2025

Supporting Statement	Planning	none	04.02.2025
Supporting Statement	Water Neutrality	688769 REV 2	04.02.2025

DELEGATED

Case Officer sign/initial Steve Astles Date: 23.06.2025

Authorising Officer sign/initial Guy Everest Date: 10.07.2025