NPPF 2026

Appeal Reference: 6012699
LPA Reference: DC/25/1899
Site: Land South of Amberley Close Playing Fields, Rowlands Road, Horsham, RH12 4LH

1. The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2026) is relevant to this appeal, particularly through policies S4, HC7 and HO7, together with Annex A.

2. Policy S4 establishes the decision-making approach for development within settlements. It provides that development proposals should be approved unless their benefits would be substantially outweighed by adverse effects assessed against the Framework's national decision-making policies. S4(2)(a)(ii) specifically identifies substantial adverse impacts in relation to the application of HC7 as a circumstance in which the benefits are likely to be substantially outweighed. The application of HC7 to the appeal site is therefore an important issue.

3. Policy HC7 concerns the protection of existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land. Policy 43 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015), in turn, addresses sites and premises currently or last used for community facilities or services, leisure or cultural activities for the community. The policies are not identical. The relevant question under HC7 is whether the appeal parcel is existing open space or recreational land within the meaning of that policy; under Policy 43, the question includes whether the parcel was used for the purposes specified in that policy. Neither question should be resolved solely by reference to visual openness or the parcel's relationship with adjoining open space.

4. The evidence already before the Inspector includes the site's adopted highway status and Horsham District Council's decision not to accept the CA26/06 Asset of Community Value nomination. The ACV decision does not determine the application of HC7 or Policy 43, but may be considered as part of the evidence relevant to the factual assessment of the site's use.

5. Policy HO7 states that substantial weight should be given to the benefits of providing homes which contribute towards meeting evidenced accommodation needs. The Council has acknowledged the weight of the housing benefits in the context of its housing land supply position. Those benefits should be assessed alongside any adverse effects established by the evidence under the revised Framework.

6. The Appellant does not suggest that NPPF 2026 automatically displaces Policy 43. The appeal should be determined under the Framework as a whole, with Annex A applying where a development plan policy is materially inconsistent with the national decision-making policies.

Hongwei Ren
Appellant