



PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

TO: Planning Committee

BY: Head of Development and Building Control

DATE: 7 April 2026

DEVELOPMENT: Demolition of existing buildings. Erection of four barn style detached dwellings with associated garages utilising existing access together with landscaping.

SITE: Greenacres, Saucelands Lane Shipley West Sussex RH13 8PU

WARD: Southwater, South and Shipley

APPLICATION: DC/25/2131

APPLICANT: **Name:** Chidhurst Ltd **Address:** C/O NJA Town Planning Ltd The Beehive City Place Gatwick RH6 0PA

REASON FOR INCLUSION ON THE AGENDA: More than eight persons in different households have made written representations within the consultation period raising material planning considerations that are inconsistent with the recommendation of the Head of Development and Building Control.

RECOMMENDATION: To refuse planning permission

1. THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To consider the planning application.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION

- 1.2 The application seeks full planning permission for the demolition of the existing buildings on site and the erection of four dwellings, with units 1, 2 and 3 having detached double car ports incorporating a bike and refuse store. Unit 4 would have an integral double garage and bike and refuse store.
- 1.3 The hardstanding would consist of loose gravel chippings for all units, with the dwellings sharing a material palette of half hipped roofs in natural red colour clay tiles. Unit 3 and 4 would be 4-bedroomed L-shaped dwellings and unit 1 and 2 would be 3-bedrooms.
- 1.4 No alterations would occur to the private access from the main road, although a timber fence would be installed between the public right of way and the access.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

- 1.5 The application site comprises a commercial site with a number of Class E(g)/B8 use buildings positioned within it, located on the southern side of Saucelands Lane, Shipley. The

site is not located within any defined built-up area boundaries and is therefore considered to be located in the countryside.

- 1.6 The buildings are single storey in nature and consist of a mixture of designs and external materials, including brick, blockwork, timber cladding and metal sheeting to the external walls and tiles, and metal sheeting and corrugated fibre cement to the roofs. Some of the buildings are dilapidated, although two of them were at the time of the site visit, considered in good condition externally. The more dilapidated buildings were left open.
- 1.7 The site is accessed via an existing access from Saucelands Lane which runs south to a large area of hardstanding with the existing buildings positioned around. There is a Public Right of Way (PROW) located to the west of the site which runs from north to south. The surrounding area is considered to be rural in nature with only sporadic development present within the vicinity. The closest built-up area boundary is that of West Chiltington which is located approximately 3.7 miles (as the crow flies) away from the site to the south-west. The application site measures approximately 0.66ha.

2. INTRODUCTION

STATUTORY BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

- 2.2 The following Policies are considered to be relevant to the assessment of this application:

2.3 National Planning Policy Framework:

2.4 Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF 2015):

Policy 1 - Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development
Policy 2 - Strategic Policy: Strategic Development
Policy 3 - Strategic Policy: Development Hierarchy
Policy 7 - Strategic Policy: Economic Growth
Policy 9 - Employment Development
Policy 10 - Rural Economic Development
Policy 15 - Strategic Policy: Housing Provision
Policy 16 - Strategic Policy: Meeting Local Housing Needs
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 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

2.5 Shipley Parish Neighbourhood plan 2019-2031

HD1 – New Housing Development
HD2: Housing Mix
HD3: High quality design

2.6 Shipley Parish Design Statement

2.7 Horsham District Local Plan (2023-40) (Regulation 19):

Strategic Policy 1: Sustainable Development
Strategic Policy 2: Development Hierarchy
Strategic Policy 3: Settlement Expansion
Strategic Policy 6: Climate Change
Strategic Policy 7: Appropriate Energy Use
Strategic Policy 8: Sustainable Design and Construction
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 15: Settlement Coalescence
Strategic Policy 17: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
Strategic Policy 19: Development Quality
Strategic Policy 20: Development Principles
Strategic Policy 23: Infrastructure Provision
Strategic Policy 24: Sustainable Transport
Policy 25: Parking
Strategic Policy 37: Housing Provision
Strategic Policy 38: Meeting Local Housing Needs
Policy 39: Affordable Housing
Policy 40: Improving Housing Standards in the District

2.8 Supplementary Planning Guidance:

Planning Obligations and Affordable Housing SPD (2017)
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule (2017)

2.9 Planning Advice Notes:

Facilitating Appropriate Development
Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

PLANNING HISTORY AND RELEVANT APPLICATIONS

DC/20/0168	Outline Application for the demolition of existing buildings and the erection of 4no. dwellings with associated parking and amenity space, with all matters reserved except for access.	Application Refused on 23.03.2020
DC/25/0780	Demolition of existing buildings. Erection of four barn style detached dwellings with associated garages utilising existing access together with landscaping	Application Refused on 22.08.2025

3. OUTCOME OF CONSULTATIONS

- 3.1 Where consultation responses and representations 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 <https://www.horsham.gov.uk/planning/planning-applications/view-and-comment-on-planning-applications>.

3.2 **Landscape Officer:** No Objection

The site lies within the parish of Shipley, outside the Built-Up Area Boundary, and is therefore classed as countryside. It currently contains storage and employment uses, including commercial buildings and offices. It is bounded by Saucelands Lane to the north, fields and hedgerows to the south, mature vegetation to the east, and Public Right of Way Footpath SHI-2807 to the west, separated by an existing tree line.

Mitigation is outlined within the document which states that to the “eastern edge, residential curtilages would be soften with ribbons of understorey scrub and tree specimens.” This mitigation measure is outlined within the submitted Soft Landscape Layout plan (dwg no. RCo555-01 Rev 03). When comparing this plan to the Site Location Plan (dwg no. 000_01 Rev B) it is noted that these proposals are sited outside of the red line boundary, and therefore the mitigation measures proposed cannot be secured through the current planning application. The red line boundary should be amended to include this area.

It is disappointing to see that the amount of landscaping proposed has been reduced compared with the previous refused scheme. The layout remains the same, so query the loss of this vegetation. Additional soft landscaping should be incorporated to enhance visual amenity and biodiversity value, particularly through reinforcing the existing tree line to the west of the site, which will provide improved screening of the site from the Public Right of Way.

3.3 **WSCC Highways:** No Objection

Saucelands Lane is a narrow rural ‘C’ road subject to the national speed limit. A five-year review of collision data shows no recorded accidents at the site access, and there is no evidence the access operates unsafely or that the proposed change of use would worsen conditions.

Observed vehicle speeds are below the limit, road geometry helps reduce speeds, visibility at the access is acceptable, and traffic flows are low. The proposed upgraded access (5m wide with 6m kerb radii) is acceptable in principle, subject to a S278 Agreement with WSCC. Passing places within the access road are adequate for low-speed, low-volume traffic.

The scheme proposes 2 x 3-bed and 2 x 4-bed dwellings. The WSCC Parking Calculator indicates 9 spaces are required; 2 spaces per dwelling are shown, with garages contributing 0.5 spaces each. There is sufficient space within plots to meet demand, with no anticipated overspill onto Saucelands Lane. Vehicles can turn on site and exit in forward gear. Swept path analysis confirms access for refuse and emergency vehicles is workable.

A speed survey recorded 85th percentile speeds of 32.7mph northbound and 31.6mph southbound. Visibility splays of 2.4m x 46m (south) and 2.4m x 49m (north) are achievable and considered acceptable. A condition is recommended to secure and maintain these splays.

TRICS analysis compares the existing B2/B8 use (615sqm total) with the proposed residential use.

- Existing use: approx. 41 two-way daily trips (3 AM peak, 3 PM peak).
- Proposed 4 dwellings: approx. 24 two-way daily trips (3 AM peak, 2 PM peak).

The proposal would reduce overall vehicular movements and raise no capacity concerns.

The site is in a rural location with unlit roads and higher speed limits, which do not strongly support walking or cycling. While cycle parking is provided and public rights of way are accessible, future residents would largely rely on private cars. However, as the proposal

would generate fewer trips than the existing lawful use, it would not result in a severe impact on the highway network.

The proposal would not adversely affect highway safety or result in severe cumulative impacts, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (para. 115). Conditions and informatives are recommended if permission is granted.

- 3.4 **Southern Water:** Comment in relation to planting and sewers, surface water drainage, demolition of existing water supply facilities, foul drainage and proposed SuDS details.

- 3.5 **Natural England:** Standing comments

- 3.6 **Environmental Health:** No objections subject to conditions

Conditions should be attached to the report regarding Contamination Investigation and Remediation, a site investigation scheme, whether imported/ asbestos, CEMP plan, construction hours and external lighting.

- 3.7 **Arboriculture Officer:** No Objection

No significant arboricultural objections are raised, subject to safeguards to protect trees of landscape significance. Utility routes must be agreed in advance and installed using non-invasive methods.

The rural site is accessed via a 160m driveway lined with hedgerow oak trees, which provide important landscape screening and separation from the adjacent Public Right of Way. These trees must be protected through robust fencing and careful service installation.

Other significant trees are located along site boundaries and can be retained within the proposed layout without undue harm or future pressure for pruning or removal.

- 3.8 **NatureSpace Officer:** No Objection subject to mitigations.

The site falls within the red impact risk zone for great crested newts (GCN), indicating highly suitable habitat and a high likelihood of presence. Fourteen ponds lie within 500m of the site, including one onsite, and there is a recent GCN record within the development boundary.

The submitted Great Crested Newt Survey Report (Arun Ecology, June 2025) confirms suitable terrestrial habitat within the site and records a small breeding population at Pond P1, located within 100m of the main development footprint.

NatureSpace advises that the development is reasonably likely to result in adverse impacts on GCN and that a European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) will therefore be required. An outline mitigation strategy has been provided to support the licence application.

It is agreed that a licence is necessary. The applicant intends to pursue an EPSL and has submitted outline avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures. The Local Planning Authority must be satisfied that the three licensing tests can be met and that Natural England is likely to grant the licence. Alternatively, the applicant may apply under the Council's District Licence scheme, supported by a NatureSpace Report or Certificate.

- 3.9 **Ecology Officer:** No Objection subject to conditions

Bat emergence surveys of Buildings B2, B4 and B5 found no evidence of bats, and Buildings B1, B3 and B6, along with onsite trees, were assessed as having negligible bat roost potential. No further bat surveys are required.

The site lies within 12km of The Mens Special Area of Conservation, designated for Barbastelle bats. Records of Barbastelle and other bat species occur within 2km of the site. However, woodland and pond habitats will be retained, new native hedgerows planted, and habitat connectivity maintained. Subject to a Wildlife Friendly Lighting Strategy (secured by condition), no adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC is anticipated.

Barn Owl (a Schedule 1 species) has been recorded on site. A pre-works survey of Buildings B2, B4 and B5 by a suitably qualified ecologist is recommended and should be secured by condition. The proposed Precautionary Method Statement for reptiles and other mobile protected and Priority species (including Hedgehog) is supported and should be secured by condition.

Sufficient ecological information has been provided to inform determination of the application. All mitigation and biodiversity enhancement measures set out in the submitted reports should be secured by condition and implemented in full. A separate Biodiversity Enhancement Layout should be required to secure biodiversity net gain and ensure compliance with relevant legislation and planning policy.

3.10 WSCC Public Rights of Way Officer: Objection subject to further information

Having reviewed the available online documentation, it appears that Public Footpath 2807 runs within the red line boundary, along the western side of the proposed demolition and development site. However, there is no reference within the Design and Access Statement as to how this public right of way will be accommodated, protected, or integrated within the proposed development.

Therefore, further information is required to clarify how Public Footpath 2807 will be accommodated, protected, and maintained during and following the proposed development.

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

3.11 Representations:

19 letters of support from 14 different addresses, one from outside the district

- Sympathetic rural development
- Good design given local context
- Looking for a home in the area
- A better alternative to commercial development
- Redundant site
- Would benefit the locality

5 letters of objection from 2 addresses

- Overdevelopment
- Flood water impacts
- The application has been previously refused and the applicant has not overcome these reasons for refusal
- The Ecological impact assessment does not make a correct assessment of the bat roosts on site
- No drainage method proposed
- Development outside the built up area boundary
- Loss of commercial uses within the locality

3.12 Parish Comments:
Support

3.13 Member Comments:

None received

4. HOW THE PROPOSED COURSE OF ACTION WILL PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 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.

5. HOW THE PROPOSAL WILL HELP TO REDUCE CRIME AND DISORDER

- 5.1 It is not considered that the development would be likely to have any significant impact on crime and disorder.

6. PLANNING ASSESSMENTS

Background

- 6.1 The most recent planning application under reference DC/25/0780 was refused on 22.08.2025 following assessment against the policies within the HDPF. This application was refused on the grounds that the development would be located in the countryside, outside of a defined built-up area boundary, and on a site not allocated for development. Consequently, the development would be contrary to the overarching spatial strategy and would not be essential to its countryside location.
- 6.2 In terms of the location of the site and its compliance with policy the report stated:
- The application site is located approximately 3.9km away (as the crow flies) from the closest built-up area boundary of West Chiltington located to the south-west. As such, it is considered that there is a clear separation and a significant difference in character when comparing the application site and its immediate surrounds, which is considered to be very rural in nature. The application site would not be well related to the nearest defined settlement of West Chiltington, the other closest settlement areas or the District centre of Horsham to the north-east, with future occupiers of the dwellings likely to be highly dependent on the use of private vehicle in order to access services and facilities.*
- It is considered that the scheme would be contrary to the overarching strategy and hierarchical approach of concentrating development within the main settlements as set out in the HDPF. The proposal for 4no new dwellings on the site is not considered to be essential to its countryside location and consequently represents an inappropriate, unsustainable and unacceptable form of development in this location.*
- 6.3 The application was also refused on the grounds of loss of commercial floorspace without sufficient marketing information to demonstrate that the buildings were not viable in their current use. Insufficient information had also been provided to demonstrate that the

development would not result in adverse harm to the ecological interests of the site. This previous refusal is a material consideration of significant weight in the planning assessment.

Principle of Development

- 6.4 Policy 2 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) sets out the main growth strategy, focusing development in the main settlements. The application site is situated outside of any of the defined settlements as identified under Policy 3 of the HDPF, and therefore is considered to be in a countryside location in policy terms.
- 6.5 Policy 4 of the HDPF outlines that the expansion of settlements outside the built-up area are supported where the site is allocated in the Local Plan or in a Neighbourhood Plan and adjoins an existing settlement edge; the level of expansion is appropriate to the scale and function of the settlement type; the development is demonstrated to meet the identified local housing needs; the impact of development individually or cumulatively does not prejudice comprehensive long term development; and the development is contained within an existing defensible boundary and the landscape and townscape character features are maintained and enhanced.
- 6.6 The HDPF outlines that the proposed settlement hierarchy is the most sustainable approach to delivering housing; with new development focused in the larger settlements of Horsham, Southwater and Billingshurst; with limited new development elsewhere, only where it accords with an adopted Neighbourhood Plan. Specifically, Policy 3 of the Horsham District Planning Framework seeks to retain the existing settlement pattern and ensure that development takes place in the most sustainable locations as possible.
- 6.7 Paragraph 83 of the National Planning policy framework outlines that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby.
- 6.8 Policy Ship HD1 states that applications for housing developments within Shipley and Coolham villages, and Dragons Green and Brooks Green hamlets, will be considered favourably where the proposals meet all of the following criteria: the proposed development is for an infill gap, or on previously developed land, within the continuity of existing buildings; the proposed development will not result in the outward extension of the villages or hamlets onto greenfield land; the proposed development delivers new affordable housing; the proposed development reflects the scale and density of existing development in the village or hamlet where it is located; and the proposed development responds positively to Shipley Parish Design Guidance. This policy does not allocate sites, nor establish a housing target for the Parish, but does provide general guidance as to the location, mix, and quality of any proposed new development.
- 6.9 Policy Ship HD2 continues that applications for new housing in Shipley Parish should respond to the most up-to-date local housing need wherever possible, including 2- and 3-bedroom homes as well as new affordable housing, contributing to a balanced mix of housing in the Plan area.
- 6.10 In this countryside location, the proposal is also considered against Policy 26 which seeks to protect the countryside against inappropriate development unless it is considered essential and appropriate in scale; whilst also meeting one of four criteria. These criteria include: supporting the needs of agriculture or forestry; enabling the extraction of minerals or the disposal of waste; providing for quiet informal recreational use; or enabling the sustainable development of rural areas.

- 6.11 The nearest defined Built-Up Area Boundary (West Chiltington), which provides access to essential goods, services, and employment opportunities, lies approximately 3.7 miles from the site. Travel to this settlement on foot would take in the region of 1 hour and 13 minutes and would necessitate walking along unlit rural roads, largely without any pavement and limited public transport links such that the nature of the road is considered to discourage residents from walking and cycling. Consequently, the site would be reliant on the use of the private car for meeting day-to-day needs, which is contrary to the principles of sustainable development. The application site does not constitute a sustainable location for new residential development.
- 6.12 It is considered that the scheme would be contrary to the overarching strategy and hierarchical approach of concentrating development within the main settlements as set out in the HDPF. The proposal for 4no new dwellings on the site is not considered to be essential to its countryside location and consequently represents an inappropriate, unsustainable and unacceptable form of development in this location. Additionally, the site has not been allocated for housing within a 'made' Neighbourhood Plan and has therefore, at present not been deemed to be appropriate for housing at a local level.
- 6.13 The site is therefore considered to be inappropriate, where the development would not be essential to its countryside location. The proposed development would therefore be contrary to Policies 1, 3, 4 and 26 of the HDPF.
- 6.14 Whether there are any material considerations that would outweigh the conflict as identified above will be addressed in the Conclusions and Planning Balance section below.
- 6.15 Further to the above, the site is currently in a commercial/employment use, where consideration must be given to Policy 9 of the HDPF which relates to Employment Development. This policy states that 'Redevelopment of employment sites and premises outside Key Employment Areas, must demonstrate that the site/premises is no longer needed and/or viable for employment use'.
- 6.16 The current application has sought to address this matter through the submission of a Surveyor Letter which outlines that the units are unlikely to be let due to their poor condition, where it is understood that the site contains asbestos material. The Surveyor suggests that the buildings are not suitable for commercial occupation and there has been a decrease in the level of demand for these types of unit. The access track is stated to not be suitable for most commercial vehicles.
- 6.17 Whilst the comments about the site being in poor condition and vacant are noted, the units would appear to be in poor condition due to lack of general maintenance. There is no evidence to suggest that marketing has taken place to bring the units back into use, where it is considered that repair works could be undertaken to bring the units back into viable use.
- 6.18 The site is considered to provide valuable business accommodation and employment in a rural area, where the proposal would result in the loss of much needed employment land within the District. Given the lack of justification provided in this regard, the application is therefore considered to also be contrary to Policy 9 of the of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

Design and Appearance

- 6.19 Policies 25, 32 and 33 of the HDPF promote development which is of high quality design and is sympathetic to the distinctiveness of the dwelling and surroundings. Development should protect, conserve and enhance the landscape character, taking account of the natural environment, landscape and landform pattern to which it forms a part. As no plans or details have been submitted pertaining to design, scale or appearance of the dwellings, and as

permission is not sought for these matters at this stage, no consideration is given to this aspect.

- 6.20 Policy Ship HD3 of the Shipley Neighbourhood Plan states that all proposals for new development in Shipley Parish are expected to respond positively to local design characteristics and features as set out in the Shipley Parish Design Guidance. New development should be of a size and scale which respects, and where possible, enhances the character of the area or locality, using materials typical of the area.
- 6.21 The previous application sought permission for the same number of dwellings as currently proposed, with the layout and scale of the development being generally the same as the current proposal (albeit that the siting of a detached garage would differ and an area of shared amenity space is now proposed). The previous Officer Report outlined that the proposed dwellings would not be greatly disproportionate to some of the existing dwellings within the vicinity in terms of footprint.
- 6.22 The wider area consists of individually designed detached dwellings set back from the access road, with the area being of a rural appearance. The scale, form and design would be acceptable, with materials and roof form giving a barn-like appearance to the dwellings that would be anticipated to be present within the wider area. The roofs would be half hipped with conservation style handmade clay tiles, and the exterior materials to the walls would be a mixture of horizontal timber cladding and vertical cladding and a brick base. The openings within the dwellings would be tall and wide, reflecting an agricultural use. The heights of the dwellings would be largely modest, with plot number 4 being in an L shaped configuration to add some variety to the development. Given the enclosed nature of the development, and reasonably modest scale of the dwellings, the proposed development would not be considered to result in harm to the wider landscape. Each of the dwellings would have a garage, with 3 of the dwellings having detached garages with bin stores incorporated into them.
- 6.23 The development would therefore be in accordance with Policies 25, 32 and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

Arboricultural Impacts

- 6.24 Policy 31 of the HDPF states that proposals that would result in the loss of existing green infrastructure will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that new opportunities will be provided that mitigates or compensates for this loss, and ensures that the ecosystem services of the area are retained. In addition,
- 6.25 Policy 33 outlines that development proposals should presume in favour of the retention of existing important landscape and natural features. Development must relate sympathetically to the local landscape and justify and mitigate against any losses that may occur through the development.
- 6.26 No Objections have been raised by the Arboricultural Officer, and it is noted that the row of hedgerow and trees are considered visually important such that it would be sought for these to be retained as part of the development. No objection in light of 31 and 33 of the HDPF.

Residential Amenity

- 6.27 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.
- 6.28 The layout of the proposed development largely reflects that considered under the earlier application reference DC/25/0780. The Officer Report notes that Plots 1 and 2 would have

some degree of mutual overlooking, however this would not be of an extent that would warrant a refusal given the sufficient distance between the dwellings. Each of the dwellings would be of an acceptable distance between each other such that they would not result in an unacceptable relationship in respect of obtrusive appearance, overlooking, or lack of light and privacy. The residential amenity space for the dwelling would be modest but not unacceptable, and in terms of layout, the dwellings could be appropriately accommodated on the site without adversely impacting on the privacy and amenity of the occupiers of neighbouring properties.

- 6.29 The current layout is considered to be designed to address potential amenity impacts, where there has been no change in the spatial context to conclude differently than the previous application. As such there are no objections in light of Policy 33 of the HDPF.

Highways Impacts

- 6.30 Policies 40 and 41 of the HDPF states that development should provide safe and adequate access and parking, suitable for all users.
- 6.31 The proposed dwellings would be served by the existing access located to the north from Saucelands Lane which serves the site. The dwellings would be set a considerable distance away from the access point, approximately 150m away and each dwelling would be served by vehicular parking areas. Plots 1, 2 and 3 would have a detached double car port and plot 4 would be integral.
- 6.32 West Sussex County Council (WSCC) as the Local Highway Authority have undertaken a site visit, where the speeds observed were below the posted limit and it was noted that the geometry of Saucelands Lane appeared to assist in reducing vehicle speeds along its length. Visibility was also observed at the access point and traffic flows were not considered to be of high density. There are not anticipated to be any anticipated highways concerns with the proposed geometry of the access, with the supporting information indicating that vehicle trips would be reduced when compared with the existing use.
- 6.33 The WSCC Parking Demand Calculator outlines that the 9 spaces as proposed would be sufficient to serve the 4 no. dwellings in this location, with sufficient space within each plot to accommodate likely demand. The access arrangement would also allow for vehicles to turn on site to egress onto Saucelands Lane in forward gear.
- 6.34 Public Rights of Way have been consulted as part of the development, noting that Public Footpath 2807 runs within the red line boundary along the western side of the proposed demolition and development site. Given that there would be no development within the PRoW and there would be no obstruction of it, or interruption to its use, there would be no conflict raised
- 6.35 For these reasons, the proposed development is considered to accord with Policies 40 and 41 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

Ecology

- 6.36 Policy 31 of the HDPF states that development will be supported where it demonstrates that it maintains or enhances the existing network of green infrastructure. Development proposals will be required to contribute to the enhancement of existing biodiversity, and should create and manage new habitats where appropriate.
- 6.37 Circular 06/2005 identifies that the presence of protected species is a material consideration when considering a development proposal that, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat. Therefore, it is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed application, is

established before planning permission is granted. Information on biodiversity impacts and opportunities should inform all stages of development, and an ecological survey is usually necessary where the type and location of development are such that the impact on biodiversity may be significant and existing information is lacking or inadequate.

- 6.38 The site falls within the red impact risk zone for great crested newts (GCN), indicating highly suitable habitat and a high likelihood of presence. Fourteen ponds lie within 500m of the site, including one onsite, and there is a recent GCN record within the development boundary. There is a Great Crested Newt Survey Report (Arun Ecology, June 2025) included in the submission which confirms suitable terrestrial habitat within the site and records a small breeding population at Pond P1, located within 100m of the main development footprint. It is considered reasonably likely therefore that the development will result in adverse impacts on GCN and that a European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) will therefore be required.
- 6.39 The applicant has outlined that they will seek an EPSL and this would need to be granted by Natural England prior to development commencing. The applicant has submitted outline avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures to support that they would likely be granted a license. The alternative to this would be to be granted a District Newt license by NatureSpace prior to determination. Given that the application is being recommended for refusal, no NatureSpace license has been requested by the Officer.
- 6.40 Following consultation with the Council's Ecologist, it is agreed that no further biodiversity surveys are required. The mitigation and enhancement measures as proposed within the Reports are considered satisfactory, and no objections on ecology grounds have been raised.

Water Neutrality

- 6.41 A 2021 Position Statement from Natural England identified that it could not be concluded with the required degree of certainty that new development in the Sussex North Water Supply Zone would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Arun Valley SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites. As a consequence, and to comply with the legal duties set out in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (known as the Habitat Regulations), all new development since has been required to demonstrate water neutrality.
- 6.42 On 31st October 2025 Natural England formally withdrew the 2021 Position Statement, citing a package of measures that they were satisfied would safeguard the Arun Valley sites. Principal amongst these measures is a reduction in the Southern Water abstraction licence 'by March 2026'. However, given the licence change has not yet taken place Horsham District Council, as competent authority under the Habitats Regulations, cannot yet be certain that new development will not result in adverse impacts on the Arun Valley sites.
- 6.43 To ensure development can come forward as water neutral in the meantime, the Council has agreed with Natural England to use the significant water savings made by Southern Water in 2024/25 through their programme of leakage reduction (amongst other measures). This has generated some 3,240,000 litres per day of water savings that can now be attributed to new development without increasing water abstraction in the Arun Valley beyond baseline. These savings were previously to be used to launch the Sussex North Water Certification Scheme (SNWCS), however following the withdrawal statement SNWCS will no longer be launching. Natural England standing advice dated 10 November 2025 raises no objection to using these savings to enable development to come forward. The standing advice clarifies that it functions as Natural England's formal response pursuant to Regulation 63(3) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 to all relevant planning applications which seek to achieve water neutrality using the above Southern Water savings.

- 6.44 Officers have undertaken an Appropriate Assessment which demonstrates that the anticipated increase in mains water consumption from this development, alongside all other development granted since the 31st October 2025, will not exceed 3,240,000 litres per day.
- 6.45 Accordingly, Officers consider that the proposed development will not have an Adverse Effect on the Integrity of the Arun Valley Site, either alone or in combination with other plan and projects, thereby complying with Regulations 63 and 70 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, HDPF Policy 31, and paragraph 193 of the NPPF.

Climate Change:

- 6.46 Policies 35, 36 and 37 require that development mitigates to the impacts of climate change through measures including improved energy efficiency, reducing flood risk, reducing water consumption, improving biodiversity and promoting sustainable transport modes. These policies reflect the requirements of Chapter 14 of the NPPF that local plans and decisions seek to reduce the impact of development on climate change. The proposed development would by way of condition include the following measures to build resilience to climate change and reduce carbon emissions:
- Requirement to provide full fibre broadband site connectivity
 - Dedicated refuse and recycling storage capacity
 - Opportunities for biodiversity gain
 - Cycle parking facilities
 - Electric vehicle charging points

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

- 6.47 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 may not be begun unless a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority and the planning authority has approved the Plan.
- 6.48 The submitted details indicate that 10% BNG can be achieved, with this including significant enhancement. Had the development been considered acceptable this would have needed to be secured by way of a Legal Agreement.

Conclusions and planning balance

- 6.49 It is considered that the proposal for the demolition of the existing commercial buildings and construction of 4no new dwellings would be contrary to the overarching strategy and hierarchical approach of concentrating development within the main settlements as set out in the HDPF.
- 6.50 The application site does not constitute a sustainable location for new residential development. The nearest defined Built-Up Area Boundary (West Chiltington), which provides access to essential goods, services, and employment opportunities, lies approximately 3.7 miles from the site. Travel to this settlement on foot would take in the region of 1 hour and 13 minutes and would necessitate walking along unlit rural roads. Consequently, the site would be reliant on the use of the private car for meeting day-to-day needs, which is contrary to the principles of sustainable development. The proposal for 4no new dwellings on the site is not considered to be essential to its countryside location and consequently represents an inappropriate, unsustainable and unacceptable form of development in this location.

- 6.51 In December 2025, the Council published the latest Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) which revealed that the Council currently has a housing land supply of 1.7 years against current targets. It is noted that the housing land supply has increased since the consideration of previous application DC/24/1699, from 1 year to 1.7 years. Notwithstanding this, it remains that the Council is unable to demonstrate a full 5-year housing land supply, and it is recognised that this forms a material consideration in decision making which triggers the application of the 'tilted balance' at Paragraph 11d of the NPPF.
- 6.52 In light of the Council's inability to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites, and in recognition of the key objective of Government policy to significantly boost the supply of homes, the Council has endorsed a guidance document titled Shaping Development in Horsham (2025). The advice contained in the advice note is guidance only and does not form policy and does not alter the statutory decision-making framework, therefore it carries only limited weight.
- 6.53 The note sets out the weight that can be given to current and emerging local policy and has been produced to enable the Council to act proactively to continue to deliver housing in a sustainable manner. For development proposals located outside the defined BUAB, the SDPAN (at paragraph 5.12) echoes the requirements of HDPF Policy 4 and states that applications will be considered positively provided that all of the following criteria are met:
- The site adjoins the existing settlement edge as defined by the BUAB;
 - The level of expansion is appropriate to the scale and function of the settlement the proposal relates to;
 - The proposal demonstrates that it meets local housing needs or will assist the retention and enhancement of community facilities and services;
 - The impact of the development individually or cumulatively does not prejudice comprehensive long-term development; and
 - The development is contained within an existing defensible boundary and the landscape character features are maintained and enhanced.
- 6.54 The application site would not adjoin an existing settlement edge and does not benefit from the provisions of the SDPAN.
- 6.55 It is acknowledged that the proposal would make a modest contribution to the housing supply, where this would be afforded weight in the planning balance. While the Council are unable to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply, it is considered that this benefit would not outweigh the conflict identified in respect of the countryside location of the development and the loss of commercial premises.
- 6.56 It is a fundamental principle of the planning system that all applications are determined on their own merits. Within this it is acknowledged that similar applications should be determined in a similar manner.
- 6.57 This is relevant as the applicant has put forward a planning permission from the former Arun Feedmills site, approximately 400 metres to the south of the Greenacres application site, for the erection of 8 dwellings in a countryside location (ref: DC/23/2278). The applicant contends that this permission is a direct comparator to the development proposed by this current application and should justify an approval of planning permission.
- 6.58 The former Arun Feedmills site benefits from an extant permission for a two-storey commercial development (ref: SP/48/98) granted permission in 1999. The weight given to this fallback position and the benefit derived from 8 dwellings was a matter for the decision maker to determine. The 'Conclusion and Planning Balance' section of the Arun Feedmills Committee Report acknowledged this fallback and noted that the residential development

would not be expected to create additional trips beyond that which would result from the extant commercial development.

- 6.59 The Arun Feedmills report went onto state that, *‘considering the application as a whole in the context of the Paragraph 11d ‘tilted balance’, and given the particular circumstances specific to this site, it is not considered that the harm afforded by the conflict with Policies 2, 4, 26 of the HDPF and Policy Ship HD1 and HD2 (which must be afforded reduced weight applying Paragraph 11d of the NPPF) significantly and demonstrably outweighs the benefit of a new dwellings in this location’*. It is clear that the Arun Feedmills decision took into account site specific considerations and made a series of judgements as to the weighting of such considerations, with the final decision one the LPA were entitled to make.
- 6.60 There is a need for balance between individual application assessment and consistency in decision making. In this instance it is considered that a decision on a site with its own specific planning history would not create any precedence or degree of weight which could overcome the concerns raised as part of the proposed Greenacres development. The Arun Feedmills decision would not make the existing commercial space on this application site redundant and would not overcome deficiencies in the relationship between the proposed development and surrounding settlements and services.
- 6.61 As such, taking into account all relevant material considerations, it is considered that the harm arising from the proposed development in this unsustainable location would not be significantly or demonstrably outweighed by the benefits arising from the proposal. The development would be contrary to Policies 2, 3, 4, 9, and 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) and the benefits of the scheme would not outweigh the harm and conflict as identified.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 That the application be refused for the following reasons: -
1. The development would be located beyond a defined built-up area on a site not allocated within the Development Plan and would not be essential to this countryside location. The development would therefore be contrary to the overarching spatial strategy and hierarchy approach of concentrating development within defined settlements and advocating a planned approach to settlement expansion, contrary to policies 1, 2, 4 and 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015). Notwithstanding the absence of a five-year land housing supply, and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) at paragraph 11(d), it is not considered that there are any material considerations in this instance which would outweigh harm arising from conflict with Local and Neighbourhood Plan policies in these regards.
 2. It has not been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority that the existing commercial floorspace is no longer needed and/or viable for employment use, contrary to Policy 9 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

8. USE OF AI

- 8.1 This report has not been prepared with the support of artificial intelligence tools.