Horsham District Council

DELEGATED APPLICATIONS - ASSESSMENT SHEET

APPLICATION NO./ADDRESS:
DC/25/0524
Blackstone Gate Farm House, Henfield Road, Albourne, West Sussex, BN6 9JJ

DESCRIPTION:
Conversion of existing stables into 3 holiday-lets.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

DC/24/0106	Application to confirm the change of use of residential annexe to a separate single dwelling (Lawful Development Certificate - Existing)	Application Refused on 14.06.2024
DC/22/0743	Change of use of land from agricultural to residential curtilage and erection of a detached garage building with home office above.	Application Permitted on 16.06.2022
DC/22/0077	Erection of a detached garage building with a home office above.	Withdrawn Application on 08.04.2022

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

The application site is located at Blackstone Gate Farmhouse, situated on the eastern side of Henfield Road, in the parish of Albourne. The site lies within a rural setting characterised by open countryside, with scattered residential and agricultural buildings nearby. The wider landscape comprises farmland and hedgerows, consistent with the surrounding countryside character. The site itself contains a group of single-storey stable buildings of traditional form, set within the residential curtilage of the farmhouse. Access is taken directly from Henfield Road via an established entrance and driveway serving both the farmhouse and associated buildings. Mature boundary vegetation provides a degree of natural screening from the road and adjacent land, helping the site remain relatively contained within its setting.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION

The application seeks full planning permission for the conversion of the existing stable buildings into three self-contained holiday-let units. The proposed development would utilise the footprint of the existing stables, with external alterations including new fenestration, doors, and associated landscaping to facilitate the new use. The units would provide short-term visitor accommodation and be managed in connection with the main farmhouse. No extensions to the existing footprint are proposed, and the scheme would retain the overall rural character of the existing built form while adapting the structures for tourism-related purposes. Provision for parking and access is included within the existing site layout.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES
The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Horsham District Planning Framework (2015):
Policy 1 - Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development
Policy 10 - Rural Economic Development
Policy 11 - Tourism and Cultural Facilities

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 37 - Sustainable Construction
Policy 40 - Sustainable Transport
Policy 41 - Parking
Policy 42 - Strategic Policy: Inclusive Communities
Policy 43 - Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation

Neighbourhood Plan:
Woodmancote Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2016 – 2031
Policy 1 – A Spatial Plan for the Parish
Policy 3 – Design

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 1.7 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.

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

Parish Design Statement:

Planning Advice Notes:
Facilitating Appropriate Development
Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

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:

HDC Environmental Health Officer: No Comment

Natural England: No Objection – Subject to appropriate mitigation being secured.

Southern Water: Standard information provided for proposed soakaways and septic tanks.

WSCC Highways: No Objection - In summary, the LHA does not consider that this proposal would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety or result in ‘severe’ cumulative impacts on the

operation of the highway network, therefore is not contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 116), and that there are no transport grounds to resist the proposal.

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS:

Representations:
2 letters of representation letters have been received one neither objecting nor supporting the application the neighbouring resident, whose property is located directly behind the stables proposed for conversion into three holiday lets, has expressed concerns about the intended use of the units. They are particularly wary of potential noise and the uncertainty around who may be staying there. They are seeking reassurance that appropriate community disturbance policies will be in place to prevent disruptive behaviour or gatherings that could negatively impact neighbouring properties.

The second letter objects to the application, the neighbour claims that the application plan inaccurately represents the ownership boundaries, particularly concerning the proposed entrance. They refer to the Land Registry Title Deeds for East Cottage, which they believe provide a more accurate pictorial representation of the boundaries.

Parish Comments:
Woodmancote Parish Council: Objection - Woodmancote Parish Council objected to the application due to concerns over highway access, specifically the proposed entrance being located on a dangerous bend. They questioned why the entrance matches that of the Old Dairy (DC/23/1594) and recommended using the main northern entrance, which is also designated for emergency services and considered safer.

If Horsham District Council is minded approving the application, the Parish Council requested the following conditions:

- Exterior lighting should be downward-facing and sensor-controlled to reduce light pollution.
- Letting occupancy should be limited to a maximum of three months per unit.
- Ancillary use only – the building should remain incidental to the enjoyment of Blackstone Gate Farm and not be used as permanent residential accommodation.

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 2 of the HDPF directs development to the most sustainable locations within the settlement hierarchy. The application site lies outside of a defined Built-Up Area Boundary and is therefore located within the countryside, where development is more restricted. Policy 26 seeks to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, whilst allowing development that contributes positively to the rural economy where it is appropriate in scale and nature.

Policies 10 and 11 of the HDPF support rural economic development and tourism related uses where proposals represent sustainable rural diversification and are appropriate to their countryside location. These policies also support the reuse of existing rural buildings where the proposal contributes to the rural economy and respects the character of the surrounding area.

The application seeks the conversion of an existing stable building into three self-contained holiday-let units. The reuse of an existing rural building for visitor accommodation can, in principle, represent a sustainable form of development where it supports tourism and rural economic activity. The submitted Design and Access Statement confirms that the proposal involves internal alterations to the existing building without extending its footprint or height.

However, while the principle of reusing the building may be acceptable, the LPA must also consider whether the scale and intensity of the proposed use is appropriate to its countryside location. In this case, the proposal would introduce three separate visitor accommodation units within a modest stable building located within the residential curtilage of Blackstone Gate Farmhouse. Officers consider that the subdivision of the building into three units represents an intensified form of development within the countryside.

This concern is reinforced by the recent refusal of a proposal for a separate dwelling at the neighbouring Old Dairy site (application reference DC/24/0106), which involved a building of a comparable overall scale. The Council concluded that the creation of an additional residential unit in that location would represent an unjustified form of development in the countryside. In this context, the proposed introduction of three holiday-let units is considered excessive.

Whilst tourism uses may be supported where they provide genuine rural diversification, the proposal appears to represent an intensified form of residential-type accommodation rather than a clearly evidenced rural enterprise. Officers consider that a more limited form of development, such as a single holiday-let unit, may have been capable of being supported. However, the current proposal for three units would introduce a scale and intensity of use that is disproportionate to the site and its rural context. The proposal therefore conflicts with Policies 10, 11 and 26 of the HDPF.

Design and Appearance:

Policy 25 of the HDPF seeks to protect, conserve and enhance the natural environment and landscape character of the District, ensuring that development is designed to respect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Policy 32 requires high quality and inclusive design in all development, and expects proposals to be of a scale, massing and appearance that is appropriate to their context. Policy 33 further requires that development is of a high standard of design and layout, is sympathetic to the built form of the surroundings, makes efficient use of land, and respects the character of the locality.

Paragraph 135 of the NPPF reinforces the importance of design in decision-making, stating that significant weight should be given to development which reflects local design policies and guidance, and which enhances the overall quality of an area. Poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area should be refused.

The proposal would retain the existing footprint and height of the stable building, with external alterations limited primarily to the insertion of additional windows and doors. Whilst these physical alterations are relatively modest, the conversion of the building into three separate units would require

a degree of subdivision, domestic features and associated external activity that would alter the overall character and function of the building.

The stable building currently retains a simple agricultural appearance that is characteristic of rural equestrian structures within the surrounding countryside. The introduction of three separate holiday-let units would increase the number of domestic openings, external activity, parking demand and associated paraphernalia typically associated with residential accommodation. Collectively, these changes would erode the agricultural character of the building and introduce a more domesticated form of development within the rural landscape.

Officers consider that the scale and intensity of the proposed conversion would therefore result in an over-domestication of the building and its immediate setting, which would be harmful to the character of the countryside. Accordingly, the proposal conflicts with Policies 25, 32 and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

Residential Amenity:

Policy 33 of the HDPF requires that development should not result in unacceptable harm to the amenity of the occupiers of neighbouring properties.

Two representations have been received in relation to the proposal. One neighbouring resident expressed concerns regarding the potential for noise and disturbance arising from the use of the building as holiday accommodation, particularly given the uncertainty regarding the behaviour of short-term visitors. Another representation raised concerns regarding the accuracy of the submitted site boundary.

Whilst the Local Planning Authority acknowledges that the building has historically been used for equestrian purposes, the proposed use would introduce three separate holiday-let units near neighbouring residential properties. The occupation of three independent units would increase the number of visitors, vehicle movements and general activity associated with the site when compared with the existing stable use.

Given the close relationship between the stable building and neighbouring residential properties, the Local Planning Authority considers that the intro-duction of three holiday-let units would result in a level of activity and potential disturbance that could give rise to harm to neighbouring residential amenity.

Whilst such impacts might potentially be reduced through a more limited form of development, the proposed scale of three units would intensify activity on the site beyond what would be considered compatible with the residential character of the surrounding area. The proposal is therefore considered to conflict with Policy 33 of the Hors-ham District Planning Framework (2015).

Highways Impacts:

Policies 40 and 41 of the Horsham District Planning Framework state that development should provide a safe and adequate access, suitable for all users.

The application proposes converting existing stables into three holiday lets, with access via an existing vehicle entrance on Henfield Road (a B-classified road with a national speed limit). The LHA found no visibility concerns at the access point and does not anticipate a significant increase in traffic.

Five car parking spaces and cycle parking are proposed, with adequate space for vehicles to turn and exit in forward gear. While the rural location lacks nearby amenities and pedestrian infrastructure, cycling may be viable for experienced users, and public rights of way offer some connectivity.

Overall, the LHA concludes that the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety or cause severe cumulative effects on the road network and therefore does not conflict with paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Water Neutrality:

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 Biodiversity Gain Plan must show how the development will achieve the required minimum 10% BNG using the statutory biodiversity metric tool, and must demonstrate how the habitats will be managed and maintained for 30 years, starting from the date the development is completed. Off-site gains and significant on-site enhancements will be secured over this period by way of a Legal Agreement.

- The development qualifies as 'de minimis' under Regulation 4 of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024

Conclusions:

The proposal seeks the conversion of an existing stable building into three holiday-let units within the countryside. Whilst the reuse of existing rural buildings for tourism purposes can be supported in

principle, the LPA considers that the proposed development represents an excessive and unjustified scale of development within this countryside location.

The subdivision of the building into three units would introduce a level of intensity and activity that is disproportionate to the rural character of the site. The proposal would also lead to the domestication of the building and its setting and could give rise to increased disturbance to neighbouring residential properties.

Furthermore, the recent refusal of a comparable residential proposal at the neighbouring Old Dairy site demonstrates that the creation of additional residential-type units within this locality is not supported.

For these reasons, the proposal is considered to conflict with Policies 10, 11, 25, 26, 32 and 33 of the HDPF and the overarching objectives of the NPPF.

Recommendation: Application Refused

Reason for Refusal:

1 The proposed conversion of the existing stable building into three self-contained holiday-let units would represent an excessive and unjustified form of development within the countryside. The scale and intensity of the proposal would introduce a level of activity and residential type accommodation that is disproportionate to the rural character of the site and would fail to demonstrate that it represents an appropriate form of rural economic diversification. The proposal therefore conflicts with Policies 10, 11, and 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) and the overarching objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework, which seek to ensure that development within rural areas respects the intrinsic character of the countryside.

2 The proposed subdivision of the stable building into three separate units, together with the associated domestic activity and paraphernalia, would result in the over domestication of a building that currently retains a simple agricultural character. The proposal would therefore fail to respect the rural character of the building and its countryside setting, resulting in harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies 25, 32 and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

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/25/0524
Schedule of plans/documents **not approved**:

Plan Type	Description	Drawing Number	Received Date
Design & Access Statement		NONE	28.03.2025
Location plan		NONE	28.03.2025
Elevation & Floor plan	Existing roof	1979/1	28.03.2025
Elevation & Floor plan	Proposed roof	1979/2	28.03.2025
Site plan		1979/3	28.03.2025

Supporting Statement	Water Neutrality	NONE	27.06.2025

DELEGATED

Case Officer sign/initial Shazia Penne Date: 10.03.2026

Authorising Officer sign/initial RHERMITAGE Date: 28.04.2026