Horsham District Council

DELEGATED APPLICATIONS - ASSESSMENT SHEET

APPLICATION NO./ADDRESS:
DC/24/0505
Champions Farm, Storrington Road, Thakeham, West Sussex, RH20 3EF

DESCRIPTION:
Erection of a tractor shed (agriculture).

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

DC/24/0504	Erection of extension to an existing agriculture winery barn.	Application 14.03.2025	Permitted on
DC/18/1236	Replacement of 43 windows.	Application 14.12.2018	Permitted on
DC/18/2373	Raising of roof over existing annex with installation of french doors and replacement of existing window. (Householder Application)	Application 17.01.2019	Permitted on
DC/18/2374	Raising of roof over existing annex with installation of french doors and replacement of existing window. (Listed Building Consent)	Application 17.01.2019	Permitted on
DC/21/0068	Proposed internal alterations (Listed Building Consent)	Application 31.03.2021	Permitted on
DC/21/1864	Prior notification for the erection of a polytunnel.	Pending Consideration	
DC/22/1570	Installation of ground mounted solar 'PV' array and erection of outbuilding.	Application 20.10.2022	Permitted on
DISC/22/0352	Approval of Details Reserved by Condition 3 to approve application DC/22/1570.	Application 20.02.2023	Permitted on
DC/23/1227	Demolition of existing flat roof extension. Erection of single storey rear extensions (Householder Application).	Application 23.08.2023	Permitted on
DC/23/1228	Demolition of existing flat roof extension. Erection of single storey rear extensions (Listed Building Consent).	Application 23.08.2023	Permitted on
DC/23/1687	Use of an existing agricultural barn as a winery for the processing and storage of grapes grown (Certificate of Lawful Development Proposed)	Application 01.12.2023	Permitted on
DISC/23/0243	Approval of details reserved by condition 3 and 4 -to approved applications DC/23/1227	Application 02.02.2024	Permitted on
DISC/23/0244	Approval of details reserved by condition 3 and 4 to approved applications DC/23/1228	Application 02.02.2024	Permitted on

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

The application site comprises part of the 9.5-hectare Abingworth Vineyard, located on agricultural land associated with Champions Farm, Storrington Road, Thakeham, RH20 3EF. The site is situated approximately 1.5km south-west of Thakeham and 2km north of Storrington. The vineyard occupies a sloping, southerly facing hillside ranging from 30 to 50 metres above sea level, with views extending towards the South Downs to the south.

The land, forms part of Champions Farm, which is a Grade II Listed property (List Entry No. 1027204). The existing vineyard, established in 2022 by Abingworth Vineyard LLP, is accessed via a farm gate on Greenhurst Lane, positioned in the southeastern corner of the site. A public right of way runs along the ridgeline at the northern edge of the vineyard. A water main runs adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION

The application seeks full planning permission for the construction of a new, standalone tractor shed to serve Abingworth Vineyard. The proposed shed will be used for the secure storage of farm equipment and machinery essential to the ongoing viticultural operations of the site.

The proposed building does not include any water fixtures or fittings and will remain water neutral. The structure is located away from the Grade II Listed Champions Farmhouse and is screened by existing tree cover and an agricultural barn, resulting in negligible visual impact on the setting of the listed building. The proposal supports the continued diversification of the farm and contributes positively to the rural economy through the viability and operational efficiency of the vineyard enterprise.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Horsham District Planning Framework (2015):
Policy 1 - Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development
Policy 2 - Strategic Policy: Strategic 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 32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development
Policy 33 - Development Principles
Policy 35 - Strategic Policy: Climate Change
Policy 36 - Strategic Policy: Appropriate Energy Use
Policy 37 - Sustainable Construction
Policy 34 - Cultural and Heritage Assets
Policy 35 - Strategic Policy: Climate Change
Policy 36 - Strategic Policy: Appropriate Energy Use
Policy 37 - Sustainable Construction

Neighbourhood Plan:
Thakeham 6 – Design
Thakeham 7 – Heritage Assets
Thakeham 9 – Development in the Countryside

Horsham District Local Plan (2023-40) (Regulation 19):
Strategic Policy 1: Sustainable Development
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 13: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character

Strategic Policy 14: Countryside Protection
Strategic Policy 16: protected Landscapes
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
Policy 31: Rural Economic Development

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

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 Arboricultural Officer: No Objection - The Tree Officer provided two consultation responses regarding the proposed erection of a tractor shed at Champions Farm, Storrington Road, Thakeham. In the initial response dated 17 July 2024, it was confirmed that there was no objection to the proposal, provided that appropriate measures were taken to protect existing trees. It was noted that the development could be achieved without significant impact on the health of the principal mature trees and landscape elements if specialist above-ground (no-dig) construction techniques were employed, as recommended in the submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA). The report identified that some areas of proposed hardstanding fall within the minimum root protection areas of mature trees that contribute significantly to public amenity. To prevent detrimental effects on tree health, it was advised that utility connections be carefully sited, and that no-dig engineering be implemented. Consequently, it was recommended that planning permission, if granted, should be subject to conditions requiring the submission of an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) and detailed cross-sections showing finished ground levels, materials, construction depths, and edging methods for any works within root protection areas.

In a follow-up response, the Tree Officer addressed the resubmission of the tree report, confirming it was identical to the one previously assessed in July. It was noted that Tree T4, a dead poplar stem classified under Category U (unsuitable for retention), was recommended for removal by the report's author—independently of the development proposal. While the applicant intends to retain the tree, its status as dead means it does not constitute an arboricultural constraint on the proposed development. The officer concurred with the classification and confirmed that no further comments were necessary from an arboricultural perspective.

HDC Conservation: No Objection - The proposed building is similar to the existing and modern industrial sized shed to the east of the listed building. I am satisfied that this existing building does have an impact within the setting of the listed building but that this impact is neutral due to the distance between the principal and ancillary buildings and the limited intervisibility between the two. The proposed building will not increase the level of impact to the setting of the listed building. I am satisfied there will be no harm to the setting of the listed building. I have no conditions to suggest in this case.

Ecology Consultant: No Objection - The reviewed ecological reports indicate that the barn on site has negligible potential for bat roosting, while two trees with high bat roost potential will be retained, and no further bat surveys are necessary. The site lies within relevant conservation zones but outside critical core areas, with multiple bat records nearby. Habitat retention and enhancement measures, including scattered trees, broadleaf woodland, and new hedgerows, will maintain connectivity and prevent

severance of bat flight lines. A sensitive, wildlife-friendly lighting scheme is strongly recommended to mitigate light disturbance to bats, particularly Barbastelle bats, and should be secured by condition. With these mitigation and enhancement measures, including bird and bat boxes to support biodiversity net gain, the proposal is considered ecologically acceptable, with no adverse effects on designated sites, pending further assessment of Great Crested Newts by another specialist.

Nature Space: No Objection - The proposed development is not considered to be relevant to the District Licensing Scheme in this case and we consider there would be no likely impact on great crested newts or their habitats. I therefore have no comments to make at this time.

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS:

Representations:
None Received.

Parish Comments:
None Received

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 10 of the Horsham District Planning Framework addresses the sustainable use of land and emphasizes the importance of development that respects the character of the area while enabling economic, social, and environmental sustainability. This policy encourages development that contributes positively to rural areas, supporting businesses and growth while maintaining environmental and landscape quality. Policy 26 further supports sustainable development in the countryside where it can be demonstrated to meet essential agricultural needs and sustain or enhance the rural economy.

The National Planning Policy Framework (2024) paragraphs 88 and 89 encourages the sustainable growth and expansion of rural businesses, promoting well-designed new agricultural buildings. Furthermore, the NPPF's broader sustainable development objectives emphasize achieving a balanced approach between economic, social, and environmental goals.

The proposal involves erecting a standalone tractor shed at Champions Farm, Storrington Road, Thakeham, to support Abingworth Vineyard, a family-run viticultural enterprise established in 2022. This building will provide storage for equipment and machinery used in everyday vineyard operations and forms part of a wider farm diversification strategy.

The proposed tractor shed is directly related to the vineyard's operational needs and is therefore considered essential to its countryside location. The development does not involve a change of use of

the land, maintaining the site's primary agricultural character, which would be supported by the proposal. With the above in mind, the proposal would accord with the above referenced policies and is therefore acceptable in principle.

Design and Appearance:

Policies 25 and 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) require that development within the countryside protects, conserves, and enhances the landscape character and natural environment of the District. This includes safeguarding the existing landform, development pattern, and important landscape features, while maintaining settlement separation. Policy 26 further requires that development outside built-up area boundaries be essential to its countryside location.

Policies 32 and 33 of the HDPF emphasise the importance of high-quality design that is sensitive to both the natural and built environment.

Policy 10 of the Thakeham Parish Neighbourhood Plan (2017) supports development that protects and, where possible, enhances green infrastructure and valued landscape features such as prominent ridgelines, public rights of way, and hedgerows.

The proposed tractor shed is designed to support the needs of the Vineyard and is integral to the operation of the vineyard, proposed to serve the current use of the site. Its scale and siting are proportionate to its function and appropriate to the rural character of the area, ensuring the development does not cause any significant increase in activity or built form within the countryside. The site lies adjacent to a public right of way along the northern ridge of the vineyard. However, the proposed building is positioned at a lower elevation and is partially screened by existing trees and landform. Consequently, its visual impact on the wider landscape and public realm is limited and deemed acceptable. Importantly, the development does not result in the loss of any hedgerows, woodland, or other significant landscape features.

The tractor shed is a utilitarian agricultural structure. Its design and materials are typical of rural outbuildings. The tractor shed sports a steel portal frame and clad in dark green corrugated metal sheeting. The roof is pitched, continuing the use of corrugated metal, providing a cohesive industrial appearance. Open bays are evident along one elevation, offering easy access for machinery, and the structure rests on a simple concrete slab. Consideration has been given to the building's massing, height, and orientation, resulting in a discreet and harmonious addition to the site.

Overall, the proposal is integrated into its rural setting and demonstrates due regard for the surrounding landscape character, consistent with the objectives of both the HDPF and the Thakeham Parish Neighbourhood Plan.

Residential 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 and the significant separation distance from any neighbouring properties would be sufficient to prevent any unacceptable harm to neighbouring amenity.

Ecology:

Policy 31 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) emphasizes the need to conserve biodiversity, safeguard habitats, and ensure development avoids harm to protected species. In accordance with this policy, the proposed development has been subject to ecological assessment by Place Services, which confirms the scheme has been designed to avoid adverse ecological impacts and enhance biodiversity where possible.

The barn proposed is unlikely to support bat roosts, and key trees with high bat roost potential will be retained. The site is located within the wider conservation zone for The Mens SAC and Ebernoe

Common SAC, which support nationally significant populations of Barbastelle and Bechstein's bats. As a result, appropriate measures have been incorporated to avoid disruption to potential bat flight paths and ensure habitat connectivity is preserved. These include retention of existing broadleaf woodland and scattered trees, planting of native hedgerows and additional trees, and grassland enhancement.

To mitigate potential light disturbance to foraging and commuting bats, particularly Barbastelle bats, a sensitive lighting strategy following current best practice guidance is proposed. In addition, a planning condition prohibiting external lighting has been applied to provide further protection. Biodiversity enhancements, such as bird and bat boxes, will also contribute to net biodiversity gain in line with Policy 31.

Great Crested Newts have also been considered. Following consultation with NatureSpace, it has been confirmed that the proposal does not fall within the District Licensing Scheme and is unlikely to result in any adverse impacts on this species or its habitat. Accordingly, no objections have been raised, and no further measures are required at this time.

In relation to potential impacts on internationally designated habitats, a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) has been undertaken. The Appropriate Assessment concludes that, with standard mitigation measures secured by condition—including habitat retention, compensatory planting, and a wildlife-sensitive lighting scheme—the development will not result in an Adverse Effect on the Integrity (AEOI) of The Mens SAC or Ebernoe Common SAC. As the mitigation measures are standard, not bespoke, and fully conditioned, no consultation with Natural England is required.

Overall, the proposed development meets the requirements of Policy 31 by avoiding harm to protected species and habitats and by delivering ecological enhancements that support local biodiversity.

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.

It is considered that the proposed development would not result in a greater water demand than the existing arrangement as the store would not include mains water connection. As such, there is no clear or compelling evidence to suggest the nature and scale of the proposed development would result in a more intensive occupation of the site necessitating an increased consumption of water that would result in a significant impact on the Arun Valley SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. 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 193 and the Council's obligations under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG):

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). This requires that development must achieve at least 10% BNG on all habitats within the development site.

The Applicant has submitted a Biodiversity Metric which demonstrates the statutory Biodiversity Metric calculation, where it is expected that the proposed scheme will result in a net gain of 0.37 (+10.36%) habitat units. The linear feature calculation for the proposed scheme expects a gain of 0.12 linear units. The current scheme satisfies the trading rules within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric.

In the event the application is approved, it is a condition of the planning permission that a Biodiversity Net Gain Plan, including a Metric Tool calculation, be submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This should show how the development will achieve BNG 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 have been secured over this period by way of a s106 Legal Agreement.

Conclusions:

The proposed standalone tractor shed at Champions Farm meets an essential operational need for the vineyard, respects the countryside location, and preserves the landscape, heritage, and residential amenity. The design is appropriate and sited to minimize visual impact, ecological assessments demonstrate no adverse effects and provide for biodiversity enhancements. Water neutrality is maintained, ensuring compliance with environmental protections. Overall, the proposal is considered acceptable.

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-commencement Condition:** Prior to the commencement of works, cross sections/details indicating the proposed finished ground levels, surface materials including sub-base and depth and extent of construction and method/materials used for edging, within root protection areas around retained trees shall be submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: As this matter is fundamental to ensure the successful and satisfactory retention of important trees and hedgerows on the site in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015)

4 **Pre-commencement (Slab Level) Condition**: Prior to any works above slab level, a Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy for protected, Priority and threatened species, prepared by a suitably qualified ecologist in line with the recommendations of the Ground Level Tree Assessment (Xenia Ecology, May 2025) and Bat Scoping Report (The Ecology Co-op Ltd., November 2023) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

The content of the Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy shall include the following:

a) Purpose and conservation objectives for the proposed enhancement measures;
b) detailed designs or product descriptions to achieve stated objectives;
c) locations of proposed enhancement measures by appropriate maps and plans (where relevant);
d) persons responsible for implementing the enhancement measures; and
e) details of initial aftercare and long-term maintenance (where relevant).

The works shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details shall be retained in that manner thereafter.

Reason: To enhance protected, Priority and threatened species and allow the LPA to discharge its duties under paragraph 187d of NPPF 2024 and s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (as amended).

5 **Regulatory Condition**: All mitigation measures and/or works shall be carried out in accordance with the details contained in Ground Level Tree Assessment (Xenia Ecology, May 2025) and Bat Scoping Report (The Ecology Co-op Ltd., November 2023), as already submitted with the planning application and agreed in principle with the local planning authority prior to determination.

This may include the appointment of an appropriately competent person e.g. an ecological clerk of works (ECoW) to provide on-site ecological expertise during construction. The appointed person shall undertake all activities, and works shall be carried out, in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To conserve protected and Priority species and allow the LPA to discharge its duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (as amended).

6 **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).

7 **Regulatory Condition**: No external lighting or floodlighting shall be installed other than with the permission of the Local Planning Authority by way of formal application.

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

8 **Regulatory Condition**: Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 or Orders amending or revoking and re-enacting the same, the proposed tractor shed hereby permitted shall be used only for the storage of agricultural equipment and agricultural machinery used in connection with the maintenance of the landholding at Champions Farm, Storrington Road, Thakeham (as identified on the approved plans) and shall not be used for any other commercial trade or business nor as a separate living accommodation.

Reason: The site lies in an area where, in accordance with Policy 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) development which cannot be justified as essential to the needs of agriculture or forestry 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: Submit a biodiversity gain plan - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

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-net-gain.

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.

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/24/0505
Schedule of plans/documents **approved**:

Plan Type	Description	Drawing Number	Received Date
Supporting Statement	Biodiversity Impact Assessment	NONE	02.07.2024
Supporting Statement	Biodiversity Metric Calculations (excel)	NONE	02.07.2024
Location & Site plan	As existing	24523/P200	02.04.2024
Site plan	As proposed	24523/P200	02.04.2024
Elevation & Floor plan	Roof, as proposed	24523/P202	02.04.2024
Supporting Statement	Planning and Water Neutrality	NONE	02.04.2024
Supporting Statement	Arboricutural Report	NONE	27.08.2024
Supporting Statement	Bat Scoping Report	NONE	02.04.2024
Supporting Statement	Heritage	NONE	02.07.2024
Supporting Statement	Bat Assessment	NONE	05.05.2025

DELEGATED

Case Officer sign/initial Shazia Penne Date: 28.05.2025

Authorising Officer sign/initial RHERMITAGE Date: 30.05.2025