Horsham District Council

DELEGATED APPLICATIONS - ASSESSMENT SHEET

APPLICATION NO./ADDRESS:
DC/25/0130
Woodlawn Surgery, High Street, Partridge Green, West Sussex, RH13 8HR

DESCRIPTION:
Change of use of ground floor Doctor's Surgery (Use Class E) to create 1no. residential dwelling (C3).

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

WG/98/88	C/u from residential to doctors surgery & single storey xtn	Application Permitted on 05.01.1989

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE
The application site comprises the easternmost ground floor unit at Woodlawn, located on the High Street in Partridge Green, West Sussex. Formerly known as Woodlawn Surgery, the premises were historically used as a doctor's surgery (Use Class E) but have remained vacant since December 2023 following formal closure supported by NHS Sussex due to low patient uptake and the availability of nearby medical alternatives.

The building itself is not listed, lies outside of any conservation area, and forms part of a larger property that has been subdivided into five residential units, with shared access from the High Street and an additional entrance at the rear. The site falls within the Built-Up Area Boundary (BUAB) of Partridge Green and benefits from sustainable access to local services, amenities, and public transport options.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION
This application seeks full planning permission for the change of use of the ground floor doctor's surgery (Class E) to a single one-bedroom residential dwelling (Class C3).

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES
The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Horsham District Planning Framework (2015):
Policy 25 - Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
Policy 31 - Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
Policy 32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development
Policy 33 - Development Principles
Policy 34 - Cultural and Heritage Assets
Policy 40 - Sustainable Transport
Policy 41 – Parking
Policy 43 - Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation

West Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan
Policy 5 – Community Facilities

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF requires that all development plans complete their reviews no later than 5 years from their adoption. Horsham District Council is currently in the process of reviewing its development plan however at this stage the emerging policies carry only limited weight in decision making. As the HDPF is now over 5 years old, the most important policies for the determination of this application must be considered as to whether they are 'out of date' (NPPF paragraph 11d). This includes, for applications involving the provision of housing, whether the Council can demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites (NPPF footnote 8).

The Council is currently unable to demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites, with the supply currently calculated as being 2.9 years. The presumption in favour of development within Paragraph 11d) of the NPPF therefore applies in the consideration of all applications for housing development within the District (unless footnote 7 or Paragraph 14 applies to relevant applications), with Policies 2, 4, 15 and 26 now carrying only moderate weight in decision making.

All other policies within the HDPF as itemised above have been assessed against the NPPF and are considered to be consistent such that they continue to attract significant weight in decision making.

Horsham District Local Plan (2023-40) (Regulation 19):
Strategic Policy 1: Sustainable Development
Strategic Policy 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 19: Development Quality
Strategic Policy 20: Development Principles
Strategic Policy 24: Sustainable Transport
Policy 25: Parking
Policy 28: Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation
Strategic Policy 37: Housing Provision

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:
Natural England: No Objection – Subject to appropriate mitigation being secured. The delivery, management and maintenance of any measures identified in the applicant's water neutrality statement that are required to ensure that the proposed development will not result in increased levels of abstraction within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone.

Southern Water: Insufficient Information Provided - The applicant has not provided details of the proposed means of disposal of foul/surface water drainage from the site. Southern Water is unable to comment fully on this Planning Consultation until such time as the relevant information is provided.

WSCC Highways: No Objection - The Local Highway Authority does not consider that the 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.

Representations:
None Received.

Parish Comments:
West Grinstead Parish Council: Object, the proposal is contrary to Neighbourhood Plan Policy 5 (section 3) which states:

"*Development proposals which result in the loss of existing community buildings will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that the continued use is no longer feasible, taking in-to account factors such as: appropriate marketing; the demand for the use of the site or premises; its quality and usability; and the identification of a potential future occupier*".

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:

Loss of Dental Facility

The proposal seeks full planning permission to convert the former Woodlawn Surgery (Use Class E) into a one-bedroom flat (Use Class C3).

Policy 43 of the HDPF seeks to retain community facilities, allowing for their loss only where:

(1) the facility is no longer needed;
(2) marketing demonstrates a lack of viable demand for its continued use; or
(3) an alternative, equivalent or improved facility exists within a reasonable distance.

Policy 5 of the West Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan similarly seeks to protect community buildings from loss unless their continued use is no longer feasible. Policy 5, Section 3, specifically requires evidence of appropriate marketing, demand assessment, and identification of any potential future occupiers.

In response to the above, the applicant has provided detailed evidence in the form of a Marketing Statement and Agent Letter from Henry Adams Commercial, confirming an active marketing campaign lasting nine months. During this time, the property was advertised through all major commercial property platforms (Zoopla, EG Propertylink, PrimeLocation, LoopNet), on-site signage, targeted agent outreach, and social media. It is understood that the unit received six viewings, all from parties interested solely in residential conversion. No viable interest was generated for continued commercial use of the premises, and it is noted that the original planning permission included a condition which restricted use to a doctor's surgery which significantly limited potential alternative community use.

The supporting documents set out that the closure of Woodlawn Surgery was formally endorsed by NHS Sussex's Chief Primary Care Officer, citing exceptionally low patient engagement and confirming that the loss would have minimal clinical impact due to suitable nearby alternatives, including a full-time surgery located approximately 100 metres away at Village Hall Lane and a branch facility 3.2 miles away in Cowfold, both operated by Henfield Medical Centre.

It is considered that the submitted information, which includes information on the closure of the dormer use, evidence of marketing, and the proximity of alternative facilities in the vicinity of the site, is such that the change of use would accord with the above policies and is acceptable in principle.

Proposed Residential Use

Policy 3 of the HDPF states that development will be permitted within towns and villages which have defined built-up areas, and that any infilling and redevelopment will be required to demonstrate that it is of an appropriate nature and scale to maintain characteristics and function of the settlement.

The site is within the built-up area of Partridge Green with the formation of 1 additional dwelling considered in keeping with the characteristics and function of the settlement. The principle of housing on the site is therefore considered acceptable and in accordance with the above policy.

Design and Appearance:

Policies 32 and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) require development to be of a high standard of design, ensure efficient use of land, and reinforce the locally distinctive character of the district.

The re-use of an existing commercial premises with no change to its external form would not have any adverse impact on the prevailing character or appearance of the locality, and would be in keeping with the existing domestic character of the building. The proposal does not raise any concerns in respect of the above policy.

Residential Amenity:

Policy 32 of the HDPF states that development will be expected to provide an attractive, functional, accessible, safe, and adaptable environment that contribute a sense of place both in the buildings and spaces themselves. Policy 33 continues that development shall be required to ensure that it is designed to avoid unacceptable harm to the amenity of occupiers/users of nearby property and land.

Adjoining Properties / Land

The building at Woodlawn is already in mixed residential use, comprising multiple self-contained flats across the ground and upper floors. The proposed one-bedroom unit will occupy the easternmost section of the ground floor and mirrors the existing residential layouts within the property. The introduction of a further residential unit would not be expected to generate harmful levels of noise or disturbance, with no other unacceptable impacts considered likely to result.

Future Occupants

The proposed flat would provide a gross internal area of approximately 42.2m², which exceeds the national minimum space standards for a one-person dwelling (37m²), and the key habitable rooms would benefit from adequate natural light and ventilation. There is an existing bin store to the rear of the site which the proposed development would likely make use of.

The proposed residential unit would abut a neighbouring Class E retail unit in use as a local convenience store. This relationship creates potential for noise and disturbance for future occupants of the unit. It is though noted that a similar relationship exists at first floor level and the commercial unit is not open during the night-time period (11pm to 6am). The relationship between the application site and neighbouring commercial unit is not considered one which would as a matter of course be unusual or unexpected, and the proposal would not prejudice the future viability of the commercial unit. Further, it is considered that the proposal would provide an acceptable standard of accommodation for future occupants.

Highways Impacts:

Policies 40 and 41 of the HDPF states that development should provide safe and adequate access and parking, suitable for all users.

The proposal includes one off-road allocated parking space to the rear of the building, consistent with the requirements set out by West Sussex County Council's parking standards for a one-bedroom dwelling in this location. The site is accessible to local amenities, including shops, services, and a public house within walking distance. Furthermore, the nearest bus stops on the B2135 High Street are a short distance away, providing sustainable transport links to surrounding settlements such as Horsham, Henfield, and Steyning.

West Sussex County Council Highways has reviewed the proposal and raised no objections, confirming that the development would not result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety or generate severe cumulative impacts on the highway network. There are no physical alterations proposed to the existing vehicular access arrangements. Given the small scale of the proposal and its location within a built-up and accessible village centre, the proposed change of use is not expected to materially increase traffic movements, parking pressure, or demand for on-street parking.

The application site includes an area of land to the rear of the building, which would provide a secondary access from the rear of the site (where the off-street parking space is proposed). This area of land would be sufficient to provide parking for a cycle and no further details of this arrangement are considered necessary.

The development is considered to comply with the above Policies in respect of highway related matters.

Water Neutrality:

The application site falls within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone, where water abstraction is known to affect the integrity of designated European protected sites in the Arun Valley SAC, SPA, and Ramsar areas. As such, all new developments in this zone are required to demonstrate that they achieve water neutrality, as advised by Natural England's Position Statement.

A Water Neutrality Statement, prepared by CGS Civils Ltd and dated December 2024, has been submitted in support of the application. The report confirms that the proposed dwelling, through the use of water-efficient fixtures and fittings, will achieve a daily water consumption of 117.53 litres, compared to an existing consumption of 123.56 litres per day from the former surgery use. The resulting net reduction of water use on site confirms that the proposal will not result in an increase in abstraction and can therefore be deemed water neutral.

Natural England has been consulted and raised no objection, subject to a planning condition securing the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures. Such a condition has been applied to ensure that the development complies with Policy 31 of the HDPF, the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, and Paragraphs 179 and 180 of the NPPF (2024). The application therefore successfully addresses the issue of water neutrality and avoids adverse impacts on protected habitats.

Climate Change:

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 includes the following measures to build resilience to climate change and reduce carbon emissions:

- Dedicated refuse and recycling storage capacity
- Cycle parking facilities

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). The development is considered to qualify as 'de minimis' under Regulation 4 of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024

Conclusions:

The development is considered to accord with relevant local and national planning polices and is therefore recommended for approval.

Recommendation: Application Permitted

Conditions:

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

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

3 **Pre-occupation Condition**: The development hereby permitted shall be undertaken in full accordance with the water neutrality strategy (Water Neutrality Statement received 28.01.2025). The dwelling hereby permitted shall not be first occupied until evidence has been submitted to and been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority that the approved water neutrality strategy has been implemented in full. The evidence shall include the specification of fittings and appliances used, evidence of their installation, and completion of the as built Part G water calculator or equivalent. The installed measures shall be retained as such thereafter.

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

4 **Regulatory Condition**: No works relating to the construction of the development hereby approved shall take place outside of 08:00 hours to 18:00 hours Mondays to Fridays and 08:00 hours to 13:00 hours on Saturdays nor at any time on Sundays, Bank or public Holidays, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of adjacent occupiers in accordance with Policy 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/25/0130

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

Schedule of plans/documents **approved**:

Plan Type	Description	Drawing Number	Received Date

Supporting Statement	Planning	NONE	28.01.2025
Supporting Docs	Water Neutrality Report	NONE	28.01.2025
Elevation & Floor plan	Existing and Proposed, Block and Location	01	28.01.2025

DELEGATED

Case Officer sign/initial Shazia Penne Date: 24.03.2025

Authorising Officer sign/initial Guy Everest Date: 25.03.2025