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Horsham District Council
Parkside
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West Sussex
RH12 1RL

Date: 2 October 2025
Our ref: 09735

For the attention of: Matthew Porter

Application ref: DC/25/1029
Location: Kingfisher Farm West Chiltington Lane Billingshurst West Sussex
Proposal/Description: Use of the land for the stationing of caravans for residential purposes for 5 gypsy pitches together with the formation of additional parking, hard standing, landscaping and utility/dayrooms ancillary to that use.

Thank you for consulting with Place Services on the above Full planning application. This letter sets out our consultation response on the landscape impact of the application and how the proposal relates and responds to the landscape setting and context of the site.

Summary

Not supportive on landscape grounds	☐
No landscape objection subject to attached recommendations and / or conditions	☒
Further information required prior to determination	☐
No landscape comments / does not wish to comment	☐

This review is based on a desktop study without a site visit of the above-referenced application and its submitted documents. Our Landscape comments are as follows:

Site Context:

The application site is located in the countryside, with the built-up areas of Billinghurst around 2.5km to the west, and Barns Green around 1km to the east. To the north is an area for which. The site is currently developed.

Planning Policy Context:

Horsham District Planning Framework

The Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) (HDPF) Proposals Maps identifies the site as being located outside the defined built-up area boundary and therefore designated as countryside. The following policies are considered relevant:

- Policy 26: Countryside Protection sets out a presumption against development unless for agriculture, forestry minerals, quiet informal recreation or ensures the sustainable development of rural areas. The Policy also states that development permitted must be of a scale appropriate to its countryside character location and must not lead, either individually or cumulatively, to a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside and/or conserves, and / or enhances, the key features and characteristics of the landscape character area in which it is located.

- Policy 23: Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation sets out the following [inter alia];
    - *"There must be no significant barriers to development exist in terms of flooding, poor drainage, poor ground stability or proximity to other hazardous land or installation where conventional housing would not be suitable*
    - *The site must also be large enough to provide adequate vehicle parking, including circulation space, along with residential amenity and play areas*
    - *The site is located in or near to existing settlements, or is part of an allocated strategic location, within reasonable distance of a range of local services and community facilities, in particular schools and essential health services*
    - *The development will not have an unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the landscape and the amenity of neighbouring properties and is sensitively designed to mitigate any impact on its surroundings."*

- Policy 25: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character sets out that development proposals will be required to protect, conserve, and enhance the landscape character, taking into account areas identified as being of landscape importance, the individual settlement characteristics, and maintains settlement separation.

- Policy 31: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity requires development to contribute to the enhancement of existing biodiversity and should also be compliant with Policy 33: Development Principles which states that proposals should be distinctive in character, respect the character of the surrounding area (including its overall setting, views and green corridors) and, where available and applicable, take account of the recommendations/policies of the relevant Design Statements and Character Assessments.

Itchingfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2015 – 2031 (IPNP)

The Neighbourhood Plan was subject to successful Examination but cannot proceed to Referendum because of the legal requirements in relation to Water Neutrality and the Habitat Regulations. Therefore, we consider the following policies relevant:

- Policy 1: Green Infrastructure conservation
- Policy 2: Biodiversity conservation
- Policy 5: Protection of green infrastructure
- Policy 12: Design of housing.

Of further relevance is Aim 5: Traveller Sites, which states: *"Save as for 10 pitches (together with touring 4 caravans) at Greenfield Farm, West Chiltington Lane, Barns Green, Itchingfield, and 11 pitches at Kingfisher Farm, West Chiltington Lane, Barns Green; any suggested need for further, or fewer, pitches or additional caravans within the parish will be looked at again when the review of the draft Horsham District Council Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Draft Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) (December 2017) is available."*

Review of the proposal/submitted information

The site falls within LW6 Central Low Weald of the Landscape Character Assessment of West Sussex (2003). Key characteristics relevant to the site and its context include:

- Predominantly small to medium-sized pasture fields, enclosed by woodlands, shaws and Hedgerows
- Dense cover of ancient broadleaved woodlands and conifer plantations
- Local concentrations of horse grazed paddocks and golf course development.

Key issues of change include poor hedgerow and woodland management, fragmentation of hedgerows and loss of hedgerow trees and pasture or field trees, increased traffic and suburban development, in particular around Southwater and Billingshurst settlement fringes, and along main roads.

Landscape and visual sensitivities include:

- Unsympathetic urban development, changes in settlement pattern and addition of suburban features.
- Changes in land management practices leading to change in field sizes, and loss of hedgerows and isolated pasture trees, loss of tranquillity.
- Subdivision of fields and changes in boundary styles linked to increase in horse paddocks are also considered a sensitivity.

Although this is considered in association with horse paddocks, the subdivision of the field parcel to accommodate individual plots is considered comparable. Furthermore, historic features include small and medium-sized assarts, linear patterns associated with droveways and irregular fields radiating out from settlements; historic mapping identifies the sites original field pattern to include two medium sized linear fields separated by a tree belt along their length.

The site is identified as Landscape Character Type G: Wooded Small Scale Farmlands, Landscape Character Area (LCA) G2 – Itchingfield and Barns Green Wooded Farmlands of the Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment (2003). This character area largely reflects the characteristics of the application site, and key characteristics described as horse grazing and set aside fields, narrow country lanes and a strong sense of enclosure. The Character Assessment also describes the overall landscape condition in this area as 'declining' with a moderate overall sensitivity to change. Key sensitivities include *"further small-scale incremental erosion of character such as suburban features."*

Policy 23 of the HDPF states that for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation *"The development will not have an unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the landscape and the amenity of neighbouring properties and is sensitively designed to mitigate any impact on its surroundings".*

The application has not been accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) to demonstrate that the application does not have unacceptable landscape and visual impacts, though we have made the professional judgement that given the intimate enclosed nature of the site, visual impact would be limited. However, we have concerns regarding impact on landscape character, where urbanising features of the proposals will have a negative effect

on the tranquillity of the small, enclosed horse paddocks as described in both aforementioned Landscape Character Assessments.

Furthermore, the proposals directly influence key sensitivities within both LCAs, particularly due to the subdivision and incremental erosion of their character. The cumulative impact of the proposals alongside existing similar developments amplifies the overall effects. Additionally, the lack of meaningful landscape interventions provides minimal mitigation of the adverse negative effects.

These conclusions are shared with Inspector in the combined appeal (Appeal Decisions APP/Z3825/C/16/3153910, APP/Z3825/C/16/3153915, APP/Z3825/W/17/3188942, APP/Z3825/W/17/3188945) where paragraphs 76-84 discuss matters of character and appearance. Notably para 83 the inspector notes *"In conclusion, the harm to the visual amenity and the appearance of its surroundings is limited. However, the development results in harm to landscape character, harm that is increased markedly by the cumulative impact."*

We agree that visual impact will be limited; albeit previous consultation at DC/24/1290 - Greenacres Farm West Chiltington Lane Billingshurst West Sussex (dated 18/10/2024) identified some loss of hedgerow along West Chiltington Lane which we considered unacceptable noting *"received site photos indicate a section of hedgerow has been removed to facilitate a new access point. This reduces the enclosure of the site impacting both visual amenity from West Chiltington Lane and a key characteristic of the landscape."* While outside of the site, this loss of enclosure will undoubtedly increase the visual sensitivity along West Chiltington Lane of the proposals.

Proposed Hedges

We acknowledge the proposals include hedgerows surrounding each pitch on three sides, as shown on the 'Proposed Site Plan' (Drawing: 0179.LIB.XX.00.DR.LD.2100.D5). The introduction of these hedgerows has the potential of benefitting biodiversity and will reinstate a historic boundary on the western side.

Summary:

While the proposals raise concerns regarding adverse impacts on landscape character, the countryside setting, site location, we acknowledge that the limited visual prominence of the site and the inclusion of mitigation measures such as new hedgerow planting around each pitch are step towards reducing adverse impacts overall. Additionally, the site may be considered acceptable as an extension to the northern parcel, in spatial terms.

In order to deliver adequate mitigation on the impact of LCA G2 – Itchingfield and Barns Green Wooded Farmlands, we encourage the applicant to consider restoring the lost historic tree belt, spanning the length of the wider field parcel to the west, as a means of improving landscape character and reducing the adverse effects of the proposed development. (See below)



Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries in relation to this advice.

Place Services – Landscape Team

Email: landscape@essex.gov.uk

Place Services provide landscape advice on behalf of Horsham District Council.

Please note: This letter is advisory and should only be considered as the opinion formed by specialist staff in relation to this particular matter.