



DELEGATED APPLICATIONS - ASSESSMENT SHEET

APPLICATION NO./ADDRESS:

DC/26/0999

Lee Place, The Stables, Blackgate Lane, Pulborough, West Sussex, RH20 1DF

DESCRIPTION:

Extension to existing sandschool.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

DC/23/1225 Conversion of existing dairy building into residential accommodation. Withdrawn Application
Siting of an external free standing air source heat pump. Retrospective on 24.07.2024
permission for catslide roof extension for pool/pond equipment.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

The application site comprises part of an established commercial equestrian facility at Lee Place. The site is situated within a rural location in Billingshurst Parish, outside the defined Built-Up Area Boundary.

The existing sand school forms part of the established equestrian use of the site and measures approximately 20 metres by 60 metres. It comprises a sand and fibre riding surface and is enclosed in part by established vegetation, including a mixed native hedgerow and trees along its northern boundary. The wider site contains existing equestrian buildings and associated facilities.

The existing access, parking and drainage arrangements serving the equestrian operation would remain unchanged as a result of the proposal.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION

Planning permission is sought for the extension of the existing sand school along its northern side. The extension would increase the width of the arena by approximately 10 metres, from 20 metres to 30 metres, whilst retaining its existing length of 60 metres. The resulting arena would therefore measure approximately 30 metres by 60 metres. The submitted plan confirms that the existing sand and fibre surface, access and drainage arrangements would be retained.

The proposal does not involve the erection of any buildings or a change in the established commercial equestrian use. The applicant advises that there would be no increase in horse numbers, staff, customer numbers or vehicle movements and no material intensification of the authorised use.

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 7 - Strategic Policy: Economic Growth
Policy 9 - Employment Development
Policy 10 - Rural Economic Development
Policy 25 - Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
Policy 26 - Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection
Policy 29 - Equestrian Development
Policy 31 - Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
Policy 32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development
Policy 33 - Development Principles
Policy 37 - Sustainable Construction

Billingshurst Neighbourhood Plan:

The Billingshurst Neighbourhood Plan was formally made on 23 June 2021.

Policy Bill 2 – Housing Design and Character

Policy Bill 3 – Energy Efficiency and Design

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: Comment - No objection in principle, subject to appropriate landscaping mitigation secured by condition. The proposed loss of the northern boundary hedgerow and adjacent trees can be satisfactorily compensated through replacement planting.

The existing sand school is enclosed by a mature mixed native hedgerow that contributes positively to the rural character of the site. The proposed extension would necessitate removal of the northern section of hedgerow and could result in the loss of two nearby trees, comprising a Norway maple and a horse chestnut. While retention of the tree stems may be technically possible, construction activities are likely to cause significant root disturbance and would require substantial pruning to maintain an appropriate relationship with the enlarged facility.

Given that both trees are ornamental specimens and are of varying quality, their loss could be adequately mitigated through replacement planting. Subject to agreement by the Landscape Team, suitable mitigation would include the provision of a new mixed native species hedgerow along the revised boundary at a density of five plants per linear metre, together with replacement tree planting positioned further north and at a greater distance from the facility.

The proposed landscape mitigation is considered sufficient to offset the vegetation loss and could be secured through an appropriate landscaping condition or a pre-commencement landscaping scheme.

Nature Space: No Objection – The Ecology Officer advises that no ecological information has been submitted with the application, although the planning statement confirms that sections of the northern boundary hedgerow, and potentially some trees, will need to be removed to facilitate the development. A pond is located approximately 120 metres north of the site, and the application site falls within an amber impact zone for GCN, indicating the presence of suitable habitat in the surrounding area. Whilst a full ecological survey is not considered proportionate given the scale and likely impacts of the proposal, it is recommended that a Precautionary Working Methods Statement is secured. The PWMS should be prepared by a suitably qualified ecologist and include measures for vegetation clearance,

management of trenches and construction materials, and procedures to be followed should a Great Crested Newt be encountered during works. The statement should be submitted for approval by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development.

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS:

Representations:

None Received

Parish Comments:

Billingshurst Parish Council: No Objection

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 26 of the HDPF seeks to protect the rural character and undeveloped nature of the countryside whilst allowing development which is appropriate to a countryside location. Policy 29 relates specifically to equestrian development and supports equestrian-related proposals where the scale and level of activity are appropriate to the location and the development is satisfactorily integrated with its surroundings. These policies are relevant given that the proposal concerns an existing commercial equestrian facility within a rural location.

The NPPF 2026 supports the sustainable growth and expansion of businesses in rural areas, including through the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses. In considering development in rural areas, regard should also be given to whether the proposal is sensitive to its surroundings and appropriate to its location.

The application relates to an established commercial equestrian facility and seeks to extend the existing sand school by approximately 10 metres along its northern side, increasing the arena from approximately 20m x 60m to 30m x 60m. There would be no change to the established commercial equestrian use of the site.

The applicant states that the extension is required to provide a safer and more practical riding area for professional schooling and show jump training. The proposal would not result in an increase in horse numbers, staff, customer numbers or vehicle movements and would not materially intensify the authorised commercial use.

The proposal therefore represents a proportionate operational improvement to an established equestrian business rather than the introduction of a new or unrelated use within the countryside.

Given the nature and scale of the development and its functional relationship with the existing equestrian use, the proposal is considered appropriate to its countryside location.

Accordingly, the principle of development is acceptable and accords with Policies 26 and 29 of the HDPF and the relevant provisions of the NPPF 2026.

Design and Appearance:

Policy 25 of the HDPF seeks to protect, conserve and enhance the landscape and townscape character of the District, including the pattern of existing landscape features. Policy 26 seeks to protect the rural character and undeveloped nature of the countryside. Policies 32 and 33 require development to be of a high quality and to respond appropriately to the character and appearance of its surroundings. These policies are relevant to the proposal given its countryside location and the presence of established boundary vegetation. The NPPF 2026 similarly seeks to ensure that development is sympathetic to local character and landscape setting and achieves a high standard of design.

The proposal comprises a 10-metre extension along the northern side of the existing sand school, increasing its overall dimensions from approximately 20m x 60m to 30m x 60m. The extension would retain the existing sand and fibre riding surface and would not introduce any new buildings or other substantial built form.

The extension would require the removal of the northern section of the existing mixed native hedgerow and could result in the loss of a Norway maple and horse chestnut. The Council's Arboricultural Officer raises no objection in principle and considers that the vegetation loss can be satisfactorily mitigated through replacement planting, comprising a new mixed native species hedgerow along the revised boundary together with replacement tree planting further north.

Given the low-profile nature of the proposal, its position immediately adjoining the existing sand school and the proposed replacement landscaping, the extension would remain visually associated with the established equestrian facility and would not result in unacceptable harm to the rural character or appearance of the surrounding area.

Accordingly, subject to the replacement landscaping being secured by condition, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of character and appearance and accords with Policies 25, 26, 32 and 33 of the HDPF and the relevant provisions of the NPPF 2026.

Residential Amenity:

Policy 33 of the HDPF requires development to have regard to the amenities of existing and future occupiers and to ensure that development does not cause unacceptable harm through matters including overlooking, loss of privacy, loss of daylight or sunlight, noise, disturbance and other environmental effects.

The proposal comprises the extension of an existing sand school within an established commercial equestrian facility. No new buildings or change of use are proposed, and the applicant confirms that the development would not result in an increase in horse numbers, staff, customer numbers or vehicle movements and would not materially intensify the existing commercial use.

Given the nature of the development and the absence of any material intensification of the existing use, the proposal is not considered to result in any significant increase in noise, disturbance or other activity that would adversely affect neighbouring residential occupiers. Furthermore, no representations have been received from neighbouring properties.

Accordingly, the proposal would not result in unacceptable harm to the amenities of neighbouring properties and is considered to accord with Policy 33 of the HDPF.

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 N6 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) requires applicable development to achieve a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain. Planning permission is subject to the statutory biodiversity gain condition requiring a Biodiversity Gain Plan to be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to commencement.

The Applicant has submitted a Biodiversity Metric which demonstrates that the development would achieve an 11.71% net gain in area habitat units and a 125.15% net gain in hedgerow units. The biodiversity gains would be delivered wholly on-site through habitat enhancement, including replacement native hedgerow and additional native tree planting. No off-site biodiversity units or statutory biodiversity credits are required.

The submitted metric therefore demonstrates that the statutory minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain can be achieved. The statutory biodiversity gain condition will apply requiring the submission and approval of a Biodiversity Gain Plan prior to commencement of the development.

Conclusions:

The proposal represents a proportionate extension to an established commercial equestrian facility and is acceptable in principle. The extension would remain closely related to the existing sand school and, subject to replacement landscaping, would not cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the countryside. The proposal would not materially intensify the existing use or

adversely affect neighbouring residential amenity, while the submitted Biodiversity Metric demonstrates that the statutory BNG requirement can be achieved on-site.

The proposal is therefore considered to accord with the relevant provisions of the HDPF and the NPPF 2026, and planning permission is recommended.

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:** No development shall commence until a Precautionary Working Methods Statement has been prepared by a suitably qualified ecologist and submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority.

The PWMS shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- a) Timings and methods for vegetation clearance and site preparation works to avoid harm to protected species;
- b) Measures for the management of excavations, trenches, stockpiles, waste, building materials and other site features that may present a risk to wildlife;
- c) Procedures to be followed in the event that a Great Crested Newt or any other protected species is discovered during construction works, including the cessation of works within the affected area and consultation with a suitably qualified ecologist;
- d) The identification of persons responsible for implementing and monitoring the approved measures throughout the construction period.

The development shall thereafter be carried out in full accordance with the approved Precautionary Working Methods Statement.

Reason: These details are required prior to the commencement of development as they are fundamental to safeguarding protected species and biodiversity interests during construction. The condition is imposed in accordance with Policy 31 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) and to enable the Local Planning Authority to discharge its duties under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

- 4 **Pre-occupation Condition:** No part of the development hereby permitted shall be first occupied until full details of all hard and soft landscaping works, including a comprehensive landscape mitigation scheme, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall include plans and measures addressing the following:

- (a) Details of all existing trees and planting to be removed and retained;
- (b) Details of all proposed trees and planting, including schedules specifying species, planting sizes, densities and plant numbers, together with tree pit details;
- (c) Details of replacement landscape mitigation planting, including a mixed native species hedge planted at a density of not less than five plants per linear metre along the new facility boundary and replacement tree planting;
- (d) Details of all hard surfacing materials and finishes;
- (e) Details of all boundary treatments;
- (f) Details of all external lighting.

The approved landscaping and mitigation scheme shall be fully implemented in accordance with the approved details within the first planting season following the first occupation of any part of the development. Unless otherwise agreed as part of the approved landscaping scheme, no trees or hedges on the site shall be wilfully damaged, uprooted, felled, removed, topped or

lopped without the previous written consent of the Local Planning Authority for a period of 30 years following completion of the development. Any proposed or retained planting which dies, is removed, or becomes seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced within the next planting season with others of similar size and species unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To secure appropriate landscape mitigation and replacement planting in the interests of visual amenity, landscape character and biodiversity, and to ensure that the development is satisfactorily integrated into its surroundings, in accordance with Policies 25, 33 and 34 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

- 3 **Regulatory Condition:** The materials to be used in the development hereby permitted shall strictly accord with those indicated on the application form and approved plans.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to control the development in detail in the interests of visual amenity and 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/26/0999

Schedule of plans/documents **approved:**

Plan Type	Description	Drawing Number	Received Date
Floor plan	Existing	SK-001 P1	20.07.2026
Floor plan	Existing	SK-003	20.07.2026
Floor plan	Proposed	SK-002 P1	20.07.2026
Floor plan	Proposed	SK-004	20.07.2026
Location plan		NONE	22.06.2026
Block plan		TQRQM26171124354931	22.06.2026

DELEGATED

Case Officer sign/initial Shazia Penne Date: 06.10.2026

Authorising Officer sign/initial RHERMITAGE Date: 06.10.2026