

DC/25/1700

The Slips West End Lane Henfield West Sussex BN5 9RG

Officer Response to Cllr Potts Emails dated 19/04/26

Key Points for Clarification

1. Accessibility and Sustainability (Policy 23(d))

- What assessment has been undertaken regarding walking and cycling access to services and facilities?
- Are routes (particularly along West End Lane) considered safe and realistic for non-car travel?
- Is the Highways Authority's "no objection" being relied upon for sustainability/accessibility, or only for highway safety and capacity?

Officer Response:

The Highway Authority has confirmed that walking and cycling are feasible, and that cycle parking is provided, although it is acknowledged that West End Lane lacks continuous footways and street lighting, which may encourage reliance on the private car.

The Highway Authority's "no objection" relates to highway safety and capacity only, confirming that the development would not result in an unacceptable or severe impact on the network. It is not relied upon as evidence of sustainability in broader planning terms.

In applying Policy 23(d), regard is had to national policy, which recognises that Gypsy and Traveller sites are often located in rural or edge-of-settlement locations and are not expected to achieve the same level of accessibility as conventional housing. In this context, the site is not considered to be isolated and maintains a reasonable functional relationship with Henfield.

2. Drainage and Servicing (Policy 23(a) and (c))

- Given the Drainage Officer has requested further information, how can the LPA be confident that:
 - There are no significant barriers to development, and
 - The site can be properly serviced?
- Is it appropriate to condition these matters, or should they be resolved upfront?
- Has foul drainage and capacity been sufficiently evidenced at this stage?

Officer Response:

HDC Drainage Officer Responses:

1. Initial HDC Drainage response received 27/11/25. Additional information requested.
2. Additional information provided by Agent on 20/02/26. Follow up response received by HDC Drainage on 12/02/26 requesting further information.

3. After discussions HDC drainage agreed to get a view from LLFA. HDC then confirmed on 16/03/2026 that they are satisfied with the response from the Applicant's Drainage Engineer and have no further comment. This was in the form of private email exchange and has not been made public. This can be sent to you if you wish to view.

The application has been subject to detailed review by the Council's Drainage Officer. Initial comments raised the need for further information, which was subsequently provided by the applicant and reviewed through an iterative process.

Following this, and after seeking input from the Lead Local Flood Authority, the Drainage Officer has confirmed (via email dated 16/03/2026) that they are satisfied with the applicant's drainage engineer's response and have no further objections in principle.

The Flood Risk Assessment itself has been accepted, and there is no evidence to indicate that the site is affected by flood risk or that drainage constraints represent a fundamental barrier to development.

Whilst some detailed design elements (such as final calculations, attenuation volumes and management arrangements) would typically be secured through condition, this is standard practice for developments of this nature where a compliant drainage strategy has been demonstrated in principle.

On that basis, it is considered that the requirements of Policy 23(a) and (c) can be met, and that it is reasonable and proportionate to secure the remaining technical details by condition rather than requiring further information prior to determination.

3. Weight of the Henfield Neighbourhood Plan

- What weight has been given to the Neighbourhood Plan policies (e.g. spatial strategy, transport, infrastructure, biodiversity, design)?
- Is the absence of a traveller site allocation influencing the limited weight applied, and if so, why?

Officer Response

The Henfield Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the Development Plan and has been given full weight in decision-making. Its policies relating to design, landscape, biodiversity, transport and infrastructure have been applied alongside the Horsham District Planning Framework in the assessment of the proposal.

However, the Neighbourhood Plan does not contain specific policies relating to Gypsy and Traveller site provision or allocate sites for this use. As such, the principle of development is primarily assessed against HDPF Policies 21–23 and national policy within the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites.

In this case, the absence of a five-year supply of deliverable Gypsy and Traveller sites is a significant material consideration, engaging national policy which reduces the weight that can be attributed to policies restricting the supply of such sites. This does not diminish the overall

weight of the Neighbourhood Plan, but it does affect the weight applied to policies insofar as they relate to the principle of this specific form of development.

4. Principle of Development in the Countryside (National Policy / PPTS)

- How has the PPTS requirement that development in open countryside be strictly limited been applied?
- What are the key factors that justify this unallocated countryside site being acceptable?

Officer Response

National policy within the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites seeks to strictly limit new Traveller site development in the open countryside. However, this must be applied in the context of the overall policy framework, including the requirement to significantly boost the supply of Traveller sites where a five-year supply cannot be demonstrated.

In this case, the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable Gypsy and Traveller pitches. As a result, the relevant policies restricting the supply of such sites are considered out of date, and the presumption in favour of sustainable development is engaged.

The acceptability of this site is therefore based on a combination of factors, including its proximity to Henfield, its limited scale (4 pitches), the absence of technical objections in principle, and the fact that impacts—particularly in landscape and character terms—are assessed as moderate and capable of mitigation.

The proposal is not considered to represent isolated or sporadic development in a remote location, but rather a small-scale site with a functional relationship to an existing settlement. On that basis, and when weighed against the identified unmet need, the development is considered acceptable in principle.

5. Cumulative Impact and Distribution of Traveller Sites

- Has any assessment been made of:
 - Cumulative impact of existing and proposed sites in the locality?
 - The distribution of pitches within Henfield relative to the wider district?
- Has the proximity (~200 yards) to the Stonepit Lane site been specifically assessed?

Officer Response

The potential cumulative impact of existing and proposed Gypsy and Traveller sites in the locality has been considered as part of the assessment.

Whilst there are other sites within the wider Henfield area, including at Stonepit Lane, each proposal must be assessed on its own merits having regard to site-specific impacts. In this case, although the site lies in relative proximity (approximately 200 yards) to the permitted Stonepit Lane site, they remain physically separate, do not form a continuous or visually unified development, and are read within the landscape as distinct parcels.

There is no evidence that the proposal, either individually or cumulatively, would result in a level of development that would dominate the nearest settled community or fundamentally alter its character, having regard to the dispersed pattern of development in the locality and the degree of existing screening.

The distribution of pitches across the wider parish has also been noted; however, national policy does not require a proportional distribution of sites at parish level, and significant weight must be given to the identified unmet need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation.

On that basis, whilst cumulative effects have been considered, it is not concluded that the proposal would give rise to unacceptable harm in this regard.

6. Landscape Impact and Character

- How has the degree of landscape harm been assessed?
- To what extent does screening mitigate the acknowledged change from open field to domestic use?

The assessment of landscape harm is based on the acknowledged change in character from an open field to a semi-domestic use, including the introduction of caravans, day rooms, hardstanding and associated activity. This is identified in the officer report as resulting in localised and moderate harm to the rural character of the site.

However, this judgment reflects several key factors:

- The reduction in scale of development (from 5 to 4 pitches) and revised layout, which pulls development away from sensitive tree areas and reduces hardstanding;
- The low height and dispersed form of built development;
- The strong existing boundary vegetation, including mature trees and hedgerows, which already provide a high degree of visual containment.

The Council's appointed Landscape Officer (Place Services) confirm that the principle of development is not opposed, subject to further landscape detailing. Importantly, their comments focus on refinement and mitigation, rather than fundamental landscape conflict.

In terms of screening:

- Existing vegetation already substantially limits views into the site, including from West End Lane and nearby public rights of way;

- Additional native planting and hedgerow reinforcement is required (and can be secured by condition), including replacement of laurel hedging and strengthening of northern and western boundaries;
- Controls over materials, boundary treatments and lighting will further reduce urbanising effects.

It is recognised that screening does not remove the change in character entirely. However, it significantly reduces the visual effects and wider landscape impact, such that the harm remains contained to the site and its immediate context, rather than affecting the wider landscape character area.

Overall, taking account of the site's containment, the modest scale of development, and the ability to secure substantial landscape enhancements by condition, the degree of harm is reasonably assessed as moderate and not unacceptable in policy terms.

7. Consistency with DC/25/1209 (Stonepit Lane Refusal)

Drainage Approach

- Why are unresolved drainage issues:
 - A reason for refusal in DC/25/1209, but
 - Considered capable of being secured by condition in this case?

Application of Policy 23 and Planning Balance

- Why does unmet need carry greater weight in DC/25/1700 compared to DC/25/1209?
- What are the material distinctions that justify a different outcome?

Landscape Harm

- Why is countryside/urbanising harm given substantial weight in DC/25/1209 but considered moderate and acceptable here?
- What are the key factual or site-specific differences between the two sites?

7.1 Drainage Approach

In DC/25/1209, no drainage information was submitted at all, and the Drainage Officer explicitly objected and advised that the matter should not be secured by condition. As a result, the LPA was unable to conclude that the development would avoid flood risk or contamination, leading to refusal.

In contrast, for DC/25/1700, sufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that an acceptable drainage strategy is achievable in principle, with outstanding technical details capable of being secured via condition. This reflects a materially different evidential position at determination stage.

7.2 Application of Policy 23 and Planning Balance

The unmet need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation is a significant material consideration in both cases and is consistently afforded substantial weight.

However, in DC/25/1209, the identified landscape harm—particularly arising from topographical alterations, visual prominence, and erosion of rural character—was considered to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of meeting that need.

In DC/25/1700, while some harm is acknowledged, it is not of the same magnitude or permanence. The scheme has been revised (including reduced unit numbers and improved layout), and the remaining impacts are capable of mitigation through landscaping and condition. As such, the planning balance falls differently.

7.3 Landscape Harm

The key distinction lies in site-specific characteristics and the nature of the proposed development.

For DC/25/1209, the site is a sloping valley with high intervisibility from multiple Public Rights of Way. The proposal required significant engineering works (cut and fill, likely retaining structures), which were found to fundamentally alter landform and diminish wider landscape views. These impacts were considered intrinsic and not readily mitigated.

Conversely, DC/25/1700 relates to a more enclosed, linear field with stronger boundary vegetation and reduced visual sensitivity. The revised scheme responds to earlier concerns by reducing intensity and pulling development away from sensitive features. The Landscape Officer does not object in principle, subject to securing detailed landscaping, indicating that effects are more localised and capable of mitigation rather than fundamentally harmful.