

## PLANNING STATEMENT

12<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2026

**SITE:** LAND ON THE SOUTH-WEST SIDE OF ROWHOOK HILL, ROWHOOK, HORSHAM.

**PROJECT:** REGRADING OF LAND LEVELS TO FORM A HARDSTANDING AREA ASSOCIATED WITH HORTICULTURAL USE.

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a retrospective planning application for engineering works comprising the regrading of land and formation of a hardstanding area at Land at Rowhook.

The application relates to a modest area of operational development within a larger rural holding and seeks to regularise works already undertaken on site. The hardstanding has been formed to support the lawful agricultural use of the land and is required for the practical day-to-day management of the holding.

The application is supported by the submitted drawings and topographical information, which accurately record the site, the extent of the works undertaken, and the existing and proposed land levels.

### 2.0 THE SITE & SURROUNDINGS

The application site comprises approximately four acres and forms part of a wider agricultural holding at Rowhook Hill. The site is rural in character and contains an existing shed together with areas of open land.

The land has historically been used for Christmas tree cultivation, and it is intended that it will return to that use as part of the continuing agricultural enterprise. The application site therefore forms part of an established working rural holding rather than an isolated or unrelated parcel of land.

The area subject to the works lies adjacent to the existing shed and comprises a relatively limited portion of the overall site.

### 3.0 DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

Retrospective planning permission is sought for engineering operations which have created a level hardstanding area within the site.

The works comprise the localised regrading of land to form a practical and usable area of hardstanding, finished in gravel / crushed limestone, with the surrounding levels battered back to tie into the existing landform. The works are limited in scale and are confined to the immediate area around the existing shed.

The hardstanding is required to support the functioning of the land for agricultural purposes, including:

- storage of agricultural machinery and equipment;
- safe parking of workers' vehicles;
- manoeuvring space associated with management of the site; and
- improved day-to-day access around the existing shed and operational land.

The proposal does not involve the erection of a substantial new building and does not introduce extensive built form into the countryside.

#### **4.0 NEED & JUSTIFICATION**

The engineering works have been carried out in order to provide a practical, stable and functional hardstanding area in support of the agricultural use of the land.

Given the sloping nature of the site, a level area is required to enable safe and effective storage of machinery and equipment and to allow workers' vehicles to park and manoeuvre appropriately in connection with the management of the holding.

The proposal is directly related to the ongoing agricultural use of the land, specifically the cultivation and management of Christmas trees. The hardstanding is not an unrelated domestic or commercial feature; rather, it is a proportionate operational improvement necessary to support the working use of the site.

#### **5.0 AGRICULTURAL USE OF THE SITE**

The land, forms part of a wider agricultural holding and is intended to be used for the cultivation of Christmas trees as part of that enterprise. This reflects the site's historic use and represents a continuation of an established rural activity.

For the avoidance of doubt:

- the site is not intended for public access;
- the site is not intended for retail sales;
- Christmas trees would be distributed and sold off-site via an independent farm shop rather than from the application site itself; and
- the development does not create a destination for customers or members of the public.

Accordingly, the proposal would not intensify the site beyond activity typically associated with agriculture and rural land management.

#### **6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

##### **Principle of Development**

The proposal relates to modest engineering works required to support the use of rural land for agricultural purposes. Development of this nature is capable of being acceptable in principle where it is genuinely connected to the functional requirements of the land, limited in scale, and does not cause unacceptable harm to the countryside.

In this case, the hardstanding is operationally necessary, proportionate to the use being undertaken, and confined to a relatively small part of a much larger rural holding. The principle of development is therefore considered acceptable.

### **Character and Appearance**

The works are modest in extent and do not introduce significant built form. The use of gravel / crushed limestone is appropriate to the rural setting and avoids an overtly urban appearance.

The regraded area sits within an established agricultural context and has been formed so that surrounding levels tie back into the existing landform. As such, the overall rural character of the site is retained, and the works do not result in any significant adverse visual impact.

### **Highways and Access**

The development does not create a retail use, public attraction, or customer destination. There will be no public visits associated with the proposal, and therefore the development does not introduce material additional traffic over and above that associated with normal agricultural operations.

Vehicle movements would remain limited to those connected with the management of the land, including workers' vehicles and agricultural machinery. The provision of hardstanding improves internal manoeuvring and parking arrangements and therefore contributes positively to the safe operation of the site.

### **Residential Amenity**

By reason of its limited scale, rural context, and functional agricultural purpose, the proposal does not give rise to material overlooking, overbearing impact, noise disturbance or other unacceptable harm to neighbouring amenity.

### **Drainage and Ground Conditions**

The proposal comprises a modest area of hardstanding in a rural setting and uses a gravel / crushed limestone finish appropriate to the character of the site. The engineering works are localised and proportionate in scale.

## **7.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT**

At a national level, the proposal is consistent with the broad aims of the National Planning Policy Framework, including support for a prosperous rural economy and the sustainable growth and expansion of rural businesses and agricultural operations.

In particular, the proposal is consistent with the broad objectives of NPPF paragraph 84, which supports the sustainable growth and expansion of rural businesses and appropriate development in the countryside where justified by rural enterprise.

More generally, the proposal reflects the key planning principles that development in the countryside should be:

- necessary to support rural land uses;
- appropriate in scale and character to its setting;
- functionally related to the use of the land; and
- acceptable in landscape and amenity terms.

The hardstanding is operationally necessary, modest in scale, and appropriate to the agricultural use it serves. It does not introduce harmful built development or an urbanising form of development into the countryside.

## **8.0 PRE-APPLICATION / SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

No formal pre-application advice was sought prior to submission.

The application is, however, supported by sufficient technical and drawn information to allow the Local Planning Authority to properly assess the development. This includes the submitted plans and topographical survey information showing the site levels and extent of the engineering works carried out.

## **9.0 CONCLUSION**

This application seeks retrospective planning permission for modest engineering works and the formation of hardstanding at Land at Rowhook.

The works are required to support the ongoing agricultural use of the land, including the cultivation of Christmas trees as part of a wider holding. The hardstanding is needed for the storage of machinery and equipment and for the safe parking and manoeuvring of workers' vehicles associated with the management of the site.

The proposal is limited in scale, appropriate to its countryside location, and does not introduce retail activity, public access, or any material intensification beyond that normally associated with agricultural use. It preserves the rural character of the site and gives rise to no unacceptable impacts in planning terms.

Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the application be validated and that planning permission be granted.