HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL CONSULTATION

TO:	Horsham District Council – Planning Dept
LOCATION:	Land North of Stonepit Lane Henfield, West Sussex BN5 9QT
DESCRIPTION:	Use of land for the stationing of 3 static caravans for residential purposes along with utility building, the formation of hardstanding and associated landscaping.
REFERENCE:	DC/25/1209
RECOMMENDATION:	~~Holding Objection/ More information~~ Objection

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATION:

2nd set of comments in blue

We reviewed the additional information provided and while most of our requests with regards to the additional planting and type of cladding materials have been satisfied, the sections provided confirm the original concern with the sloping nature of the site and proposed changes to existing topography to create the necessary flat areas to accommodate the built form. Further, it also demonstrates that the proposed caravans and particularly the day room positioned at the highest point within the site, will be noticeably visible from the surrounding public footpaths, also reinforced by the now available winter views.

Although the proposed sections are crude, don't give detailed existing and proposed site levels and are not accompanied by a levels plan or cut and fill plan, they indicate the likelihood to include retaining walls within the scheme to form the building platforms.

While the visibility of built form is not in itself an impediment to development, particularly noting the proposed measures to soften the views such as the reduction in size of the caravans and the proposed timber cladding material, the changes to topography are significant and will negatively change the intrinsic characteristics of the receiving landscape and its visual qualities.

The long-distance views experienced from Stonepit lane towards the wider countryside and views of the valley slope from the PRoWs 3517, 2525 and 2530 significantly diminished in its quality by the level of engineering works required to facilitate the development.

Further, concern remains with the proposed access and its suitability in regards to egress without the need to create a bellmouth and additional vegetation removal for necessary visibility splays. The absence of a gate or gates is also noted. This is a feature usually included with this type of application.

While encroachment is minimal, there is no apparent justification as to why the access road could not be located outside the existing RPA's and in accordance with BS 5837 and to provide a better relationship with the existing landscape features. Further, subject to necessary earthworks, the encroachment could be more severe.

In conclusion, without fully reconsidering the sitting of the caravans or demonstrating these can be accommodated in a more considerate manner into the receiving slope, the proposal will have an adverse effect on the landscape character of the area, particularly when associated with increased levels of activity in the countryside location which will also erode the tranquillity Stonepit lane and users of surrounding public rights of way, and to a lesser degree, it will give rise to adverse effects on the visual amenity of the area.

The site lies within a predominantly rural setting, albeit some sporadic development is present along Stonepit Lane. While the scale of the development would not over-dominate the wider pattern of development along the lane and the immediate vicinity, the site's positioning within a sloping valley and proximity to public rights of way requires careful consideration. Views are generally limited due to the interviewing vegetation; however, a number of details remain unclear, specifically proposed changes to topography, in plot boundary treatment, access gate, and the cladding materials for the caravans. These elements have the potential to result in significant adverse effects on landscape character, particularly when associated with increased levels of activity in this countryside location.

In the absence of appropriate detail and mitigation, such elements risk undermining the rural character of the area and the proposed development could appear incongruous and intrusive, particularly when set against the established pleasant and rural qualities of the immediate locality.

MAIN COMMENTS:

Site description and context

The site is located to the west of the settlement of Henfield, set outside the build up area boundary in a countryside location. It forms part of a well defined larger field parcel that positively contributes to the rural settlement setting.

The site itself is bounded by mature hedgerow and trees along its eastern boundary and southern boundary. The northern boundary is defined by a stock proof fence and the western boundary is currently undefined.

The site's wider landscape context can be described as a mixture of pastoral and agricultural fields interspersed by woodland belts generally associated with River Adur tributaries. As such and despite its proximity to residential development further east, the site and its context retains a strong rural character.

The slopping nature of the site is reflective of key landscape characteristics of the area with the topography rising towards Stonepit Lane from the River Adur tributary to the north of the site.

The proposed access to the site will be achieved through the widening of the current access off Stonepit Lane. Stonepit Lane sits along the site's southern boundary and is a private, verdant and narrow country lane, generally bounded by dense vegetation and mature trees. Sporadic urban form can be found along the lane, but these are well integrated and do not detract from its rural character.

Multiple public rights of way (PRoWs) are present within the area, however views into the site from the footpath network are limited on account of intervening vegetation.

Notwithstanding, views of the site as proposed will be experienced from PRoW 2454 which sits adjacent to the southern boundary, along Stonepit Lane, including open views from the proposed access. Glimpse views will also be experienced from PRoW 3517 to the west of the site, 2525 to the north and 2530 to the east, particularly in winter when the vegetation is sparse. PRoW no. 2528 also runs directly opposite the site in a north southerly direction. Glimpsed views of the proposed development will be experienced by users of this footpath on arrival Stonepit Lane.

Landscape character

The site falls within Landscape Character Type D2 Henfield & Small Dole Farmlands, of the Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment.

The site and the surrounding landscape is deemed representative of the local landscape character, exhibiting many of the key characteristics of D2, including: *undulating landscape of low ridges, and narrow valleys with small streams, long views to and from the ridges, small to large size regular and irregular fields with a variable hedgerow pattern, isolated farmsteads and looseknit groups of cottages strung out along roads and lanes.*

Planning Policy Context:

The Horsham District Planning Framework Proposals Maps identifies the site as being located outside the defined built-up area boundary and therefore designated as countryside. Policy 26: Countryside Protection sets out a presumption against development unless for agriculture, forestry minerals, recreation or ensures the sustainable development of rural areas. It also goes on to say 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 25: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character also sets out that proposals will be required to protect, conserve, and enhance the landscape and townscape character, taking into account areas identified as being of landscape importance, the individual settlement characteristics, and maintains settlement separation.

Policy 23: Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation states that development should not have an unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the landscape and should be sensitively designed to mitigate any impact on its surroundings.

The proposals should also have regard to Policy 31: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity which requires development to contribute to the enhancement of existing biodiversity and should 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, townscape features, views and green corridors) and, where available and applicable, take account of the recommendations/policies of the relevant Design Statements and Character Assessments.

Review of the proposals/submitted information

In the absence of a landscape and visual appraisal (LVA) to demonstrate otherwise, it is our professional judgement that the proposal will have an eroding effect on the landscape character of the area and to a lesser degree, it is likely to give rise to adverse

effects on the visual amenity of the area. As result of the additional information, we consider the proposals to give rise to adverse effects on the landscape character and visual amenity.

The sloping nature of the site is likely to require significant level changes to flatten the area for the sitting of the static caravans. A plan indicating the level changes proposed must be submitted to fully understand the effects of the proposals on this key character characteristic. While crude sections were submitted, an existing and proposed levels plan is not provided.

No Arboricultural Survey and Report has been provided. We would advise that a tree survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) and Tree Protection Plan (TPP) are submitted to give us a greater understanding of the impact on existing trees and hedgerows on Stonepit Lane and to ensure root protection areas are not adversely impacted by the proposed building and access lane layout. The loss of any of the boundary vegetation would have a significant effect on the landscape character of the area and visual amenity of users of the footpath. Although blue dashed lines are shown within the block plan which presumably indicate RPA's, no details are provided. While encroachment is minor, we recommend the road is moved to completely avoid the RPA's.

The proposal includes tree and hedgerow planting to define the site's boundaries. These measures could be a positive strategy to mitigate the visual effects of the proposals. Notwithstanding, further details as to the planting details such as species, sizes, numbers, etc should be provided. Boundary treatments details between plots are also required, noting that native hedgerow with post and rail is considered the most appropriate treatment for the rural context. While details of both post and rail fence and close board fence have been provided within the drawing titled 'refuse, boundary and surfacing', their proposed locations aren't clear. Some additional information/clarification provided, however more detailed information is needed. For example, reference to trees is made within the block plan (note refers to hedging and trees and graphics show 21 no trees), however no information of species or size has been provided. In addition the internal hedgerows, would also need to be specified, etc. These type of details however, could be secured via condition.

If minded for approval, for the application to be acceptable in landscape terms, we would advise the following recommendations are taken into consideration:

- The hedgerow along the western and southern boundaries should be planted in double staggered rows, preferably 5 plants per linear metre. Though we would recommend this is accompanied by a 3-strand galvanised wire and timber post fence through the centre of the staggered row of hedge to prevent access through until the hedges are fully established. The full height the hedge must be maintained at must also be indicated. We would also advise that the following mix is used:
    - 60% Hawthorn (Crataegus monogyna)
    - 20% Field maple (Acer campestre)
    - 10% Hazel (Corylus Avellana)
    - 5 % Blackthorn (Prunus spinosa)
    - 5% Trees (Wild Cherry, Oak or Hornbeam)
- Tree planting should be included within the hedgerow to filter views from the most the ridge north of the site (the other side of the river Arun, near Brighthams Farm) and therefore contribute to the Land Management Guidelines of LCA D2.
- Details of the proposed in plot fencing will be required. We advise that this is post and rail with native hedgerow (as opposed to close board fence) to avoid introducing

further urbanising features into the countryside and can be more easily assimilated into the landscape. • Details of access gate, if required • The visual effects of the static caravans are somewhat dependent on the materiality and colour palette used. We therefore advise that softer materials (such as timber cladding) and colours are explored to reduce the visual impact against the vegetated backdrop.	
ANY RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS: If you're minded to recommend the application for approval without the concerns addressed above please get in touch as specific conditions will be required.	
NAME:	Inês Watson CMLI Specialist Team Leader (Landscape Architect)
DEPARTMENT:	Specialists Team - Strategic Planning
DATE:	20/10/2025 19/02/2026