

MME PLANNING SERVICES

Permission in Principle (PIP) application for the
demolition of existing structures / buildings and erection
of 1no dwelling.

at

Barnards Nursery, Rock Road, Washington, West
Sussex, RH20 3BH

Grounds of Appeal Statement

Ref: P-064

April 2026

Version 1

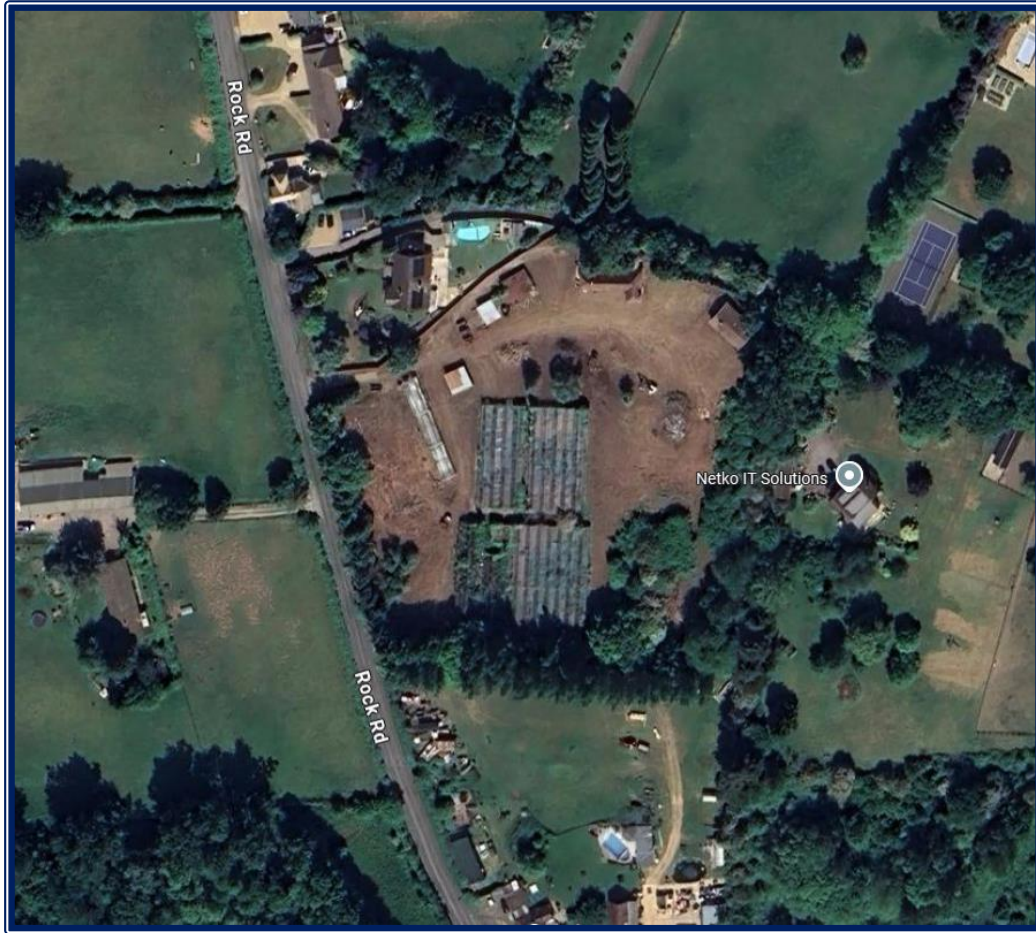


Figure 1: Site Location

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This appeal has been prepared and submitted following the Council's decision to refuse planning application reference DC/26/0084. The development sought Permission in Principle (PIP) for the demolition of existing structures / buildings and erection of 1no dwelling at Barnards Nursery, Rock Road, Washington, West Sussex, RH20 3BH. By decision notice dated 24 February 2026, permission was refused for the following reason(s):

1 *The proposed development would be sited within an unsustainable location in the countryside, outside of a defined built-up area boundary, and on a site not allocated for housing development within the Horsham District Planning Framework, or a made Neighbourhood Plan. Furthermore, the proposed development is not essential to its countryside location. Notwithstanding the absence of a five-year land housing supply, and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) at paragraph 11(d), it is not considered that there are any material considerations in this instance which would outweigh harm arising from conflict with Policies 2, 3, 4 and 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) and Policies 1 and 8 of the Storrington, Sullington and Washington Neighbourhood Plan (2019).*

- 1.2 This statement will consider the reason(s) for refusal and the policies attached to these. Having reviewed the submitted plans and considered the Council's assessment of this proposal, it is our view that planning permission should reasonably have been granted.
- 1.3 The Appellant contends that given the Council's lack of 5-year housing land supply, which currently stands at just 1.7 years, the context of the site and surroundings and relevant recent examples of housing developments permitted outside of settlement boundaries within the District, the principle of residential development in this instance is therefore acceptable and the appeal scheme is policy compliant.
- 1.4 It is considered that paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF would be engaged. In the circumstances, therefore, we would respectfully request that the appeal is allowed and PIP is granted for this proposal.

2. Appeal Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The appeal site is located to the eastern side of Rock Road, Washington, outside of any defined built-up area boundaries. As such, the appeal site is designated as countryside in policy terms. Notwithstanding the above, the appeal site is located approximately 450m away from the defined built-up boundary of Storrington and Sullington which is considered to be a Small Town / Larger Village, as per the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF).

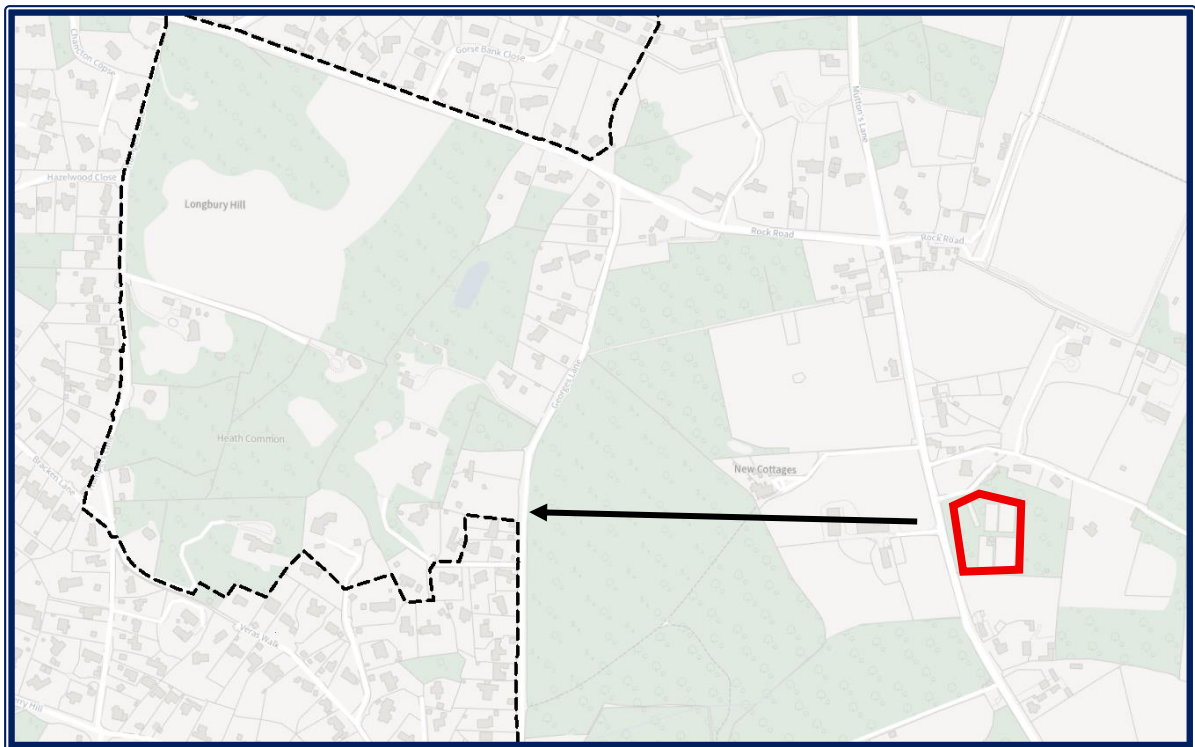


Figure 2: Plan showing relationship of the appeal site with the Built-Up Area Boundary (dashed black line).

- 2.2 Settlements such as Storrington and Sullington have a good range of services and facilities, strong community networks and local employment provision, together with reasonable rail and / or bus services. This type of settlement acts as a hub for smaller villages to meet their daily needs, but also have some reliance on larger settlements / each other to meet some of their requirements.
- 2.3 The appeal site consists of a number of dilapidated glasshouse structures, outbuildings and redundant nursery infrastructure, which occupy a significant portion of the site. Given the substantial structures currently present on the appeal site, it can be described as previously developed, brownfield land.



Figure 3: Map showing relationship of the appeal site (in purple) with existing Public Rights of Way (PROW) (red lines) connecting the site directly into the Built-Up Area Boundary (white line / area).

2.4 Although designated as a countryside location, the appeal site is surrounded by residential development, with existing dwellings located to the north, south and east, as well as to the west on the opposite side of Rock Road. As such, the appeal site is not considered to be in an isolated rural location. In addition, as detailed within Figure 3 above, there is a Public Right of Way (PROW) which connects the site directly to the built-up area of Storrington and Sullington to the west. Given the location of the appeal site and its setting in relation to the built-up area, it is therefore considered that the site is in a sustainable location. A further PROW connects the appeal site directly to Spring Garden Nursery and farm shop to the east, as well as a bus stop within a approximate 8-minute walk from the appeal site, providing direct links to larger settlements to the north and south, including Horsham.

2.5 Access currently exists to the appeal site via a private access from Rock Road at the northwest corner of the site. The appeal application red line area, as indicated on the submitted plans, extends to approximately 0.47ha.

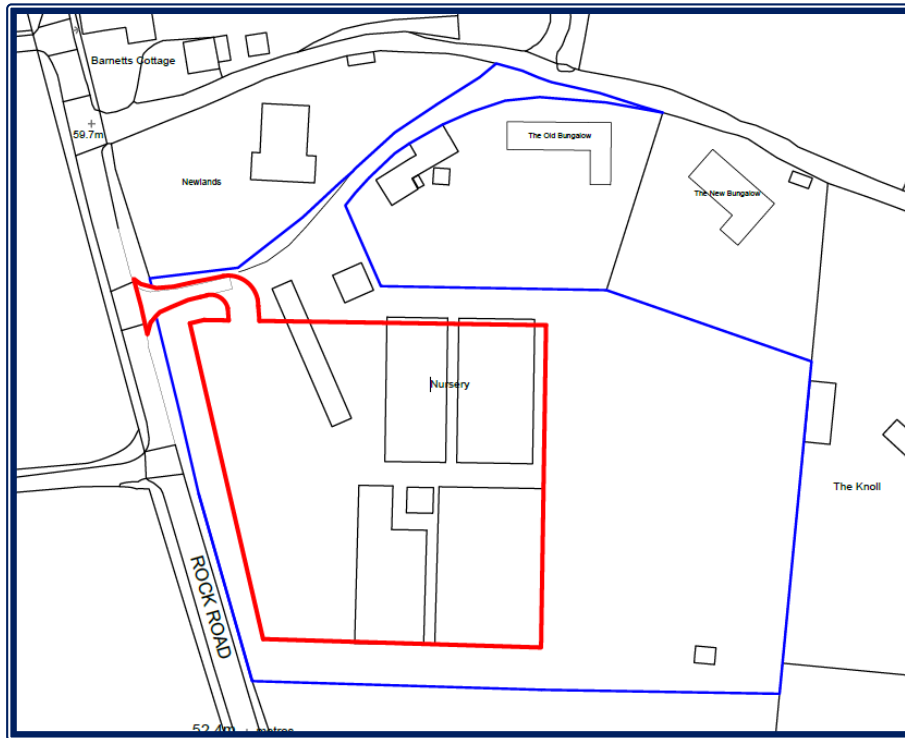


Figure 4: Appeal Site Location Plan

3. Relevant Planning Policy Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024)

- 3.1 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework for the preparation of local plans for housing and other development. The NPPF should be read as a whole.
- 3.2 Running throughout the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Sustainable development is achieved through three main objectives which are – economic, social and environmental.
- 3.3 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that for decision-taking, this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay. Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application / appeal are out of date, planning permission should be granted unless the policies of the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provide a clear reason for refusing the development proposed, or, any adverse impact of doing so would 'significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits' when assessed against the policies of the NPPF when taken as a whole (NPPF paragraph 11(d)).

Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) (2015)

- 3.4 Paragraph 34 of the NPPF requires that all development plans complete their reviews no later than 5 years from their adoption. Horsham District Council has submitted its new local plan for examination, however at this stage, the emerging policies carry little to no weight in decision-making.
- 3.5 A Local Development Scheme (LDS) was published in February 2025 by the Council. The LDS sets out the production timetable for the New Local Plan anticipated to be adopted in April 2026. Notwithstanding the above, as the HDPF is now over 5 years old, the most important policies for determining this application / appeal are now considered to be 'out-of-date'. This position is further highlighted given that the Horsham District Local Plan examination hearing meetings scheduled for January 2025 were cancelled by the appointed Inspector, and in April 2025 advised that the Plan is withdrawn due to concerns about its legal compliance. Proceedings for the new Local Plan are due to re-open in April 2026, however the new local plan carries limited weight in decision-making at this stage.
- 3.6 The Council is currently unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites. The presumption in favour of development within Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF therefore applies in the consideration of all applications for housing development within the District, with Policies 2, 4, 15 and 26 now carrying limited weight in decision-making.
- 3.7 While considered to be out of date, the main HDPF policies relevant to this application / appeal are as follows:
- Policy 1 - Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development
 - Policy 2 - Strategic Policy: Strategic Development
 - Policy 3 - Strategic Policy: Development Hierarchy
 - Policy 4 - Strategic Policy: Settlement Expansion
 - Policy 15 - Strategic Policy: Housing Provision
 - Policy 16 - Strategic Policy: Meeting Local Housing Needs
 - Policy 25 - Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
 - Policy 26 - Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection
 - Policy 31 - Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
 - Policy 32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development
 - Policy 33 - Development Principles
 - Policy 35 - Strategic Policy: Climate Change

- Policy 36 - Strategic Policy: Appropriate Energy Use
- Policy 37 - Sustainable Construction
- Policy 38 - Strategic Policy: Flooding
- Policy 40 - Sustainable Transport
- Policy 41 - Parking

Storrington, Sullington & Washington Neighbourhood Plan (2019)

3.8 While also considered to be out of date, the Neighbourhood Plan policies relevant to this application / appeal are as follows:

- Policy 1: A Spatial Plan for the Parishes
- Policy 8: Countryside Protection
- Policy 14: Design
- Policy 17: Traffic & Transport

Planning Advice Note(s) (PAN)

3.9 Relevant PANs to this application are as follows:

- Shaping Development in Horsham District
- Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

4. Planning Issues, Grounds of Appeal and Comments on the Officer's Report

Location of the Appeal Site

4.1 As detailed above, the Council is currently unable to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply, with the latest Authority Monitoring Report (December 2025) detailing a supply of only 1.7 years. Therefore, the tilted balance contained in Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF is engaged.

4.2 In addition, the Council has failed its most recent Housing Delivery Test, with the December 2024 test results demonstrating that the Council has only delivered 62% of its housing target in the preceding three years. This itself also triggers the presumption in favour of sustainable development under Paragraph 11(d). This is irrespective of a Council's five-year housing land supply position.

- 4.3 It is noted that limited weight should be attached to the conflict with Policy 26 in respect of development outside of built-up area boundaries given that the deficient housing supply position dictates that these boundaries are out of date. As such, the fact that a site may lie outside of the built-up area boundary does not, in and of itself, constitute a reason to refuse the application.
- 4.4 Further to the above, Paragraph 14 of the NPPF notes that “In situations where the presumption (at paragraph 11(d)) applies to applications involving the provision of housing, the adverse impact of allowing development that conflicts with the neighbourhood plan is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, provided the following apply:
- a) the neighbourhood plan became part of the development plan five years or less before the date on which the decision is made; and
 - b) the neighbourhood plan contains policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement”.
- 4.5 The Storrington, Sullington and Washington Neighbourhood Plan is now more than five years old. Therefore, Paragraph 14 of the NPPF does not apply and the presumption in favour of sustainable development would not be affected in this instance.
- 4.6 The site is located approximately 450m from the built-up area boundary of Storrington and Sullington, with convenient access to essential facilities and public transport links. The site is linked directly to the built-up area via a PROW to the west, allowing for convenient access on foot which would take approximately 10 minutes. Rock Road also connects directly to the built-up area to the north of the site, allowing for opportunities for cycling, for example. It is also highlighted that there is a PROW which adjoins the site and runs to the west into Spring Garden Nursery where there is a farm shop and café present, which would also provide day-to-day essentials for future occupiers of the dwelling. A bus stop is also located an approximate 8-minute walk away to the east of the appeal site, accessed via a PROW, which provides direct links to larger settlements to the north and south of the appeal site, including Horsham.

- 4.7 It is noted that there are a number of other recent decisions that have granted residential developments outside of the defined built-up areas in other parts of the District. Examples include reference numbers DC/22/0495 and DC/22/2250 which each sought permission for 1no dwelling and were granted at appeal in August 2023 and March 2024 respectively, and DC/23/2278 which sought permission for 8no dwellings and was granted by the Council's planning committee in April 2024.
- 4.8 A recent appeal decision issued in October 2025 under planning reference DC/24/1486 (Appendix C), granted permission for a new build dwelling approximately 2 miles away from the closest built-up area boundary. Within the appeal decision the Inspector states that:
- "27. The proposed dwelling would be in a location that is not considered suitable when assessed against the relevant HDPF and NP policies. The site lacks close proximity to a wide range of essential services and facilities. Although there are some opportunities for travel by means other than private car, reliance on car journeys is likely to be significant. In these respects, the proposal would conflict with key development plan policies.*
- 28. Balanced against the harm are a number of benefits. The overall housing supply remains significantly deficient, and the provision of an additional dwelling would make a meaningful contribution to addressing this shortfall. The Framework recognises that small sites can make an important contribution to housing supply and are often built out quickly. There would also be modest economic benefits during construction and through local spending, as well as a small contribution to housing diversity. While the scale of these benefits is modest given that only one dwelling is proposed, in the context of current housing pressures, even a single additional home represents a valuable and positive contribution.*
- 29. Taking all matters into account, the adverse impacts of granting permission would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the Framework as a whole. Consequently, the proposal benefits from the presumption in favour of sustainable development as defined in paragraph 11d of the Framework."*

- 4.9 Other recent examples of permitted dwellings outside of a defined built-up area can be seen under planning reference DC/24/1887, which granted outline planning consent for 2no detached dwellings in December 2025; reference DC/25/1831, which granted outline planning consent for 1no dwelling in March 2026, and reference DC/25/0895, which granted full planning consent for 1no dwelling at appeal in March 2026 (Appeal Reference APP/Z3825/W/25/3375774). These decisions are attached at Appendices E, F and G respectively.
- 4.10 In addition to the above, a recent appeal decision under planning reference DC/24/1086 (Appeal Reference APP/Z3825/W/25/3360134) which sought outline planning consent for 3no dwellings outside of a defined settlement boundary, is also highlighted. While this appeal was dismissed on ecology and biodiversity grounds, the Inspector did not consider that the appeal site was an inappropriate location for housing and gave limited weight to policies 3, 4 and 26 of the HDPF. This appeal decision is attached at Appendix D.
- 4.11 In any event, given the housing position of the Council, it is contended that even if some harm is identified, the adverse impacts of granting permission would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the Framework as a whole. It is contended that any issues or harm that are identified would need to surmount a high hurdle to prevail in this balance.
- 4.12 While it is acknowledged that every application / appeal site context should be considered on its own merits, taking into account the current situation of the Council in terms of its 5-year housing supply and the above examples, there is an expectation that a consistent approach is applied to decision-making. It is highlighted that these permitted dwellings were located a significant distance away from any defined built-up areas. The above examples clearly show, that notwithstanding the distances to the respective settlement boundaries, given the lack of 5-year housing supply, the tilted balance is engaged and the principle of residential development in this location is acceptable.
- 4.13 This position is confirmed by the Inspector within the appeal decision in relation to application reference DC/22/0495 at Appendix A, which states “I have attached limited weight to the conflict with HDPF Policy 26 in respect of development outside of BUAB. The housing shortfall dictates that those boundaries are out of date. I consider that some weight can still be given to the strategy set out within HDPF Policy 2, in terms of the general locations of new development, but the fact that a site may lie outside of the BUAB does not, in and of itself, constitute a reason to refuse planning permission”.

- 4.14 Within the delegated report for the refused application, which is the subject of this appeal, the Council continue to give weight to Policies 2, 3, 4 and 26 of the HDPF, where these are clearly out of date. Notwithstanding this, the appellant contends that the proposal would accord with criterion 4 of Policy 26 of the HDPF, as it would enable the sustainable development of a rural area.
- 4.15 The delegated report, under the 'Location' heading, appears to take a blanket approach when considering the location of the appeal site, given its setting outside of a defined built-up area boundary, however, fails to look at the specific context: a site in close proximity to a defined built-up area; existing public footpaths adjoining the site leading directly into the built-up area and to a local shop only a few hundred metres away, the developed nature of the appeal site with large dilapidated structures detracting from the setting and surroundings and existing residential development on all sides.
- 4.16 It is also highlighted that a number of established businesses and commercial units are located close by to the east of the site, which again can be easily accessed on foot via the existing PROW, providing employment opportunities within this location. None of these key factors appear to have been taken into account in detail by the Council, and the appellant respectfully requests that the Inspector considers these in full. The close proximity to a bus stop has also not been considered or acknowledged.
- 4.17 The housing supply position of the Council is clearly deficient. No additional dwelling would contribute towards the much-needed supply of houses. Small sites can often be built out relatively quickly. There would be economic benefits arising from construction and spend in the local rural economy. In the context of the current circumstances, the additional dwelling would be valuable. Recent decisions that have been made by the Council and the Inspectorate confirm small scale developments such as this make a valuable contribution to the Council's housing shortage.
- 4.18 The Council make reference to a number of decisions within their delegated report. However, it is highlighted that these are all outdated by the examples included above and within the attached appendices. The housing land supply position has moved on considerably since these decisions (i.e. it has reduced significantly) and the Inspectorate have given more weight to this in the more recent appeal decisions. Therefore, the applications referenced by the Council are not considered to be relevant in the consideration of this current PIP application / appeal.

- 4.19 In summary, given the lack of a 5-year housing supply, the location of the appeal site close to a defined built-up-area boundary, the surrounding residential context, the previously developed nature of the site, and relevant recent examples of housing developments permitted outside of settlement boundaries, the principle of residential development is therefore acceptable. Any perceived harm within this setting is not considered to outweigh the provision of an additional dwelling, given the deficient housing supply of the Council.

Land Use

- 4.20 Within their delegated report, the Council also refer to the land use not being appropriate and state that: “As outlined above, residential development within the countryside location, on a site not allocated for development within the Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan, would be contrary to the overarching spatial strategy expressed through Policies 3 and 4 of the HDPF and Policy 1 of the Storrington and Sullington Neighbourhood Plan. The provision of a residential dwelling on the site is therefore considered to result in inappropriate development within an unsustainable location, with the proposed land use not considered appropriate for these reasons”.
- 4.21 Again, it is highlighted to the Inspector that no consideration has been given to the specific context. The site is bounded on three sides by existing residential development, and would essentially represent infill development. Residential properties are also located on the western side of Rock Road opposite the site. It is also contended that given this surrounding context, the residential use of the site would be more appropriate when compared to the previous / existing agricultural / horticultural use. The site is relatively small compared to other agricultural holdings, and therefore does not lend itself to a continued agricultural / horticultural use, or a commercial or business use.
- 4.22 A residential use is considered to be commensurate in this setting and would have less of an impact on the surrounding uses when compared to the existing / historic use or any other potential commercial uses.

Amount of Development

- 4.23 The delegated report under the 'Amount of Development' heading states that: "The site presently contains a collection of former horticultural buildings which, while substantial, are utilitarian in character and associated with a historic commercial use. Their presence does not establish a residential character to the site, nor does their removal justify the introduction of a new dwelling as a direct replacement in land-use terms. The proposed development would therefore represent not simply a reduction or rationalisation of built form, but the establishment of a permanent residential planning unit where none presently exists".
- 4.24 The delegated report under this section also states that: "The surrounding built pattern along Rock Road is characterised by sporadic, loosely related dwellings set within large plots and interspersed with open land. This pattern reflects incremental rural evolution rather than planned expansion. Introducing even a single new dwelling within the application site would extend residential encroachment into an area that presently reads as part of the countryside gap between built form, thereby altering that transitional character".
- 4.25 It is contended that the proposal would closely reflect the character of development as referred to by the Council, in that it would retain the "...sporadic, loosely related dwellings set within large plots..". As detailed above, the proposal represents infill development positioned within existing residential plots and would therefore not result in 'residential encroachment', as purported by the Council. The site would create a large plot for the proposed single dwelling, in keeping with the surrounding character and spatial context. The site consists predominantly of existing built form and therefore does not represent a countryside gap, or act as a transition between built form and open countryside. The proposal would remove existing and substantial built form, and introduce 1no modest dwelling within a contained site, with existing residential uses on three sides.
- 4.26 The provision of 1no dwelling would be commensurate with the prevailing character of the locality and would not "incrementally erode the distinction between settlement and countryside" as purported by the Council. The scale and amount of development is therefore considered to be appropriate in this location, given the specific context of the site and surroundings.

5. Summary and Conclusion

- 5.1 Overall, the Appellant contends that the appeal scheme represents an appropriate form of development within a sustainable location. As the Inspector will no doubt be aware, case law confirms that it is not necessary for developments to accord with every policy of the relevant development plan and that the primary consideration is whether the proposal accords with the plan as a whole.
- 5.2 The NPPF at paragraph 3 confirms that the Framework should be read as one. In addition, the Government's Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) states that any conflicts between the development plan should be considered in light of all material planning considerations including local priorities and needs, as guided by the NPPF.
- 5.3 As set out above, the Council cannot currently demonstrate a 5-year supply of housing and the HDPF is now over 5-years old, with the most relevant policies in relation to the appeal proposals considered to be out-of-date and carrying limited weight. Given the circumstances, paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF sets out that planning permission should be granted unless:
- "Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole".
- 5.4 As detailed within this statement, there are not considered to be any adverse impacts which would outweigh the benefits of the appeal proposal. The tilted balance at paragraph 11(d) is therefore engaged.
- 5.5 Taking into account the clear need for new dwellings within the District, as well as the context, the appeal proposal is arguably essential to the countryside location and will help to enable the sustainable development of the rural area, as well as contribute to the shortfall of housing.
- 5.6 Paragraph 39 of the NPPF states that decision makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development wherever possible. In light of the above, we would contend that there is no conflict with the objectives set out in National and Local policies, and we respectfully request that this appeal be allowed. The Appellant is happy to accept any suitable planning conditions which the Inspector may deem necessary.

5.7 In summary, therefore, we would urge the Inspector to allow this appeal and grant planning permission accordingly.

6. Appendices

6.1 The following Appendices are attached to this statement –

- Appendix A – Appeal Decision - DC-22-0495 - 1no Dwelling in Countryside
- Appendix B – Appeal Decision - DC-22-2250 - 1no Dwelling in Countryside
- Appendix C – Appeal Decision - DC-24-1486 - 1no Dwelling in Countryside
- Appendix D – Appeal Decision - DC-24-1086 - 3no Dwellings in Countryside
- Appendix E – Committee Report - DC-24-1887 - 2no Dwellings in Countryside
- Appendix F – Committee Report - DC-25-1831 - 1no Dwelling in Countryside
- Appendix G – Appeal Decision - DC-25-0895 - 1no Dwelling in Countryside