



Planning Statement

Use of Land for the Erection of a Barn
for Class E(g) iii Light Industrial and Class B8 Storage

Maple Farm
Marches Road
Warnham
West Sussex
RH12 3SL

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for the erection of a barn for light industrial and storage use on land at Maple Farm, Marches Road, Warnham, West Sussex, RH12 3SL. The application is a resubmission of application DC/24/0433 that was refused on the grounds of water neutrality.
- 1.2 This Planning Statement sets out the relevant background to assist the planning authority in its determination of the planning application. The statement includes a description of the site and its surroundings, relevant planning history, details of the proposed development, a summary of the planning policy context, and an appraisal of the scheme against all relevant planning considerations.
- 1.3 This Statement should be read in conjunction with the following documents and plans which form part of the application.
- Application and CIL Forms
 - Site Location Plan
 - Existing Site Plan
 - Proposed Site Plan
 - Proposed Floor, Roof and Elevation Plans
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
 - Officer Report for DC/24/0433

2 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The application site extends to 0.16 hectares and comprises a marquee used for storage which was granted temporary permission under reference DC/23/1528 and variation of condition application DC/25/0250 which extended the siting of the marquee until 28 February 2026.
- 2.2 The marquee is sited on an area of hardstanding previously used for the storage of cars. The site forms part of Maple Farm and is accessed via the farm's driveway which leads off Marches Road.
- 2.3 The applicant has owned Maple Farm since 1997 and initially used the site for the storage of horse boxes, tractors and farm equipment. More recently the site has been used for a variety of permitted commercial uses since 2015.

Figure 2.1 – Image of the Site in 2024 (DC/23/1528)



Figure 2.2 – Images of the Site in 2022 (DC/22/086)



Site Context

- 2.10 The site is accessed directly off Marches Road which is a rural road lined with a number of residential properties, farms, commercial businesses and equestrian facilities.
- 2.11 The nearest village is Kingsfold, which lies approximately 0.8 miles to the northeast (two minute drive), or Warnham approximately 1.7 miles to the south (5 minute drive). Horsham is a 10-minute drive from the site directly off the A24.

Environmental Designations

- 2.12 The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and therefore has a low risk of flooding in accordance with the Environment Agency's flood maps for planning.
- 2.13 There is an area of woodland to the south of the site which is designated as Ancient Woodland. This is approximately 70m away so it is sufficiently distant to not be affected by the proposal.
- 2.14 There are no designated heritage assets in close proximity.

Planning History

- 2.15 The site was granted planning permission for the storage of cars in connection with a car sales business. This was granted permission in March 2022 under application reference DC/22/086. The tenant however vacated in 2023.

- 2.15 The landowner was subsequently approached by a prospective tenant who wanted to use the land for the storage of building equipment. This prompted the landowner to submit a pre-application enquiry (reference PE/23/0075) to understand what alternative uses the Council would support on the land. Uses suggested by the landowner included caravan storage, a builder's yard and the storage of building materials. The advice received suggested that these uses would be supported if they were to have the same or less impact than the car storage use and did not extend beyond the existing site boundaries. A copy of the pre-application advice is attached at Appendix A.
- 2.16 Planning permission was later sought for the temporary installation of a marquee for the storage of building materials. The marquee has been in place since October 2023 and was granted a 12-month temporary consent commencing in October 2023 under application reference DC/23/1528. A subsequent application, DC/25/0250, approved an extension of this permission until 28 February 2026. The application explained that the marquee was intended as a short-term measure to meet the tenant's immediate storage requirements, with the longer-term intention being to replace it with a permanent structure.
- 2.17 A planning application was submitted under reference DC/24/0433 for the erection of a barn to replace the existing marquee, providing a permanent and more appropriate building and enabling the removal of the temporary structure. However, this application was refused by Horsham District Council on 6 June 2024 for the following sole reason:

"Insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate with a sufficient degree of certainty that the development would not contribute to an existing adverse effect upon the integrity of the internationally designated Arun Valley Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area and Ramsar sites by way of increased water abstraction, contrary to Policy 31 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015), Paragraphs 185 and 186 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021), thus the Local Planning Authority is unable to discharge its duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), and s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (Priority Habitats & Species)."

- 2.18 An appeal against the planning refusal was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate under reference APP/Z3825/W/24/3347313. Additional information was provided to address water offsetting in response to the original reason for refusal; however, the appeal was dismissed on the grounds of water neutrality, as no planning obligation was in place before the Inspectorate to otherwise secure the necessary mitigation.
- 2.19 Both the Officer's Report for application DC/24/0433 and the subsequent appeal decision (reference APP/Z3825/W/24/3347313) confirmed that the proposal was acceptable in terms of its design, use, location, impact on amenity, highway considerations and the principle of development. The sole and decisive reason for refusal related to the inability to lawfully secure water neutrality mitigation. As Natural England has since withdrawn its position statement requiring development to demonstrate water neutrality, this matter no longer constitutes a reason for refusal and forms the basis for the resubmission of this application.

3 PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The temporary marquee has, since August 2023, been used to store building materials such as insulation panels which need to be kept free from the elements. The tenant was previously based in Colgate but had to vacate due to the premises he rented being sold.
- 3.2 The marquee is required to be removed on or before the 28 February 2026 under the terms of the existing permission. This therefore means a more permanent solution is required to secure a base for the existing tenant as well as a permanent solution for the diversification of the farm.
- 3.3 This application is a resubmission of the previously refused planning application (reference DC/24/0433). The sole reason for refusal related to the inability to demonstrate and secure water neutrality, in response to Natural England's position at that time. Natural England has since withdrawn its position statement requiring development within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone to demonstrate water neutrality. As the only reason for refusal has therefore fallen away, this application is resubmitted for reconsideration on that basis.
- 3.4 The Officer's Report attached to the application found the proposal to be supported in all other aspects as detailed below:

Acceptable in principle as Rural Economic Development

Officers concluded that the proposal complied with Policies 7, 9, 10 and 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework. The light industrial and storage barn was considered to support rural enterprise and farm diversification, providing a permanent commercial unit without generating an unacceptable level of activity in the countryside.

Appropriate Scale and Countryside Location

Although the proposal would increase activity compared to the existing storage use, Officers found that the level of activity would not be unacceptable for a rural location. The development was judged to be of an appropriate scale and consistent with sustainable rural development objectives.

Design and Appearance Acceptable

The proposed barn was considered to be sympathetic to the rural character of the area and visually appropriate given the existing hardstanding, surrounding barns, open fields and mature landscaping. Officers concluded there would be no harm to the character or appearance of the site or wider countryside, in accordance with Policies 25, 32 and 33.

No Unacceptable Amenity Impacts

The proposal was found not to cause harm to neighbouring amenity in terms of noise, disturbance or activity levels. Officers noted that, if permission were granted, any residual concerns could be addressed through conditions relating to hours of operation, lighting and machinery.

Highway Safety and Access Acceptable

West Sussex County Council Highways raised no objection. Visibility splays were adequate, the existing access was suitable, parking could be accommodated on site, and the proposal was likely to generate fewer vehicle movements than the previous car storage use. Officers concluded the proposal complied with Policies 40 and 41.

Ecology Impacts Acceptable (excluding water neutrality)

A preliminary ecological survey identified negligible potential for protected species, and no further ecological mitigation was required. Officers raised no objection on ecology grounds apart from the separate issue of water neutrality.

No Other Technical Objections

Matters raised by Fire and Rescue were noted but were not considered a planning reason for refusal. Human rights and equality impacts were also assessed and found not to be adversely affected by the proposal.

- 3.5 The landowner owns a disused agricultural building elsewhere on the farm which would be transferred to the site and repurposed. The building is located to the north of Marches Road and sits on land which is subject to an existing planning permission for redevelopment (reference DC/23/1141).
- 3.6 Permission is therefore sought to replace the existing marquee with a permanent barn to be used for storage and light industrial purposes. The building will have an agricultural appearance and all activities would be undertaken within it.

- 3.7 The barn measures 15m x 30m, with a total footprint of 450sqm. It will be sited on the existing hardstanding where the marquee currently stands.

Figure 3.1 – Proposed Barn in its Existing Location



- 3.8 No washroom facilities or water fixtures or fittings are required as the tenant will be on site for a limited time only.

Access and Parking

- 3.9 The site is accessed off Marches Road which is a rural road lined with a number of residential properties, farms, commercial businesses and equestrian facilities. Marches Road has a speed limit of 60mph.
- 3.10 The entrance to Maple Farm is via a driveway secured with an electronic gate with visibility splays of approximately 28m in both directions.
- 3.11 There is ample space within the site on the existing hard standing for vehicles to park.

Figure 3.2 – Gated Entrance to Maple Farm



4 PLANNING POLICY

- 4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the provisions of the statutory Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.2 Currently the Development Plan for the site comprises the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) and the Warnham Neighbourhood Plan. Material considerations include the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Horsham District Planning Framework

- 4.3 Horsham Local Plan is in the process of being reviewed. The Council formally submitted the Horsham District Local Plan 2023–2040 to the Secretary of State on 26 July 2024 for independent examination. Examination hearings began in December 2024 but were paused after just a few days by the Inspector due to concerns about soundness, meeting housing needs, sustainability appraisal, and duty to co-operate compliance. As such the adopted plan remains the old HDPF (2015) until adoption of the new plan.
- 4.4 The site is located within an area outside built up area boundaries and is therefore within the open countryside.
- 4.5 Policies of relevance to the proposal include:

POLICY	SUMMARY
Policy 1	Reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the NPPF. Planning applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan (and, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

POLICY	SUMMARY
Policy 10	Encourages sustainable rural economic development and enterprise within the district. Within the countryside, development which maintains the quality and character of the area, whilst sustaining its varied and productive social and economic activity, will be supported in principle.
Policy 26	Outside built-up area boundaries, the rural character and undeveloped nature of the countryside will be protected against inappropriate development. Proposals must be of a scale appropriate to its countryside character and location. Development will be considered acceptable where it does not lead, either individually or cumulatively, to a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside, and protects, and/or conserves, and/or enhances, the key features and characteristics of the landscape character area in which it is located.
Policy W7	The Warnham Neighbourhood Plan states development proposals which will provide employment in the parish will be encouraged subject to such uses and premises being compatible with the rural nature of the parish, neighbouring land uses, and the capacity of supporting infrastructure.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 4.6 The NPPF (2024) sets out the three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles, namely: a social role, an economic role and an environmental role.
- 4.7 At the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 11 confirms that for decision taking this means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay.

- 4.8 Chapter 6 (Building a strong, competitive economy) states that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.
- 4.9 Paragraph 88 relates to the rural economy and states that planning policies and decisions should enable:
- The sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;
 - The development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;
 - Sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside.

5 PLANNING APPRAISAL

5.1 The issues of relevance in the determination of the application are considered to be as follows:

- Principle of the proposed use
- Design and landscape
- Ecology
- Access and parking

5.2 These matters are considered in detail below.

Principle of the Proposed Use

5.3 Policy 10 of the HDPF encourages sustainable rural economic development and enterprise within the district. Within the countryside, development which maintains the quality and character of the area, whilst sustaining its varied and productive social and economic activity, will be supported in principle. The site has been used since 2015 for the storage of vehicles associated with Orchard Auto Sales and since 2023 for the storage of building materials in a marquee. The site has therefore been in commercial use for over 10 years.

5.4 The pre application request obtained from the council in relation to the marquee application confirmed the proposed use as storage would be less intrusive than the storage of vehicles on the site. The Council did however suggest that a building of a more agricultural appearance and permanency would be preferred.

5.5 The Officer's Report for the recent planning application DC/24/0433 confirms that the proposal was considered acceptable in respect of design, residential amenity, highway safety and ecological impacts. The Officer further concluded that the development complied with Policies 7, 9, 10 and 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework. The proposed light industrial and storage barn was assessed as supporting rural enterprise and farm diversification, delivering a permanent commercial unit without resulting in an unacceptable increase in activity within the countryside.

5.6 The permanency of the building and storage use will also provide a continued non-agricultural source of income to Maple Farm which is becoming increasingly important in these times where farming income is diminishing but costs increasing.

- 5.7 The use of the building for storage and light industrial uses will provide the landowner with flexibility should the current tenant no longer need the site for storage. It is however likely that the existing tenant will remain for the foreseeable future as their business mainly operates within the Horsham District and the site provides a central location from which to operate.
- 5.8 The proposal is considered to be consistent with Policy 26 which requires development to be of a scale and type appropriate to its location. The use will not generate significant traffic or noise. Activity levels from the site will be low and controlled.
- 5.9 The proposed use adheres to Policy W7 of the Neighbourhood Plan as it will support an existing business whilst providing additional income to the applicant in order to supplement their farming income.

Design and Landscape

- 5.10 The building will be sited on the existing hardstanding within the application site and will replace the existing marquee to provide a permanent building that has an agricultural appearance. The proposed uses will be entirely contained within the proposed building.
- 5.11 The proposal would utilise an existing redundant agricultural building, in accordance with planning permission DC/23/1141, which granted approval for the redevelopment of the site.
- 5.12 The proposed building is green in colour which will help it to blend into its surroundings. There are no public rights of way running through or near the site and the site is well screened from the road.
- 5.13 It is therefore felt that the design of the site meets the criteria of Policy 26.

Ecology

- 5.14 An ecological walkover assessment was undertaken by AEWC on the 28 February 2024. A copy of AEWC's report is submitted with this application and this confirms the existing structure on site has no suitability for bats or nesting birds and no further surveys are required for its removal.

- 5.15 It also confirms the application site as lacking any vegetative cover or other habitat features with any suitability for foraging or refuge for protected species and no further surveys are identified as being required.

Access and Parking

- 5.16 The site is accessed directly off Marches Road which leads onto the A24 and is used to serve a number of residential, agricultural and commercial properties. The access point to the site has good visibility splays of approximately 28m in both directions and has been used by farm and equestrian vehicles, and cars entering the application site since the applicant purchased the farm in 1997.
- 5.17 There is ample space on the existing hardstanding within the site for the parking of vehicles. It is likely that only one or two vehicles will be parked on site at any one time.
- 5.18 The building would be used for storage, as currently undertaken by the existing tenant, with the additional option of light industrial should an alternative tenant need to be found in the future. This would therefore have no more of an impact in terms of traffic and parking than its current and historic uses and meets the criteria of Policy 10 and 26.

6 SUMMARY

- 6.1 This planning application proposes the erection of a barn for storage and light industrial uses and is a resubmission of planning application reference DC/24/0433 which was considered acceptable but was refused only on the ground of water neutrality only.
- 6.2 The application proposes to remove the temporary marquee and replace it with a permanent building that is of an agricultural appearance.
- 6.3 The additional rental income will provide much needed revenue to Maple Farm and make good use of a site that has, since 2015, been used in a commercial nature.
- 6.4 The use will generate only a small number of vehicle movements, likely to be limited to one or two a day.
- 6.5 The site is accessed via a private gated track off Marches Road and is therefore not accessible to the general public.
- 6.6 It is it therefore hoped that the Council will approve this application.

Appendix A

Officer Report for DC/24/0433



DELEGATED APPLICATIONS - ASSESSMENT SHEET

APPLICATION NO./ADDRESS:

DC/24/0433
Maple Farm , Marches Road, Warnham, West Sussex, RH12 3SL

DESCRIPTION:

Erection of a barn for light industrial and storage use on land at Maple Farm, RH12 3SL.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

DC/23/1528	Temporary siting of a marquee for storage use	Approved on 04.10.2023
DC/22/0086	Retrospective application for the construction of a hardstanding area for the storage of cars and the siting of a container to be used as an office.	Application approved
DC/21/1878	Prior notification for change of use of an agricultural building to residential (Use Class C3) to form 5no dwellings with associated operational development.	Prior Approval Required and PERMITTED on 08.10.2021
DC/17/1296	Prior Approval for a proposed Change of Use of Agricultural Building to B8 Storage with ancillary B1 Business	Prior Approval Required and PERMITTED on 04.08.2017
DC/14/0750	Continued use of former farm office as 1-bed dwelling	Application Refused on 22.09.2015
DC/13/0030	Retention of a lean-to extension to former farm workshop building (Certificate of Lawful Development - Existing)	Application Refused on 07.05.2013
DC/12/1636	Retrospective change of use of part of agricultural building to livery stables and retention of sand school	Application Permitted on 21.12.2012
DC/05/1078	Regularisation of hardstanding area and variation of conditions 2 (access) and 5 (landscaping) of WN/44/01	Withdrawn Application on 21.06.2005
WN/25/03	Double garage & log store Site: Maple Farm Marches Road Warnham	Application Permitted on 16.06.2003
WN/34/02	Conservatory Site: Maple Farm Marches Road Warnham	Application Permitted on 05.07.2002

SITE AND SURROUNDS

The application relates to a parcel of land sited to the west of Maple Farm and south of Marches Road. The parcel was granted planning permission for hardstanding and a change of use following a retrospective application under DC/22/0086. Following this, a temporary permission was granted under DC/23/1528 for the siting of a marquee to be used for storage purposes.

The surrounding area is wholly rural in character. Maple farm itself comprises the main farmstead to the east, including barns, residential dwelling and a sandschool.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The siting of the barn would be on the existing hardstanding and in the same location as the temporary marquee currently on site. The Planning statement indicates that the approximate dimensions of the building would be 15 meters in width by 30 meters in depth and would be for light industrial and storage uses.

The submitted plans appear to be 25 metres in depth and 12.1 metres in width. The eaves height of the building would be 4.15 metres and the maximum ridge height would be 6.3 metres.

Access to the site would be via the existing access, with no alterations to the access or proposed parking.

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 3 - Strategic Policy: Development Hierarchy
Policy 7 - Strategic Policy: Economic Growth
Policy 9 - Employment Development
Policy 10 - Rural Economic Development
Policy 24 - Strategic Policy: Environmental Protection
Policy 25 - Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
Policy 26 - Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection
Policy 27 - Settlement Coalescence
Policy 28 - Replacement Dwellings and House Extensions in the Countryside
Policy 29 - Equestrian Development
Policy 30 - Protected Landscapes
Policy 31 - Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
Policy 32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development
Policy 33 - Development Principles
Policy 34 - Cultural and Heritage Assets
Policy 35 - Strategic Policy: Climate Change
Policy 36 - Strategic Policy: Appropriate Energy Use
Policy 37 - Sustainable Construction
Policy 38 - Strategic Policy: Flooding
Policy 39 - Strategic Policy: Infrastructure Provision
Policy 40 - Sustainable Transport
Policy 41 - Parking
Policy 42 - Strategic Policy: Inclusive Communities
Policy 43 - Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation

Neighbourhood Plan:

Warnham Neighbourhood Plan (made)

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:

WSCC Fire and Rescue: Comment

Currently the nearest fire hydrant to this property is 290 metres away. The supply of water for firefighting for a commercial premises should be within 90 metres.

WSCC Highways: No objection

The existing site access from Marches Road via a private track will be retained for the proposed uses. Marches Road is a two-way, single carriageway road subject to national speed limit of 60 miles per hour. Visibility splays along both sides of the road are adequate for the posted speed limit. An inspection of data supplied to WSCC by Sussex Police over a period of the past five years reveals that there have been four incidents of personal injury which were all caused due to driver behaviour. Therefore, there is no evidence to suggest that there are any concerns associated with road geometry or layout.

Parking is accommodated on site which is away from the public highway. Delivery and servicing is carried out in line with the existing arrangement. The supporting statement does not contain information about the estimated vehicular movements associated with the barn. However, the LHA are of the opinion that the site's previous land use as a car storage would have generated far more vehicular trips compared to the proposed uses.

The Local Highway Authority does not consider that the proposal would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety or result in 'severe' cumulative impacts on the operation of the highway network, therefore is not contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 111), and that there are no transport grounds to resist the proposal.

Natural England: Comment

Concur with the conclusion of the Local Planning Authority's HRA appropriate assessment insofar that further information is required to determine the significance of impacts on designated sites and the scope for mitigation. Provision of a robust figure for the proposed water use, taking into account future uses where a mains connection may be required is necessary.

Parish Comments:

Whilst a consultation document was uploaded to the planning portal, no comments appear to have been made as part of this response.

Representations:

Support comment received:

- Barn used in connection to business
- No additional traffic, noise or other disturbance
- No visual impact to consider as it is sited well away from the road and other dwellings.'

One objection received:

- Do not believe there to be a justification for change of use
- Highways and access Impacts
- Noise Generation
- Issues relating to temporary structure
- Access is inadequate

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 7 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) states that sustainable employment development in Horsham District will be achieved by: allocating land for a high quality business park at Land North of Horsham; redevelopment, regeneration, intensification and smart growth of existing employment sites; the formation and development of small, start-up and move-on businesses by encouraging provision of small units through development proposals; encouraging sustainable local employment growth through Neighbourhood Development Plans; and identifying additional employment areas to meet the need for appropriate new business activity. In addition, Policy 9 of the HDPF states that the provision of small, start-up and move-on business units will be supported to enable them to reach their fullest potential.

Policy 10 of the HDPF states that sustainable rural economic development and enterprise within the District will be encouraged in order to generate local employment opportunities and economic, social and environmental benefits for local communities. In the countryside, development which maintains the quality and character of the area, whilst sustaining its varied and productive social and economic activity will be supported in principle. Any development should be appropriate to the countryside location and must: contribute to the diverse and sustainable farming enterprises within the District, or in the case of other countryside based enterprises and activities, contribute to the wider rural economy and/or promote recreation in, and the enjoyment of, the countryside; and either be contained wherever possible within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion or, in the case of an established rural industrial estate, within the existing boundaries; or result in substantial environmental improvement and reduce the impact on the countryside particularly if there are exceptional cases where new or replacement buildings are involved.

Furthermore, Policy 26 of the HDPF states that outside built-up area boundaries, the rural character and undeveloped nature of the countryside will be protected against inappropriate development. Any proposal must be essential to its countryside location, and in addition meet one of the following criteria: support the needs of agriculture or forestry; enable the extraction of minerals or the disposal of waste; provide for quiet informal recreational use; or enable the sustainable development of rural areas. In addition, proposals must be of a scale appropriate to its countryside character and location. Development will be considered acceptable where it does not lead, either individually or cumulatively, to a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside, and protects, and/or conserves, and/or enhances, the key features and characteristics of the landscape character area in which it is located.

The addition of a light industrial use within this location would increase the level activity within the countryside over the current storage use, however, the flexible light industrial and storage building use would result in a level of activity that would not be unacceptable in this regard. The proposal would create a permanent commercial unit which is distinct from the temporary marquee on site approved under DC/23/1528. There has been no change in site circumstance and as per the previous permission, the proposal would support goals of rural enterprise in the countryside and not result in a level of activity that would be unsuitable or unacceptable for the rural location. It is therefore considered that the proposal would be acceptable in principle, subject to all other material considerations.

Design and Appearance:

Policies 25, 32 and 33 of the HDPF promote development that is of a high quality design, which is sympathetic to the character and distinctiveness of the site and surroundings. The landscape character of the area should be protected, conserved and enhanced, with proposals contributing to a sense of place through appropriate scale, massing and appearance.

The appearance of the proposed building would not be unacceptable in terms of siting, and would be of an appearance that would not be unexpected in the rural locality. The application site has permission for the storage of cars under DC/22/0086 and when considering this planning history, the impact of the proposal on the visual amenity of the site would be considered more akin to what would be expected in the context of a site surrounded by open fields, barns and mature landscaping. It is therefore considered that the proposals would not have a detrimental effect on the character of the site or the wider area, in accordance with policies 25, 32 and 33 of the HDPF.

Amenity Impacts:

Policy 33(2) of the HDPF states that development should consider the scale, massing and orientation between buildings, respecting the amenities and sensitivities of neighbouring properties.

Given the context of the proposed siting and the nature of its use, it is not considered that the proposal would give rise to unacceptable impacts on amenity. Regardless, if the proposed development were considered otherwise acceptable, conditions would have been attached in respect of hours of operation, lighting and machinery.

It is also considered that any potential changes to traffic movements associated with the proposals would not be so significant as to result in any significant harm to neighbouring amenity above that that could already exist. Overall, it is considered that the proposals would be in accordance with Policy 33(2) of the HDPF.

Highways Impacts:

Policies 40 and 41 of the HDPF states that development should provide safe and adequate access and parking, suitable for all users.

Highways have been consulted during the application. The proposal would use the existing site access from Marches Road via a private track. They consider the Visibility splays along both sides of the road adequate such that there is no concern in respect of site access or public safety. Parking would be accommodated on the existing hardstanding and the proposal is considered to result in fewer vehicular trips than the previous car storage use on site. Given the above Highways consultation response, there are no concerns in respect of policies 40 and 41 of the HDPF.

Ecology:

Policy 31 of the HDPF states that development will be supported where it demonstrates that it maintains or enhances the existing network of green infrastructure. Development proposals will be required to contribute to the enhancement of existing biodiversity and should create and manage new habitats where appropriate.

The applicant has submitted a preliminary site walkover survey by AEWC (dated on the 28th February 2024). The survey found that there is negligible potential for protected species on site. Given the information submitted and that the siting of the proposed building would be in the location of the existing marquee, there are no objections to the proposal based on concerns with Ecology and no reason to request further survey.

Water Neutrality:

The application site falls within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone as defined by Natural England which draws its water supply from groundwater abstraction at Hardham. Natural England has issued a Position Statement for applications within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone which states that it

cannot be concluded with the required degree of certainty that new development in this zone would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Arun Valley SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites.

Natural England advises that plans and projects affecting sites where an existing adverse effect is known will be required to demonstrate, with sufficient certainty, that they will not contribute further to an existing adverse effect. The received advice note advises that the matter of water neutrality should be addressed in assessments to agree and ensure that water use is offset for all new developments within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone.

A Water Neutrality Statement has been provided and states that there is no mains usage within the application site currently. The Water Neutrality Statement suggests the following condition:

'No wcs to be added to the site without the prior consent of the planning authority'.

Whilst it is accepted that the temporary marquee was granted permission with this condition, that secured no mains water usage for only one year and did not include the light industrial use. This was considered reasonable in this instance given that the permission would only be in place for a very limited time and it was understood at the time of writing the officer's report that this was likely to be tenanted by one business during the time of the permission for storage use. Equally, a similar condition was granted for the storage of cars and a shipping container office. The nature of shipping containers is that they are temporary structures, with the officer's report noting at the time that the business was largely online such that facilities would not be needed. The permission was for the storage of cars specifically, and not a general B8 storage use and light industrial use that would have potential to be tenanted by multiple businesses over the lifetime for the development, some of which may require water. In this instance, and given the precise nature of storage, a condition relating to the storage of cars which requires no water could specifically be enforced against.

The current application under assessment differs to these applications in that it would be for general storage and light industrial use in perpetuity, and would cater to a range of businesses. There is potential that some of the businesses for both uses would require water and it would not be reasonable for the LPA to condition that there is no mains in the future to supply them with water. Furthermore, it is considered in this instance given the need for certainty around water neutrality that whilst the current temporary storage use would not require mains, further information would be required in regards to the light industrial use, where this is likely to require additional levels of staff and dedicated facilities over a storage use. As such, it is the opinion of this officer that it is not possible to reasonably conclude that there would be no usage as stated within the submitted WNS, and it is unlikely that the no mains water consumption stated would reasonably represent the consumption of a light industrial and storage use. Natural England have been consulted during the application and have objected on the basis of the above assessment.

In the absence of a strategy to demonstrate water neutrality through the incorporation of on-site measures and/or appropriate offsetting actions capable of achieving water neutrality, there is no certainty that the proposal will not contribute further to the existing adverse effect on the integrity of the Arun Valley SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites. In such circumstances the grant of permission would be contrary to policy 31 of the HDPF, NPPF paragraph 180 and the Council's obligations under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Other Matters

It is noted that the application relates to either re-locating an existing building from somewhere else in the Applicant's ownership or erecting a new building. The location of the existing building has not been shown within the red line, and there would be no mechanism in place to secure its relocation. It is also of note that the existing building is of a different footprint and appearance to the proposed new building. Had the proposal been considered acceptable, clarification on the proposed development would have been requested, including further information on the location of the existing building (and its incorporation in the red line) where relevant.

Conclusions:

In conclusion, the development is considered acceptable in principle and the proposal is not considered to result in harm to the character and appearance of the site, the wider countryside area or the amenities of neighbouring properties and users of land. In addition, the proposal would not result in harm to the function and safety of the highway network.

Notwithstanding the above, there is a lack of information within the Water Neutrality Statement about a proposed usage, that it is not possible to determine what the likely water demand would be from the proposed development. It would be unlikely that the site has demonstrated appropriate levels of mitigation and/or offsetting measures to address the demand and meet water neutrality. Insufficient information has been provided to undertake the Assessment and it is not therefore possible for Horsham District Council to conclude that, with mitigation, the project will not have an Adverse Effect on the Integrity of the Arun Valley SAC/ SPA /Ramsar site.

It is not considered that the benefits arising from the development would overcome the harm arising to the Arun Valley Protected Sites. Given the nature of the uses now proposed, which would include light industrial activities that are likely to be water consuming, it is not considered that a temporary permission would be appropriate or acceptable.

Recommendation: Application Refused

Reason(s) for Refusal:

1. Insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate with a sufficient degree of certainty that the development would not contribute to an existing adverse effect upon the integrity of the internationally designated Arun Valley Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area and Ramsar sites by way of increased water abstraction, contrary to Policy 31 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015), Paragraphs 185 and 186 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021), thus the Local Planning Authority is unable to discharge its duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), and s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (Priority Habitats & Species).

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/24/0433

Schedule of plans/documents **not approved:**

Plan Type	Description	Drawing Number	Received Date
Supporting Statement	Protected Species Walkover Survey by Animal Ecology & Wildlife Consultants Ltd dated March 2024	23-221	19.03.2024
Elevation plan	West and East Elevation	NONE	19.03.2024
Elevation & Floor plan	Floor Plan and North and South Elevation	NONE	19.03.2024
Site plan	Existing Site Plan	NONE	19.03.2024

