

Birchfield Nursery, Kidders Lane, Henfield BN5 9AB

The development proposed is change in use of the premises to mixed-use purposes for Use Classes B8, E and as a base for a garden design and landscaping business.

The site is not in an appropriate location for the proposed use and its effects on the character and appearance of the area. This plant nursery site which is located within the open countryside. The site sits adjacent to the A281 Brighton Road and is within a predominantly open and rural landscape. The site contains numerous buildings and structures, many associated with its use as a nursery.

Policy 2 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) (HDPF) seeks to maintain the district's rural character whilst ensuring that the needs of the community are met through, amongst other things, focusing development in and around Horsham and bringing forward strategic development areas. Policy 10 of the HDPF relates to rural economic development and establishes a range of criteria against which development in the countryside will be considered, including the requirement that any development must contribute to the wider rural economy. The site is not within an area designated for development in the HDPF and it is in the countryside.

Policy 25 of the HDPF states that the natural environment and landscape character of the district, including the landscape, landform and development pattern, will be protected against inappropriate development. Policy 26 states those outside built-up areas the rural character and undeveloped nature of the countryside will be protected against inappropriate development and that any proposal must be essential to its countryside location and, in addition meet one of the following criteria: 1) support the needs of agriculture or forestry, 2) enable mineral extraction or waste disposal, 3) provide quite informal recreation, or 4) enable sustainable development of rural areas.

Several of the existing structures on the site are associated with the plant nursery use, although many are not now used in association with the business on the site. Areas within the centre and south of the site would be used for open storage, and the appellant has suggested height

limits for these areas. Taking account of the policies set out above, it is clear that the proposed uses would not comply with the requirements of them. The proposal would amount to an inappropriate use in the countryside raising conflict with those policies.

The site is in a prominent position adjacent to the busy A281. The surrounding area is made up of mainly open fields with low fences and mature trees. Where buildings exist, they are mainly close to the roads and mainly appear to be associated with the agricultural/rural uses in the landscape. As the site currently stands, views of the structures and storage are available from the road and outside the site.

The applicant includes proposals for landscaping around parts of the site, with the intention that the site would be screened from views. Whilst this may reduce the visibility of the inappropriate uses and features within the site, they would still be seen when passing the site but particularly when within the site would be at significant odds with the requirements of Policies 25 and 26 and would fail to protect the landform and development pattern of the area and would be in conflict with Policy 3.2 of the Henfield Neighbourhood Plan. The proposal would have an unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the surroundings.