



Horsham District Council
Parkside
Horsham
West Sussex
RH12 1RL

Our ref: 15090
Date: 9 March 2026

For the attention of: Daniel Holmes

Application ref: DC/26/0206
Location: Woodside Equestrian Centre Forest Road Colgate West
Sussex RH12 4TF
Proposal/Description: Retention of top surface to majority of existing hardcore area
and its use for the parking of vehicles in connection with the
use of the equestrian centre and re-siting of lorry containers
onto historic hard surfaced area (Retrospective)

Thank you for consulting with Place Services on the above application. This letter sets out our consultation response on the landscape impact of the application and how the proposal relates and responds to the landscape setting and context of the site.

Summary

Not supportive on landscape grounds	☒
No landscape objection, subject to attached recommendations and/or conditions	☐
Further information required prior to determination	☒
No landscape comments / does not wish to comment	☐

Overall, we judge that the development does not seek to conserve and enhance the purposes of the National Landscape, under the CRoW Act 2000. This type of development is also largely incompatible with the aims of the AONB Management Plan from a landscape perspective.

We judge that the use of hardstanding and storage has a more adverse effect on the landscape character than that of previous uses. However, effects on landscape character are relatively localised.

If minded for approval, we advise that the scheme introduces further soft landscaping along the north-western boundary to further reduce visual effects along Forest Road, which is the only visual receptor affected by the development. The relocation of caravans and containers

away from the north-western edge of the site does however reduce the visual impacts associated with the development.

We also advise the above recommendations are considered in accordance with guidance set out within the High Weald Colour Study.

1.0. Site Context

- 1.1. The Site is located at Woodside Farm and 1km east of Horsham. It is located within the High Weald National Landscape (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, AONB). The Site itself comprises the buildings, hard standing and paddocks associated with Woodside Farm. Forest Road forms the north-western site boundary.
- 1.2. We note that the scheme was refused under application number DC/24/1405 and was dismissed at appeal.

2.0. Planning Policy Context

Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) (2015)

- 2.1. The following policies are considered relevant to this application: Environmental Protection (Policy 24), District Character and the Natural Environment (Policy 25), Countryside Protection (Policy 26), High Weald AONB (Policy 30) and Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity (Policy 31).

3.0. Review of the proposal/submitted information:

- 3.1. Within the Horsham Landscape Character Assessment (HLCA) (2003), the site is located in LCA L1 St Leonard's Forest. Key characteristics of the LCA that are relevant to the site include: narrow flat-topped ridges, steep sided ghylls, large conifer plantations, heathland on wooded ridges, pasture and arable fields, confined views, ridgetop roads and isolated farmsteads.
- 3.2. Sensitivities to change within LCA L1 include small incremental changes to roads, and changes in farmland management and expansion of horse paddocks.
- 3.3. The Site is located within the High Weald National Landscape, and therefore the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan should be considered.
- 3.4. Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 sets out that there is a duty to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of AONBs. Below are the key character components of the High Weald's natural beauty that we consider most relevant to this site:
 - Settlement: Farmsteads around routeways, separation between settlements.
 - Woodland: Highly interconnected mosaic of woodlands, wooded routeways, high proportion of Ancient Woodland.

- Fieldsapes and heath: Irregular field patterns, fields at right angles to ridge-top roads, fields as permanent pasture.
 - Aesthetic and Perceptual Qualities: A sense of intimacy, enclosure and remoteness owed to the heavily treed landscape.
- 3.5. Section 85 of the CRoW Act (2000) states that development within National Landscapes must “*seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty*”. Within this scheme, the enhancements to the National Landscape are limited to the potential enhancements to the north-western site boundary, where hedgerow and tree planting contributes to the multi-layered planting approach set out within the High Weald Design Guide. However, the introduction of hard surfacing and caravans/containers does not largely contribute to enhancing the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape.
- 3.6. The extent of hard surfacing and storage of containers and caravans will adversely affect the countryside character of the site and surrounding landscape and will not seek to conserve and enhance the National Landscape.
- 3.7. No Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been submitted for review. We have made the professional judgement that given the predominant rural nature of the surrounding area, the introduction of sub-urbanising features will have an adverse and eroding impact on the landscape character and qualities of the area.
- 3.8. From a visual perspective, we note that views are available into the site from Forest Road, notably in winter months when vegetation is less. However, the amendments to the layout seek to reduce visibility of the upright features. There are also no other available views, and the site is largely well contained.
- 3.9. The lorry containers are currently located to the north-west of the site, adjacent to Forest Road. Views of the containers are available from Forest Road in their position to the north-west of the site. The submitted Proposed Site Plan (Dwg no. 3B) proposes to relocate these containers to the south-east edge of the site, adjacent to the existing buildings at Woodside Farm. This is considered a more appropriate location for the containers, by reducing their visual appearance along Forest Road and impact on users travelling along this route in the National Landscape.
- 3.10. An area of Ancient Woodland is located north-west of the site, on the opposite side of Forest Road. Para 193(c) of the NPPF (December 2024) states “*development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists*”. A 15m buffer should be provided between the Ancient Woodland and the proposed development. We do however defer to comments

from an Arboricultural Consultant on the impacts of the development within this 15m zone.

- 3.11. It is not confirmed in the submitted Proposed Site Plan whether any material will remain within the root protection areas (RPA) of the existing trees along the edge of Forest Road. The trees along this route are important to the enclosed character of this road, the High Weald AONB characteristics, and also to the screening of the site from this visual receptor.
- 3.12. The letter dated 3rd February 2026 from Stephen Jupp states “*The planting of a hedgerow would be considered*”. Within this area, field boundaries are typically formed by shaws and strips of woodland. We would therefore advise that any mitigation planting reflects the local landscape character and proposes appropriate buffer planting.
- 3.13. We do however acknowledge that planting of the north-western site boundary would contribute to reducing the visual effects associated with the development. Where gaps in the vegetation provide views into the site, further planting along this boundary would be beneficial and welcomed. This will also contribute to reducing the declining condition of the landscape, as per the LCA.

4.0. Summary

- 4.1. Overall, we judge that the development does not seek to conserve and enhance the purposes of the National Landscape, under the CRoW Act 2000. This type of development is also largely incompatible with the aims of the AONB Management Plan from a landscape perspective.
- 4.2. We judge that the use of hardstanding and storage has a more adverse effect on the landscape character than that of previous uses. However, effects on landscape character are relatively localised.
- 4.3. If minded for approval, we advise that the scheme introduces further soft landscaping along the north-western boundary to further reduce visual effects along Forest Road, which is the only visual receptor affected by the development. The relocation of caravans and containers away from the north-western edge of the site does however reduce the visual impacts associated with the development.
- 4.4. We also advise the above recommendations are considered in accordance with guidance set out within the High Weald Colour Study.

Please contact us if you have any queries in relation to this advice.

Place Services – Landscape Team

Email: landscape@essex.gov.uk



Place Services provide landscape advice on behalf of Horsham District Council.

Please note:

This letter is advisory and should only be considered as the opinion formed by specialist staff in relation to this particular matter.

We are unable to respond directly to applicants/agents or other interested parties. Any additional information, queries or comments on this advice that the applicant/agent or other interested parties may have, must be directed to the Planning Officer at the relevant LPA, who will seek further advice from us where appropriate.

