



Horsham District Council
Parkside
Horsham
West Sussex
RH12 1RL

Our ref: 15470
Date: 20 March 2026

For the attention of:

Application ref: DC/26/0266
Location: Thakeham Mushrooms Storrington Road Thakeham
Pulborough West Sussex RH20 3DY
Proposal/Description: Demolition of existing buildings and the redevelopment of the site to provide 150 dwellings, including affordable housing, land for the community land trust, works to public right of way and associated landscaping, open space and infrastructure.

Thank you for consulting with Place Services on the above Full planning 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.

This letter sets out our landscape comments and observations based on the submitted amended documents and plans, whilst also looking to provide recommendations for how to proceed.

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	☐

We judge that there is capacity for the proposed development within the former mushrooms site without significant adverse landscape and visual effects on the wider landscape. Further information is required on the level changes across the scheme. We advise that the above recommendations and conditions are taken into consideration.

1.0. Site Context

- 1.1. The application Site is located to the west of Thakeham village and to the north of Abingworth village. Storrington Road B2139 runs along the eastern boundary of the application Site, and two residential settlements define both the northern and southern

boundaries. The Site itself comprises the former Thakeham Mushrooms Site, with the southern part of the Site comprising large buildings.

- 1.2. A public right of way (PRoW) runs along the eastern Site boundary along the road, and another PRoW runs along the western Site boundary through the centre of the land ownership boundary. Both PRoWs connect Abingworth to Thakeham.
- 1.3. In June 2025, an application (Ref: DC/24/0021) on this site was dismissed at appeal under APP/Z3825/W/24/3350094, for 247 houses and flexible non-residential floorspace (Use Class E).

2.0. Planning Policy Context

Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) (2015)

- 2.1. Policies relevant to this application include:
 - Policy 25: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
 - Policy 26: Countryside Protection
 - Policy 27: Settlement Coalescence
 - Policy 31: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
 - Policy 33: Development Principles

Regulation 19 Horsham District Local Plan 2023-2040 (January 2024) Examination

- 2.2. Strategic Policy 14: Countryside Protection is relevant to this application considering its location outside of the settlement boundary.
- 2.3. Strategic Policy 15: Settlement Coalescence is also a consideration given the Site's location between Thakeham and Ashingdon villages.

Thakeham Parish Neighbourhood Plan to 2031 (January 2017)

- 2.4. Policy Thakeham 3 'Horticultural Land off Storrington Road ('Mushroom Site') states that is an agricultural or horticultural use cannot be secured for the Site, redevelopment for one or more of the following uses will be permitted:
 - D2 recreational use compatible with the countryside location;
 - a solar array use;
 - B1 light industrial/commercial use and/or tourism use within the existing developed area of the site with the remainder returned to an open agricultural use.

Other policies relevant to this application include Thakeham 9 'Development in the Countryside' and Thakeham 10 'Green Infrastructure & Valued Landscape'.

3.0. Review of the LVIA:

- 3.1. The application has been supported by the submission of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) produced by fabrik Chartered Landscape Architects (February 2026).
- 3.2. The methodology for the LVIA is based on the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (third edition).
- 3.3. The submitted LVIA has been updated from the version submitted under DC/24/0021, with amendments and additional information highlighted in blue. We welcome this clear approach.

Landscape Character

- 3.4. The Site is located within the F1 Pulborough Chiltington and Thakeham Farmlands Landscape Character Area (LCA) of the Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment (2003). Key characteristics of this LCA include the undulating sandstone ridge, partly wooded low scarp, extensive arable and horticultural use with mushroom farms, leafy sunken lanes, small historic villages such as Thakeham, scattered small cottages and farmsteads. The character is generally rural however there is a localised visual intrusion from derelict nurseries and small-scale industrial uses. The area is sensitive to large scale housing developments and a decline in traditional land management.
- 3.5. Guidelines therefore include ensuring small scale development responds to traditional settlement patterns and uses local materials and design, redevelopment of glasshouse sites should be well integrated into the landscape with small woodland and hedgerow planting and encourage significant woodland planting with the existing hedgerow network south of Thakeham.
- 3.6. The Site is located within the WG7 Storrington Woods and Heaths LCA of the Landscape Character Assessment of West Sussex. Key characteristics of this LCA include the distinctive landform of low ridges and alternating shallow valleys, heavily wooded ridges, small patches of heathland, undulating mixes farmland including orchards, vineyards, a network of small woodlands, a more heavily wooded northern escarpment, abandoned glasshouses and a relatively undeveloped character.
- 3.7. Table 10.1 provides an overview of the assessed effects on landscape character. Overall, we agree with the included landscape receptors, and where our judgements may differ from those included within the assessment, these are not deemed substantial.

Visual Effects

- 3.8. Para 1.2 of the submitted LVIA states that viewpoint photography was undertaken in December 2025, representing the worst-case scenario. We welcome the inclusion of annotated winter photography in addition to previous photography from May 2023.
- 3.9. Table 10.1 provides an overview of the assessed effects on landscape character. Overall, we do not disagree with most of the judgements provided. Overall, we agree with the included landscape receptors, and where our judgements may differ from those included within the assessment, these are not deemed substantial.
- 4.0. Review of the Proposals:**
- 4.1. Under Policy 2 ‘Strategic Development’ and Policy 33 ‘Development Principles’ of the HDPF, reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land) is encouraged whilst respecting any constraints that exist. We therefore agree with the principle of developing only on land within the Site has been previously occupied by built areas associated with the former mushroom farm.
- 4.2. Views towards the South Downs scarp (Viewpoint 2) are an important feature of this site, which is being maintained along the western PRow owed to the housing setback from this edge, which is positive.
- 4.3. A key constraint of the site is the change in topography. The submitted Concept Drainage Strategy (Dwg no. 2505500-ACE-XX-XX-DR-C-101) indicates a change from 41m in the south-west to 53m in the north-east of the developable area. Significant earthworks and levels changes will be required to facilitate the scheme on this site. We therefore request that further information is submitted regarding proposed levels, and the locations of any retaining walls. Cross sections would be useful submissions, demonstrating levels changes across the scheme.
- 4.4. We have particular concern for the level changes between the developed area in the north-east, and its transition into the POS adjacent. Avoidance of large retaining walls across the scheme is preferable. Where possible, large retaining walls should also be avoided between rear gardens; when in combination with a 1.8m fence, this creates a very tall overhead structure to residents in the lower elevation rear gardens. As above, details of cross sections should be submitted.
- 4.5. Spot heights for the proposed scheme should also be submitted, to demonstrate the changes in levels and also indicate the differences in heights across retaining walls.
- 4.6. Additional pedestrian access should be proposed between the POS facing shared streets, and the POS itself. Boundaries largely separate these shared streets from the POS which

reduces connectivity and pedestrian permeability.

- 4.7. A narrow gap is provided between the rear garden boundaries of Plots 132-138. We question the function of this considering these are semi-detached houses with no required rear access. This gap may become a maintenance and security issue.
- 4.8. We have reservations about the rear gardens that are disconnected from the dwellings, for example, Plot 123 and 132.
- 4.9. Boundary treatments between the drives and the POS are not marked on the Boundary Treatment Plan (Dwg no. P24-2268_DE_010_A_008)
- 4.10. The substation is located in a prominent location within the POS near to the entrance of the scheme. We advise this is either relocated to a less prominent location, or alternatively soft landscaping is proposed to surround it. Our preference is that this is relocated.
- 4.11. Hard surface treatments are proposed in some locations within the root protection areas (RPA) of trees around the Site boundaries, notably on the eastern edge. We advise no-dig solutions are proposed within these areas.
- 4.12. Most of the site comprises wildflower/grassland meadow. We advise that some of this space is proposed as maintained flowering grassland which is more accessible for residents and can be utilised for dog walking and play.
- 4.13. The proposed SuDS attenuation pond to the south of the Site is not well described within the DAS. We advise that this basin has 1:4 banks to allow for some partial pedestrian access when stormwater storage is not required. This allows for a multi-functional space with variations in planting and play which can be incorporated into the landscape design of this area. We also advise that a precast concrete head wall with galvanised metal railings are not preferable and a softer approach is advised. Flood tolerant planting should also be incorporated into the design to improve the visual amenity and biodiversity of the basin.
- 4.14. The Site does not benefit from any existing trees located within the centre of the Site that can contribute towards providing a sense of maturity to the scheme. We would expect a range of tree stock sizes to be used across the site, as a minimum and as provided, 10-12cm should be used. A number of trees should also be larger where the location allows to provide a sense of maturity to the scheme. Selected trees would also be preferably long-life expectancy species.
- 4.15. We would expect details of tree pit design to be provided and where trees are proposed in close proximity to hard landscaped / surfaced areas or equipment, details of root barrier systems should also be provided.

5.0. Summary

- 5.1. We judge that there is capacity for the proposed development within the former mushrooms site without significant adverse landscape and visual effects on the wider landscape. Further information is required on the level changes across the scheme. We advise that the above recommendations and conditions are taken into consideration.

6.0. Recommended Condition(s):

- 6.1. If minded for approval, we would recommend the following conditions for your consideration:

ACTION REQUIRED PRIOR TO COMMENCEMENT OF DEVELOPMENT: HARD AND SOFT LANDSCAPING SCHEME.

No development shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved, in writing, by the Local Planning Authority a scheme of hard and soft landscaping and boundary treatment for the site, which shall include any proposed changes in ground levels and also accurately identify spread, girth and species of all existing trees, shrubs and hedgerows on the site and indicate any to be retained, together with measures for their protection which shall comply with the recommendations set out in the British Standards Institute publication BS 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction.

The soft landscaping plan should include plant species, number, density, location and sizes of the proposed planting. The planting specification should provide details of tree planting pits, green roofs, planting preparation and establishment operations. We would recommend an alternative to plastic guards, such as the use of perimeter protective fencing where appropriate, or guards manufactured from 100% biodegradable materials.

The hard landscaping plan should include details of specific materials, colours and finishes of paved or otherwise hard surfaces, built features and street furniture. The plans should clearly show the position of any new fencing and hard surfaces in relation to existing and proposed planting.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and the character and appearance of the area. This condition is required to be agreed prior to the commencement of any development to ensure matters of tree and hedgerow protection are secured early to ensure avoidance of damage or loss due to the development and/or its construction. If agreement was sought at any later stage, there is an unacceptable risk of loss and damage to important trees and hedgerow that would result in harm to amenity.

ACTION REQUIRED PRIOR TO COMMENCEMENT OF DEVELOPMENT: LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN (LMP)

No development shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved, in writing, by the Local Planning Authority a landscape management plan for a minimum of 5 years. This should include:

- a) Drawing/s showing the extent of the LMP i.e. only showing the areas to which the LMP applies, areas of private ownership should be excluded.
- b) Written Specification detailing:
 - All operation and procedures for soft landscape areas; inspection, watering, pruning, cutting, mowing, clearance and removal of arisings and litter, removal of temporary items (fencing, guards and stakes) and replacement of failed planting.
 - All operations and procedures for hard landscape areas; inspection, sweeping, clearing of accumulated vegetative material and litter, maintaining edges, and painted or finished surfaces.
 - Furniture (Bins, Benches and Signage) and Play Equipment.
 - All operations and procedures for soft landscaping to SuDS features; inspection of linear drains, basins and swales, removal of unwanted vegetative material and litter, including inlets and outlets.
- c) Maintenance task table which explains the maintenance duties across the site in both chronological and systematic order.
- d) Mechanism for monitoring and review of the management plan and operations.

Reason - To support plant establishment and ensure appropriate management is carried out and to maintain functionality and visual aesthetic.

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.

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