

PLANNING STATEMENT

Proposed Storage and Workshop Building
Dalesdown Christian Conference and Activity Centre
Honeybridge Lane, Dial Post, Horsham, West Sussex

Submitted on behalf of:
Family Foundations Trust Ltd

1. Introduction

This Planning Statement supports a full planning application for the erection of a storage and workshop building at Dalesdown Christian Conference and Activity Centre.

The proposal replaces a former temporary residential mobile home, which has recently been demolished. While planning permission was previously granted under application DC/19/1040 for a replacement chalet dwelling and shed, that chalet was not constructed. The site is therefore currently undeveloped.

The proposal provides essential operational infrastructure to support the ongoing maintenance and management of the established Dalesdown facility.

2. Site Context and Established Use

Dalesdown operates as a long-established Christian conference and activity centre in the countryside near Dial Post. The site comprises several substantial buildings set within extensive landscaped grounds.

The centre is operated by Family Foundations Trust Ltd, a registered charity overseeing both Dalesdown and Children Worldwide. The Trust provides residential camps, training events and activity-based programmes for children, young people and adults.

Given the scale of the buildings and grounds, ongoing estate management is critical to the safe and effective delivery of the charity's activities.

The application site lies within the countryside, outside any defined Built-Up Area Boundary, and forms part of the established Dalesdown complex.

3. Planning History and Principle of Development

The site has historically accommodated a mobile home associated with the operational needs of Dalesdown. Under application DC/19/1040, the Council granted permission for:

- Demolition of temporary accommodation
- Erection of a replacement chalet dwelling
- Erection of a shed

The officer's assessment accepted the principle of a permanent structure in this location in connection with the lawful institutional use of the wider site.

The previously approved chalet was not constructed and the former mobile home has now been removed. The current proposal replaces this built presence with a workshop and storage building ancillary to the established use.

Development Plan Context

The key development plan policies are contained within the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

Relevant policies include:

Policy 1 – Strategic Policy

Supports sustainable development consistent with the NPPF.

The proposal represents sustainable development by supporting an established rural community facility without extending its operational footprint.

Policy 2 – Strategic Development

Seeks to maintain the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

The proposal:

- Replaces a previously developed footprint.
- Is modest in scale.
- Is well screened by existing vegetation.
- Does not expand the developed envelope of the site.

It therefore preserves countryside character in accordance with Policy 2.

Policy 4 – Settlement Expansion

Restricts new development outside Built-Up Area Boundaries unless it complies with other relevant policies.

This proposal is not isolated new development but ancillary infrastructure directly supporting an established lawful countryside use. It therefore aligns with the framework of exceptions envisaged by Policy 4.

Policy 26 – Countryside Protection

Seeks to protect the character and quality of the countryside.

The development:

- Is proportionate and operationally necessary.
- Replaces a long-standing structure.
- Has limited visual impact due to screening and siting.
- Does not introduce new residential activity.

As such, it accords with Policy 26.

Policy 32 – The Quality of New Development

Requires development to achieve high standards of design, integration and landscape sensitivity.

The proposed workshop:

- Is modest in scale.
- Sits within the existing developed context.
- Maintains appropriate scale and form.
- Will be constructed in materials appropriate to its rural setting.

It therefore complies with Policy 32.

Policy 33 – Development Principles

Requires development to function well and add to overall quality.

The building:

- Serves a clear operational purpose.
- Enhances the functionality of the site.
- Supports long-term sustainability of the established use.

4. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The National Planning Policy Framework (2023) provides further support.

Paragraph 11 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

The proposal supports an established rural institution, ensuring its continued viability and operational effectiveness.

Paragraph 84 – Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy

Planning decisions should enable:

“the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas.”

Although charitable in nature, Dalesdown operates as an established rural enterprise providing employment, training and visitor activity. The proposed workshop supports its sustainable operation.

Paragraph 93 – Community Facilities

Planning policies should:

“Plan positively for the provision and use of community facilities.”

Dalesdown functions as a community, educational and recreational facility. The proposal ensures its continued safe and effective operation.

Paragraph 180 – Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

The development:

- Reuses an established built location.
- Minimises landscape impact.
- Benefits from existing tree screening.
- Does not encroach into open countryside beyond the developed campus.

5. Operational Justification

The Dalesdown estate comprises multiple buildings and extensive grounds. Effective maintenance requires:

- Secure storage of machinery
- Dedicated workshop space for repair and servicing
- Consolidation of tools and operational equipment
- Currently, there is no purpose-built facility to accommodate these functions.

The proposal:

- Improves efficiency and estate management
- Reduces ad hoc storage
- Supports safe operation of buildings and grounds
- Ensures long-term sustainability of the centre

Importantly, the proposal does not intensify use of the site nor expand its operational activities. It supports the existing lawful use.

6. Impact Assessment

Landscape and Visual Impact

- Replaces a previously established structure.
- Located within an existing developed context.
- Screened by mature trees and vegetation.
- Limited wider visibility.

There is no material harm to countryside character.

Residential Amenity

- No nearby residential properties adversely affected.
- Workshop use ancillary to existing site activity.

Highways

- No new access proposed.
- No significant increase in vehicle movements beyond routine maintenance activity.

7. Planning Balance and Conclusion

The proposed development represents the replacement of a previously established built presence within the Dalesdown complex with a modest and proportionate workshop and storage building. The structure is directly ancillary to the lawful and long-established use of the site as a Christian conference and activity centre and provides essential operational infrastructure necessary for the effective maintenance of the buildings and extensive grounds.

The proposal does not extend the developed footprint of the site into open countryside, nor does it intensify the primary use of the centre. Instead, it consolidates and formalises maintenance functions in a purpose-built facility, thereby supporting the long-term sustainability and responsible management of

the estate. The building will sit within an established developed context, benefit from existing mature tree screening, and will not result in material harm to the character or appearance of the countryside.

In policy terms, the development accords with Policies 1, 2, 4, 26, 32 and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework by representing sustainable, proportionate and well-designed ancillary development that preserves countryside character while supporting an established rural institution. It is also consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework, particularly paragraphs 11, 84, 93 and 180, which collectively encourage sustainable rural enterprise, the protection of community facilities, and development that respects environmental character.

When considered in the round, the proposal constitutes sustainable development that enables the continued effective operation of an established charitable facility delivering recognised community and educational benefits. There are no material planning harms that would outweigh these benefits. Planning permission should therefore be granted.