



HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL CONSULTATION

TO:	Horsham District Council – Planning Dept
LOCATION:	Beckley Stud Reeds Lane Southwater West Sussex
DESCRIPTION:	Erection of a new storage building and associated hardstanding and the retention of existing installed hardstanding (part retrospective).
REFERENCE:	DC/25/2133
RECOMMENDATION:	Advice / Objection
SUMMARY OF COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATION: Due to the scale and incremental change experienced within the site, the proposed development is considered to give rise to adverse effects on the landscape character and visual amenity of the area. If the proposed development meets the essential to its countryside location provisos within HDPF 26, we recommend the reduction in size of the storage barn is explored and that mitigation measures, such as reinforcement of periphery planting and building materials to soften its appearance.	
MAIN COMMENTS: <u>Site description and context</u> 1. The site is located to the east and in close proximity to the settlement of Southwater, approximately 0.4km away on the opposite side of the A24, and in a countryside location. 2. The site forms part of the wider Beckley Stud holding which comprises a mixture of paddocks, sand school, stable building, mobile home and a green steel clad building, all associated with an equestrian business. 3. The sitting of the new storage building would replace the sand school. 4. Beckley Stud is bounded by Colstaple Ln on its northern and western boundaries, Reeds Ln along the eastern boundary and PRoW 1676 along the southern boundary. The boundaries are predominantly defined by hedgerow and trees and a mixture of boundary treatments such as post and rail fence, traditional state railing, close board fence. Although not identified as public rights of way, both Colstaple Ln and Reeds Ln are both used by walkers to connect into the wider footpath network. The sand school is currently surrounded by an evergreen hedge, however it is unclear if this was to be retained or removed to facilitate development. 5. The immediate site context holds rural qualities, predominantly comprising wooded and agricultural landscape features but there are also elements of built	

form along Reeds Ln, Colstaple Ln and Kings Ln. Notwithstanding, the character of the area remains very much rural owing to the narrow lanes, well vegetated and tranquil nature.

6. The site access is made off Reeds Ln through the solid gates with brick piers and a gravelled surface. These features associated with the buildings and hardstanding located adjacent to the boundary as seen from the lane, result in a localised adverse effect on the visual amenity and rural qualities of this section of Reeds Ln.

Policy context

7. Policy 25 requires that the natural environment and landscape character of the District, including the landscape, landform and development pattern, together with protected landscapes and habitats will be protected against inappropriate development.
8. HDPF Policy 26 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 also meet one of four criteria which include (4) enabling the sustainable development of rural areas. In addition, proposals must be of a scale appropriate to its countryside character and location, and would not lead, either individually or cumulatively to a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside and protects and/or conserve, enhances key features and characteristics of the landscape character in which it is located.

Landscape character guidance

9. The site is located within both M1 Crabtree & Nuthurst Ridges & Ghylls and H1 Southwater & Christs Hospital Farmlands Landscape Character Areas as defined in the Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment (2003). Nevertheless, the site and surrounding area is more closed aligned and representative of the key characteristics found within M1 Landscape Character Area (LCA).
10. The overall landscape character of M1 LCA is described as *a well wooded and enclosed landscape of steep wooded ridges and ghylls, as well as small valleys situated on the Tunbridge Wells sand. (...) It has a strong network of small to large sized woods, shaws and hedgerows, which enclose mainly small pasture fields. As result views are generally very confined, (...) Farmland ponds, hedgerow oaks and steep winding lanes are also distinctive features. Despite some localised suburban pressures the area retains a strong rural unspoilt character.*
11. Key characteristics found within the site and its context include:
 - *Steep wooded ridges and ghylls*
 - *Strong pattern of woodlands, shaws and hedgerows,*
 - *Ancient hedgerow oaks*
 - *Small to medium size irregular and regular shaped pasture fields*
 - *Field ponds*
 - *Dispersed settlement patterns of farmsteads*
 - *Confined views*
 - *Traditional building materials*
12. Relevant key issues identified include *decline in hedgerow management associated with expansion of horse paddocks and introduction of suburban features in localised area, e.g. intrusive gates, fences.*

13. The overall sensitivity to change *is high due to the many landscape qualities of the area and include incremental improvements to the character of minor roads, suburbanisation.*
14. Planning and Land Management Guidelines recommend:
- *Conserve the strongly rural unspoilt character*
 - *Ensure any development responds to design and materials. Infill development between looseknit groups of cottages along lanes would erode character*
 - *Conserve the strong pattern of woodland, shaws and hedgerows through coppice management, planting and natural regeneration*
 - *Encourage the planting of tree groups around modern farm buildings*
15. Key issues identified for H1 LCA include *Visual intrusion from modern farm buildings.* Key sensitivities to change are *small scale incremental change.* Planning and Land management guidelines include *ensure any new development responds to local design and materials* and *conserve existing hedgerows and field trees.*

Assessment

16. Although there are mature trees and hedgerow around the perimeter of the wider holding, the proposed building will be clearly experienced from the public footpath and surrounding lanes through the intervening vegetation, which in winter due to its deciduous nature is very scarce.
17. The site has been subject to a number of development changes throughout the years which incrementally have eroded its rural character and its immediate setting.
18. If the proposal is found to meet the essential to the countryside location test or the sustainable development of the rural area, there is nevertheless concern with its scale.
19. While the proposed storage barn will be experienced in the context of the existing cluster within the Buckley Stud, the proportions of the storage barn will be clearly experienced from the public footpath and surrounding lanes. The development would lead to an over intensification of the use of the site further eroding the rural character of the area and visual amenity of those enjoying the countryside.
20. In addition, no measures have been proposed to mitigate any of the identified adverse effects. Mitigation measures such as the reduction of size, timber cladding and enhancement planting would need to be considered.
21. The proposed development would therefore give rise to adverse effects to the character and visual amenity of the area due to its scale and loss of tranquillity as result of the increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside location, contrary to HDPF 26.

ANY RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS: N/A

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