

SCOTT PLANNING

Johnsons Farm, West Chiltington
Planning Statement
January 2025



Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared to accompany a retrospective planning application for the erection of a storage building at Johnsons Farm, West Chiltington. This application follows on from Enforcement investigations by Horsham District Council (ref: EN/25/0301), where it was agreed that this application would be submitted with a view to regularising the breach of planning control.

The purpose of this statement is to explain the overall planning context for the planning application, including in terms of relevant planning policy and explain how the proposal responds to that context.

Site Description / Background

Johnsons Farm is a roughly rectangular parcel of land measuring roughly 0.6ha in area, and which lies to the southern side of Juggs Lane, in the village of West Chiltington.

The site is bounded to the north, eastern and southern boundaries by tall hedges, which gives the site a strong sense of landscaped enclosure to these boundaries. The western boundary – which is shared with a recently constructed single storey dwelling known as Lune Cottage – is formed by a 2m high close boarded fence.

Johnsons Farm is understood to have historically been a larger agricultural holding situated to the southern side of West Chiltington village, and farmed by multiple generations of the same family. This farm has however gradually diminished to its current smallholding size due to the expansion of the village in this area.

The farm was previously owned by the applicant's grandfather who had historically used the site for keeping pigs and poultry, before allowing the site to become gradually dilapidated in older age. During this period, the site was used for the dumping of various waste – to the extent that much of the site was inaccessible and a public health issue.

On inheriting the land, the applicant has undertaken a concerted programme of land restoration including clearing the site of waste, maintaining hedges and trees to the site boundaries and reseeded for grass.

As part of this programme of remediation, a number of dilapidated buildings were removed from the site, with only two small buildings remaining at the time of writing. These buildings are a former concrete sectional garage, which is in a

poor state of repair and largely covered by undergrowth, and a small timber garage building located near to the centre of the site.

The building which forms the subject of this application is located to the north-western corner of the site adjacent to the vehicular access. It is a single storey measuring approximately 10 x 10m and 4m to the ridge. The building is clad in dark green metal sheet gladding, with dark grey metal sheet cladding featuring rooflights to the roof.

The southern elevation features a roller shutter door and adjacent personnel door.

Photos of the building are included at Appendix A below, together with images showing the site mid-way during the programme of clearing and restoration (Appendix A.1).

Planning Context

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 directs decision makers to determine planning applications in accordance with the policies of the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

As such, and in addition to the physical characteristics of the site, the planning context of the site is formed by the relevant local and national planning policies that affect this area, together with any relevant material considerations.

In this case, the current development plan for this area is made up of the Horsham District Planning Framework Plan (2015) ('the HDPF).

Horsham District Council are currently in the process of producing a replacement local plan, with the examination of this plan having been started and then postponed in December 2024. Due to current levels of uncertainty around the progress of this draft document, it is not considered that the policies within the emerging plan will be likely to have any bearing on this application.

Similarly, West Chiltington are in the process of producing a Neighbourhood Plan, having had the area designated for such purposes in 2014. A draft plan has been submitted for examination, but it is not considered that it will be likely to have been 'made' as part of the Development during life of this current application.

As such, this application will be assessed against the HDPF, as well as any relevant material considerations as required by Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

West Chiltington is identified within the Development Hierarchy set out in Policy 3 of the HDPF as a 'medium village', and the application site is located just outside of the identified settlement boundary as shown in the HDPF Proposals Map copied below:

The planning policy considered to be of primary relevance to the current proposals is Policy 10 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF). This states that development in the countryside which maintains the quality and character of the area, whilst sustaining its varied and productive social and economic activity will be supported in principle. This includes (under criterion 1) development that contributes to diverse and sustainable farming practices, or which otherwise contributes to the wider rural economy and/or promote recreation in and the enjoyment of, the countryside.

This policy also (under criterion 3) seeks to support development that results in a 'substantial environment improvement' and reduces impact on the countryside.

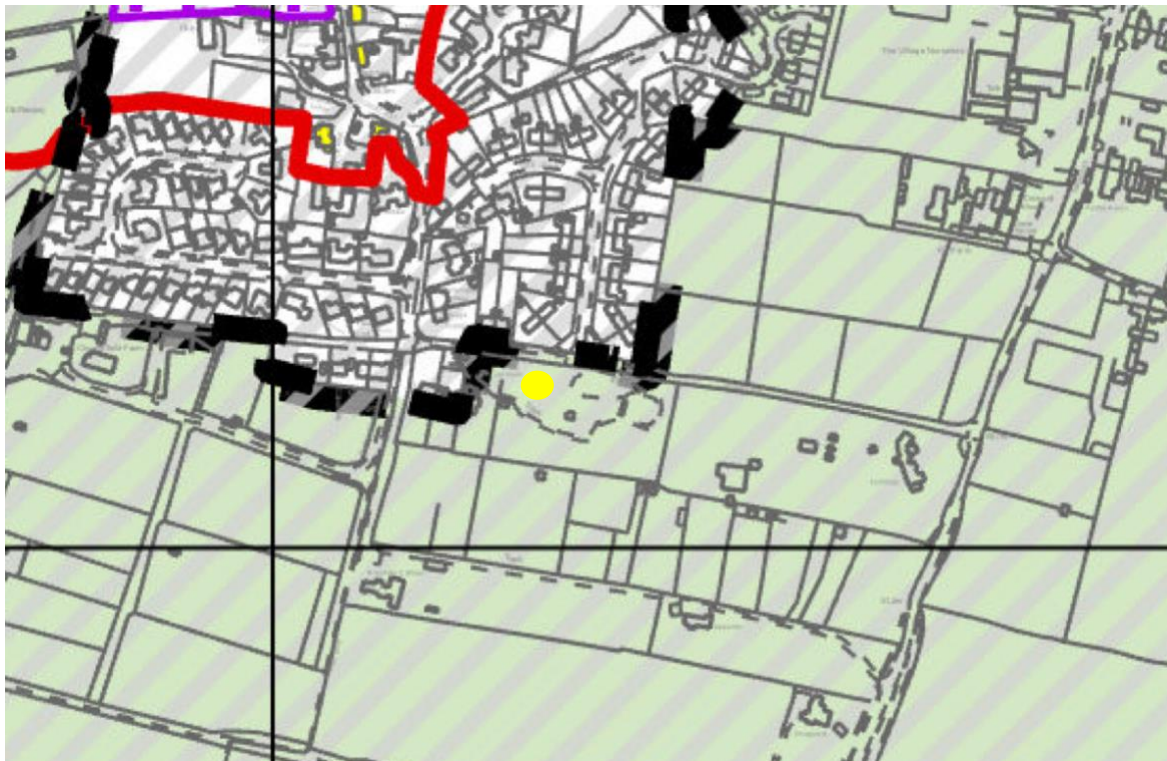


Fig 2: HDPF Proposals Map Extract showing location of proposed building (yellow dot) in relation to settlement boundary.

In addition, Policy 25 seeks to protect the natural environment and landscape character of the District from inappropriate development. The policy also states that the Council will support development proposals that meet a range of criteria including that which protects, conserves and enhances the landscape, taking into account areas identified as being of landscape importance, the individual settlement characteristics, and maintains settlement separation, and

that which maintain and enhances the Green Infrastructure Network and biodiversity.

Policy 26 (Countryside Protection) 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 in addition meet one of a range of criteria listed, including (1) support the needs of agriculture or forestry; (3) provide for quiet informal recreational use; or (4) enable the sustainable development of rural areas.

In addition, proposals must be of a scale appropriate to its countryside character and location. Development will be considered acceptable where it does not lead, either individually or cumulatively, to a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside, and protects, and/or conserves, and/or enhances, the key features and characteristics of the landscape character area in which it is located, including;

1. The development pattern of the area, its historical and ecological qualities, tranquillity and sensitivity to change;
2. The pattern of woodlands, fields, hedgerows, trees, waterbodies and other features; and
3. The landform of the area.

The above policies are further amplified by Policies 32 and 33 of the HDPF which seeks to ensure that the development in the district promotes high standard of design in order to enhance and protect locally distinctive character.

Planning Assessment

With reference to the site and planning context it is considered that the key issues to be addressed in this application are as follows:

- The principle of development
- Design and appearance
- Residential amenity

Principle of development

The building that is the subject of this application was erected by the applicant in the erroneous belief that the overriding agricultural use of the site conferred certain permitted development rights. Notwithstanding the fact that such rights do not apply retrospectively, in this case the parcel is too small to benefit from permitted development rights under Part 6 of Schedule 2, Class A of the General Permitted Development Order 2015 (agricultural development on units over 5

hectares). As such, it is necessary to now regularise the building through a full application.

As noted above, Policy 10 of the current Development Plan provides support to development that relates to ‘diverse and sustainable’ farming practices, and which promotes the enjoyment of the countryside. This policy also provides support to proposals that result in a ‘substantial environmental improvement’.

In this case, the need for the building has arisen following the applicant’s restoration and remediation of this formerly derelict site – which as noted contained a significant amount of waste material. Although this work has largely now been completed, it is considered that it meets the test of being a substantial environmental improvement in and of itself.

As well as clearing a large amount of builders’ waste, old vehicles and lorry bodies, this phase of work also cleared a number of buildings which had been associated with the agricultural use of the site, but which had fallen into disrepair. As a result, the site was largely devoid of buildings which would otherwise be necessary to enable the proper maintenance of the land – with the only pre-existing structures still standing being a small domestic type timber shed, and a single concrete sectional garage, which is overgrown with vegetation.

The building which this application seeks approval for is therefore needed to allow for the secure storage of various machinery and materials needed to properly maintain the land, including but not limited to machinery required to top the areas of grassland to make haylage/silage (i.e. tractor with topper / mower), machinery related to the maintenance of trees and hedges within and around the site, and storage of grass-seed and fertilizer. Fertilizer needs to be stored in a secure building where there is no public access and not visible from a public highway.

Due to inclement weather resulting in varied windows for cutting hay, it is reasonable to provide on-site storage capacity of hay to allow for it to be collected and sold from the site as needed.

Taking the above into account, it is considered that there is a sufficient requirement for a building of the type erected, and the application is therefore supported by Policy 10.

Design and appearance

In terms of external design, it is considered that the storage building is of a design and type that is commonly found within the rural area, and is of a simple functional design.

Similarly, the external materials are of a type that is commonplace in agricultural buildings, being dark green powder coated profiled metal cladding, with similar materials to the roof, but in dark grey. The roller shutter door that is required to secure the building is, again, common to this type of building.

Notwithstanding the above, it is considered that the siting of the building within a parcel of land that exhibits a strong sense of landscaped enclosure, means that the building is not readily visible from outside of the site, and so does not have any significant impact on the overall character of the area.

It is therefore considered that the building complies with the aims and objectives of Policies 25, 26, 32 and 34 of the HDPF.

In addition, and whilst it is acknowledged that much of this work has already been carried out, it is considered that the significant improvement in the condition and appearance of the site due to the efforts of the applicant, lend further support to this application – since the retention of the building will permit them to continue to maintain the land in this way.

Residential amenity

The only residential property that is directly affected by the storage building, is the recently constructed single storey dwelling to the immediate west, Lune Cottage. This dwelling shares an access with Johnsons Farm, and sits on land that had previously formed part of the same site.

Although the two buildings are in close proximity, and share an access, it is not considered that the use of the building for the storage of machinery and materials required to maintain the land in the way described above will result in any detrimental impact on the occupants of that dwelling. In fact, it is likely that the provision of a building on site, would serve to reduce the level of use of the access that might be required by the bringing of machinery and materials to the site from elsewhere.

This being the case, it is considered that the building will not result in any impact on the occupants of that nearby dwelling.

Conclusion

As detailed above, the proposed retention of the storage building will allow the land to be properly maintained following the programme restoration and remediation by the applicant, and will not lead to a form of development which will be detrimental to local rural character, or to the living conditions of nearby residential dwellings. This being the case, the application is supported by the relevant policies of the HDPF.

Appendix A – Photos

A.1 – Site before clearing / restoration









A.2 – Photos of Storage Building and Wider Site







