Horsham District Council

DELEGATED APPLICATIONS - ASSESSMENT SHEET

APPLICATION NO./ADDRESS:
DC/25/0265
Four Seasons Fuel, Coneyhurst Road, Coneyhurst, Billingshurst, West Sussex, RH14 9DG

DESCRIPTION:
Installation of two x 14.5 tonne vessels with a capacity of 33 metres cubed to store liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) at site. (Retrospective).

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:
There is an extensive planning history on the site, of most relevance to this current application is: -

DC/24/0031	Hazardous Substance Consent for the storage of upto 49 tonnes of Liquified Petroleum Gas (LPG)	Application Permitted on 01.04.2025
DC/17/0596	Change of Use of land for the outside storage of fuels, erection of building for the loading and unloading of gas bottles, extension of concrete areas, creation of a balancing pond, relocation of portacabin offices and shipping containers, erection of security fencing, change of use of existing timber storage building for the storage of fuels, packaging, equipment and machinery, improvements to access and construction of car park (part retrospective)	Application Permitted on 30.06.2017

On the wider site the history includes: -

DC/21/0294	Erection of warehouse and boundary fence.	Application Permitted on 28.05.2021
DC/21/0293	Erection of two-storey office building and the provision of car parking facilities	Application Permitted on 28.05.2021
DC/23/1212	Erection of lean-to extension to existing office building (Retrospective)	Application Permitted on 18.09.2024
DC/23/1213	Variation of conditions 1 and 3 of previously approved application DC/21/0294 (Erection of warehouse and boundary fence) Variation sought to allow for a change to the location of the approved warehouse and associate parking area	Application Permitted on 05.10.2023
DC/24/0322	Erection of an agricultural storage building	Application Permitted on 29.01.2025
DC/24/0916	Variation of conditions 1 and 3 of previously approved application DC/21/0294 (Erection of warehouse and boundary fence) to revise the access arrangements into the building.	Application Permitted on 12.02.2025

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES
The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Horsham District Planning Framework (2015):
Policy 1 - Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development
Policy 3 - Strategic Policy: Development Hierarchy
Policy 10 - Rural Economic Development
Policy 24 - Strategic Policy: Environmental Protection
Policy 25 - Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
Policy 26 - Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection
Policy 31 - Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
Policy 32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development
Policy 33 - Development Principles
Policy 35 - Strategic Policy: Climate Change
Policy 40 - Sustainable Transport
Policy 41 - Parking

Billingshurst Parish Neighbourhood Plan (BPNP) 2019 – 2031

Billingshurst Parish Design Statement

Horsham District Local Plan (2023-40) (Regulation 19):
Strategic Policy 1: Sustainable Development
Strategic Policy 2: Development Hierarchy
Strategic Policy 9: Water Neutrality
Strategic Policy 11: Environmental Protection
Strategic Policy 12: Air Quality
Strategic Policy 13: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
Strategic Policy 14: Countryside Protection
Strategic Policy 17: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
Strategic Policy 19: Development Quality
Strategic Policy 20: Development Principles
Strategic Policy 30: Enhancing Existing Employment
Policy 31: Rural Economic Development

REPRESENTATIONS AND CONSULTATIONS RESPONSES
Where consultation responses have been summarised, it should be noted that Officers have had consideration of the full comments received, which are available to view on the public file at www.horsham.gov.uk

CONSULTATIONS:
Health and Safety Executive: Do Not Advise Against, consequently, does not advise on safety grounds against the granting of planning permission.

West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service: No Objection, satisfied the Approved Document B (AD-B) Volume 2 B5 requirements have been met and comply with West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service requirements when attending a fire incident. A 450,000-litre water tank has been provided on site to store water for firefighting and has suitable access to it.

WSCC Highways: No Objection. Considering the existing established use on site these additional vehicle movements are not anticipated to result in a 'severe' impact to the operational capacity of the nearby road network.

Parish Comments:
None received

Representations:
One representation received, which objected on the following grounds: -

- Coneyhurst is not appropriate for the storage of hazardous materials. It conflicts with the character and intended use of the area, which is predominantly residential and agricultural. The size of the business, it would be better sited on an industrial estate.
- In the event of a leak, fire, or explosion, the impact on nearby residents could be devastating. LPG is highly flammable, and incidents elsewhere show the risks are significant even with strict controls.
- Unlike industrial estates, rural areas do not have the same level of fire service coverage, specialist equipment, or evacuation plans that would be necessary to respond quickly to a serious LPG incident.
- Increased heavy vehicle traffic on narrow country lanes, presenting additional road safety risks.
- The installation of these vessels could have negative effects on the local environment, including potential contamination risks and disruption to wildlife in the area.
- The fact that this application is retrospective shows a disregard for the proper planning process, undermining public trust. Developments of this nature should be properly consulted upon before installation.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUALITY:
The application has been considered having regard to Article 1 of the First Protocol of the Human Rights Act 1998, which sets out a person's rights to the peaceful enjoyment of property and Article 8 of the same Act, which sets out their rights in respect to private and family life and for the home. Officers consider that the proposal would not be contrary to the provisions of the above Articles.

The application has also been considered in accordance with Horsham District Council's public sector equality duty, which seeks to prevent unlawful discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between people in a diverse community, in accordance with Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. In this case, the proposal is not anticipated to have any potential impact from an equality perspective.

PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Background

The site comprises an established commercial enterprise located to the south of Coneyhurst Road, outside of any designated built-up area boundary therefore located within a countryside location in policy terms.

The site benefits from a Hazourdous Substance Consent for the storage of up to 49 tonnes of Liquified Petroleum Gas (LPG), granted under ref: DC/24/0031. This planning application is for the retention of two x 14.5 tonne vessels with a capacity of 33 metres cubed to store liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) at Four Seasons Fuel, Coneyhurst Road, Coneyhurst.

Principle of Development:

Policy 10 of the HDPF seeks to support sustainable rural economic development, and the productive use of land that maintains the relative tranquillity of the countryside in order to generate local employment opportunities and socio-economic benefits for local communities. Policy 10 stipulates that development should be appropriate to its countryside location and must contribute to diverse and sustainable farming enterprises, or the wider recreational offer or rural economy, and, in addition, be contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or result in substantial environmental improvement.

Policy 26 of the HDPF requires development in the countryside be of a scale that is appropriate to its countryside character and location and not lead, either individually or cumulatively, to a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside. It also needs to be essential to its countryside location and to meet one of the following criteria:

- Support the needs of agriculture or forestry;
- Enable the extraction of minerals or the disposal of waste;
- Provide for quiet informal recreational use; or
- Enable the sustainable development of rural areas.

Policy BILL 1 of the Billingshurst Neighbourhood Plan states that development proposals outside the proposed built-up area boundary will only be supported where: it is in accordance with the development plan policies on appropriate uses in the countryside; it relates to necessary utilities; it represents the appropriate provision of tourism facilities, accommodation, attractions and activities, where it meets the requirements of Policy BILL11; or it is on sites allocated for those uses in the Horsham District Planning Framework or its successor.

The LPG storage tanks are located within the defined boundaries of the existing commercial site and have not resulted in any encroachment into the wider surrounding countryside. The nature of the storage is such that it would not be possible to make use of pre-existing buildings on the site. The proposal would directly support the existing business operating from the site and in this respect would be supported by Policy 10 of the HDPF, with no conflict identified in respect of Policy 26 of the HDPF.

Design and Appearance:

Policy 32 and 33 of the HDPF seeks to ensure that development promotes a high standard and quality of design in order to enhance and protect locally distinctive characters. The policies also seek to ensure that the scale, massing and appearance of development relates sympathetically with the built surroundings, landscape, open spaces and routes within and adjoining the site, including any impact on the skyline and important views.

The storage tanks are sited within the existing commercial site and although of a functional form and appearance they do not appear incongruous or unsightly in this setting. The wider visual impact is largely offset by their siting away from site boundaries and the presence of intervening structures, boundary treatments and landscaping. It is therefore considered that the visual impact of the proposal is acceptable and would accord with the above policies.

Amenity Impacts:

Policy 33 of the HDPF states that permission will be granted for development that does not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of the occupiers / users of nearby properties and land.

The storage tanks are well screened from neighbouring properties and land and their provision does not amount to a change of use of the site, which already benefits from a 2017 for fuel storage and distribution. It is not considered that retention of the tanks would lead to an intensification of activity on the site leading to unacceptable harm to neighbouring amenity. There are no restrictions on operating hours as part of the existing permission for the use of the site and it would not be considered reasonable or necessary to impose them as part of this application (for storage tanks).

The existing Hazourdous Substances Consent ensure that necessary measures are taken to prevent major accidents and limit their consequences to people and the environment. The HSC provides control over the presence of hazardous substances (whether or not an associated planning permission is required). The tanks subject of this application are consistent with the parameters established by the HSC, with this consent concluding that: -

'*there are no unacceptable risks to the environment or public amenity associated with this application. The standards required in the regulations are being met. HSE has provided an assessment of the risk of harm from the maximum quantity of hazardous substances for which consent is being sought and concluded that the risks to the surrounding population arising from the proposed operation are such that there are no significant reasons, on safety grounds, for refusing Hazardous Substances Consent….*'.

There are no reasons to take a different view as part of this planning application, with the comments received from the HSE and Sussex Fire and Rescue consistent with those made as part of the existing HSC. Accordingly, the proposal does not raise any concerns in respect of the impact on safety.

Highways Impacts:

Policy 40 of the HDPF promote development that provides safe and adequate access, suitable for all users.

It is considered there may be additional movement associated with the provision of LPG according to the planning statement due to servicing and provision. It is considered however that these movements would not fundamentally affect the integrity of the highway network and it is therefore considered that the proposal accords with the policy listed above.

Climate Change:

Policies 35, 36 and 37 require that development mitigates to the impacts of climate change through measures including improved energy efficiency, reducing flood risk, reducing water consumption, improving biodiversity and promoting sustainable transport modes. These policies reflect the requirements of Chapter 14 of the NPPF that local plans and decisions seek to reduce the impact of development on climate change. The proposed development includes the following measures to build resilience to climate change and reduce carbon emissions:

- Provision of a lower carbon energy source which could provide a bridge to other alternative energy sources.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG):

Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021) mandates that every development must achieve at least a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) unless the development qualifies as exempt under the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024.

The application is retrospective made under Section 73(A) of the Town and Country Planning Act and is therefore exempt from BNG.

Conclusions:

It is considered that the proposal is accordance with the development policies laid above and is recommended for approval.

Recommendation: Application Permitted

NOTE TO APPLICANT

- The applicant is reminded that all necessary further consents from West Sussex County Council, as Highway Authority, must be secured to cover highway works that have been undertaken at the access with Coneyhurst Road. The applicant is requested to contact The Highways Agreement Team Leader (01243 642105) to commence this process. The applicant is advised that it is an offence to undertake any works within the highway prior to the necessary agreement(s) being in place.

- The applicant is reminded that the tanks permitted by this planning application must be operated in accordance with the Hazardous Substance Consent (HSC) for this site (ref: DC/24/0031). Any deviation from this Consent will require further HSC and consultation with the Health & Safety Executive.

Biodiversity Net Gain Condition
Based on the information submitted in the planning application documents, the Planning Authority considers that this permission is exempt from biodiversity net gain, and as such does not require approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun.

POSITIVE AND PROACTIVE STATEMENT
Statement pursuant to Article 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received, in order to be able to, where possible, grant permission.

Plans list for: DC/25/0265
(The approved plans will form Condition 1 on the Decision Notice of all Permitted applications)

Schedule of plans/documents **approved**:

Plan Type	Description	Drawing Number	Received Date
Supporting Statement	Planning	NONE	06.04.2025
Site plan		NONE	07.02.2025
Location plan		NONE	07.02.2025
Plans	Gas Tanks	NONE	01.12.2025

DELEGATED

Case Officer sign/initial Jacques Burrowes Date: 20.02.2026

Authorising Officer sign/initial Guy Everest Date: 27.02.2026