Horsham District Council

DELEGATED APPLICATIONS - ASSESSMENT SHEET

APPLICATION NO./ADDRESS:
DC/24/1767
New Inn Farm, West End Lane, Henfield, West Sussex, BN5 9RF

DESCRIPTION:
Change of Use of land and buildings to equestrian use. Conversion of existing livestock barn to stable barn. Conversion of outbuilding into staff facilities. Installation of new gates to property.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

DC/24/1023	Prior Notification for the erection of agricultural machinery and equipment storage barn	Prior Approval Not Required on 26.07.2024
DC/24/1369	Change of Use of land for equestrian facilities to include an outdoor arena, horse walker and lunge pen.	Pending Consideration

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

The application site covers approximately 7.7 hectares of agricultural land, accessed via tracks off West End Lane. The surrounding area is predominantly agricultural fields. Currently, the site contains two livestock barns for 200 sheep and five stables. The proposed development aims to cease sheep farming, replace the existing barns with nine stables for horses, and include staff facilities on-site. The existing layout and proposed development plans are shown in Annex A. The current structures on the site include two livestock barns and a mixed-construction stable building, which has four loose boxes, one pony box, a feed passage, and a storage area.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION

The proposed development involves changing the use of the land and buildings to equestrian purposes. This includes converting the existing livestock barn into a stable barn, repurposing an outbuilding for staff facilities, and installing new gates to the property. The plan is to discontinue the current sheep farming operation, which includes two livestock barns and five stables, and replace it with nine stables, as well as staff facilities that will feature a kitchen, WC, shower, and wash-hand basin.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES
The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Horsham District Planning Framework (2015):
Policy 1 - Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development
Policy 2 - Strategic Policy: Strategic Development
Policy 10 - Rural Economic Development
Policy 25 - Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
Policy 26 - Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection
Policy 28 - Replacement Dwellings and House Extensions in the Countryside

Policy 29 - Equestrian Development
Policy 31 - Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
Policy 32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development
Policy 33 - Development Principles
Policy 34 - Cultural and Heritage Assets
Policy 35 - Strategic Policy: Climate Change
Policy 36 - Strategic Policy: Appropriate Energy Use
Policy 37 - Sustainable Construction
Policy 40 - Sustainable Transport
Policy 41 - Parking

Neighbourhood Plan:
The Henfield Neighbourhood Plan was formally made on 23 June 2021.
Policy 1 – Spatial Plan
Policy 12 – Design Standards for New Development

Horsham District Local Plan (2023-40) (Regulation 19):
Strategic Policy 1: Sustainable Development
Strategic Policy 2: Development Hierarchy
Strategic Policy 6: Climate Change
Strategic Policy 7: Appropriate Energy Use
Strategic Policy 8: Sustainable Design and Construction
Strategic Policy 9: Water Neutrality
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
Policy 21: Heritage Assets and Managing Change within the Historic Environment
Strategic Policy 24: Sustainable Transport
Policy 25: Parking
Strategic Policy 29: New Employment
Strategic Policy 30: Enhancing Existing Employment
Policy 31: Rural Economic Development
Policy 32: Conversion of Agricultural and Rural Buildings to Commercial, Community and Residential Uses
Policy 33: Equestrian Development
Policy 45: Replacement Dwellings and House Extensions in the Countryside
Policy 46: Ancillary Accommodation

Supplementary Planning Guidance:
Planning Obligations and Affordable Housing SPD (2017)
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule (2017)

Parish Design Statement:

Planning Advice Notes:
Facilitating Appropriate Development
Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

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:

HDC Conservation Officer: No Objection - I am satisfied the proposed alterations to the existing buildings and new gate will not impact the setting of the neighbouring listed building.

Natural England: No Objection - We concur with the conclusion of your authority's HRA appropriate assessment, insofar that we have no objections subject to the delivery, management and maintenance of measures identified in the water neutrality statement, and subject to relevant pre-commencement conditions identified in the appropriate assessment being put in place, to achieve water neutrality.

WSCC Public Right of Way: More information - The comments on the planning application raise concerns regarding the potential conflict between vehicular traffic and public users of Public Bridleway 2587, which passes through the site. The applicant is advised to mitigate this conflict by implementing a traffic management plan, including a 10mph speed limit for construction traffic and appropriate signage to prioritize pedestrian, cyclist, and equestrian safety. The proposal to replace the existing five-bar gate lacks sufficient detail for the Highway Authority to assess its impact on public access and safety, and additional information is required to ensure the gate allows lawful access for all users. If the gate is electric, it should avoid features such as flashing lights or audible alerts that could disturb horses. Finally, the applicant must consult with the West Sussex County Council Public Rights of Way team if any alterations to the public rights of way are proposed.
Re-consultation Comments (received 12.02.2025): *No Objection - I am satisfied with these arrangements and am able to remove my holding objection.*

Archaeological Consultant: No Objection - The site is within an Archaeological Notification Area DWS8971- New Inn Farm Medieval Historic Farmstead, Henfield- but the proposal does not involve any below ground disturbance and so we have no archaeological concerns in this case.

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS:

Representations:
None received.

Parish Comments:
Henfield Parish Council: No Objection - Subject to satisfactory conclusion of the matter over access raised by WSCC being resolved.

Member Comments:
None received.

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

Principle of Development:

The proposed development at New Inn Farm seeks to repurpose existing agricultural buildings for equestrian use, aligning with both local and national planning policies that support the sustainable reuse of rural structures for appropriate economic activities. Horsham District Council's Policy 26 (Countryside Protection) emphasizes the importance of safeguarding the rural character and natural beauty of the countryside while allowing development that supports rural businesses and contributes to the local economy. This proposal complies with the policy by maintaining the agricultural character of the site, repurposing rather than expanding built form, and ensuring the continued viability of the land for rural employment. The site has historically been used for equestrian purposes, and the conversion of existing buildings into stables and staff facilities sustains this function without introducing intrusive new development.

Further supporting this application is Policy 29 (Equestrian Development), which acknowledges the significance of equestrian activities in the rural economy and permits development where it does not lead to over-intensification of land use. The 19-acre site is proportionate to the scale of operations, with sufficient land to accommodate the needs of the business while avoiding excessive expansion. The conversion of the livestock barn and outbuilding ensures that equestrian use remains appropriate to the setting, with minimal environmental impact and no increase in traffic movements beyond those associated with the previous agricultural use. Additionally, the new gated entrance enhances site security while maintaining the rural character of the area.

National planning policy, particularly the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024, further supports this development. Paragraph 84 promotes the diversification of rural economies and encourages the conversion of existing buildings for alternative commercial uses, which this proposal fully embraces. By retaining and adapting existing structures, the development minimizes land-use change while providing economic benefits through equestrian employment and associated industries. Paragraph 85 reinforces the principle that rural development should respect the landscape and local character, which this proposal achieves by utilizing the site's existing footprint without encroaching on open countryside.

This application benefits from the privilege of development as it meets the requirements of both Horsham District Council Policies 26 and 29 and NPPF 2024 guidance. By sustaining rural employment, repurposing existing structures, and ensuring compliance with environmental and equestrian policies, the proposal represents an appropriate and sustainable use of the land. It strengthens the local rural economy while respecting the character of the countryside, demonstrating a well-balanced approach to development in line with both local and national planning objectives.

Design and Appearance:

The proposed development at New Inn Farm consists of the conversion of existing agricultural structures into equestrian facilities and the installation of a new gated entrance. The design approach respects the site's rural character, ensuring that the development integrates seamlessly with its surroundings while complying with Policies 25, 32, and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF). These policies emphasize the importance of high-quality design, ensuring developments conserve and enhance the landscape character, maintain a strong sense of place, and reflect appropriate scale, massing, and materials.

Stable Barn Conversion

The existing livestock barn, a five-bay ATCOST concrete-framed structure, will be converted into a stable barn. The barn has a footprint of 22.6m x 11.4m, providing ample space for equestrian use while maintaining the original building envelope. The conversion will include the installation of internal stable partitions, allowing for the accommodation of multiple horses in a structured, welfare-friendly environment. The materials used will match the existing industrial-agricultural aesthetic, with retention of the concrete frame, metal roofing, and cladding where possible, ensuring that the building remains in keeping with the farm's overall character. Ventilation and natural lighting will be improved through the

installation of ridge vents and additional stable doors, ensuring the health and comfort of the horses. The layout within the barn will include individual loose boxes, a feed room, and a tack room, ensuring efficient space utilization for equestrian operations.

Staff Facilities Conversion

The existing outbuilding, which is a brick-built structure with a sliding door, will be converted into staff facilities necessary for the equestrian operation. The building has two sections with approximate dimensions of 6.1m x 4.5m and 4.9m x 4.3m. The conversion will include insulation improvements, internal partitioning to create rest and changing areas, and installation of essential welfare facilities, including a kitchenette and restroom. The brick exterior will be retained and refurbished, with any necessary repairs made to ensure longevity. The sliding door will be replaced with a secure, weather-resistant entrance, and windows will be fitted to improve natural lighting and ventilation while maintaining energy efficiency. The function of this facility is to provide a comfortable and safe space for staff to take breaks, store equipment, and conduct administrative tasks related to the equestrian business.

New Gated Entrance

The proposal includes the construction of a new gated entrance to improve security and provide a clearly defined access point to the equestrian facilities. The gate will be positioned at the entrance to the yard area, as detailed in the submitted plans. The design of the gate will reflect the rural character of the site, utilizing timber or metal farm-style gates with post-and-rail fencing extensions to ensure continuity with existing boundary treatments. The entrance will be wide enough to accommodate equestrian transport vehicles, ensuring ease of access while maintaining a secure boundary. The materials used for the gate and associated fencing will be chosen to blend harmoniously with the surrounding landscape, enhancing the farmstead's aesthetic without introducing an overly urbanized element.

The design of all elements has been carefully considered to ensure that they integrate with the existing built environment and rural setting. The material palette includes concrete, metal roofing, timber, and brick, which are all consistent with traditional agricultural and equestrian buildings. The retention of existing structural forms and footprints ensures that the development does not introduce excessive bulk or massing, maintaining the openness of the site. The colour scheme will be natural and muted, ensuring that the buildings remain visually unobtrusive within the landscape.

The proposal also aligns with Policy 25 of the HDPF, which requires that development conserves and enhances the character of the rural landscape. The retention of existing agricultural buildings ensures that the site's rural identity is preserved, while minor alterations, such as stable partitions and additional windows, enhance functionality without compromising the visual integrity of the area.

Under Policy 32, the design promotes high-quality, sustainable development, incorporating energy-efficient insulation and improved natural lighting in the staff facilities to reduce energy consumption. Meanwhile, Policy 33 ensures that the development respects the character and distinctiveness of its surroundings, which this proposal achieves by utilizing existing structures, minimizing new build elements, and maintaining a cohesive material and design approach.

The proposed design and appearance of the stable barn conversion, staff facilities, and gated entrance adhere to the principles of Policies 25, 32, and 33 of the HDPF. The development is sympathetic to the existing rural character of the site, maintaining appropriate scale and massing while enhancing functionality for equestrian use. By repurposing existing buildings and selecting materials that blend seamlessly with the surrounding environment, the proposal ensures a high-quality, sustainable, and visually appropriate development that supports the rural economy and equestrian activities without compromising the landscape's integrity.

Residential Amenity:

Policy 33 of the HDPF states that development should be designed to avoid unacceptable harm to the amenity of occupiers/users of nearby property and land, whilst having regard to the sensitivities of surrounding development.

The proposal at New Inn Farm involves the conversion of existing buildings within their current footprints, ensuring that the built form remains unchanged and does not create any additional massing or intrusion into the surrounding landscape. The stable barn conversion and staff facilities are contained within existing structures, minimizing any potential impact on nearby properties. The new gated entrance is positioned at the yard area entrance, maintaining security without altering the character or access arrangements of the site.

The nature of the development ensures that there will be no increase in traffic movements beyond those associated with the site's previous agricultural use. The equestrian activities proposed are in line with the historical use of the site, which previously accommodated stabled and grazing horses. The applicant's equestrian business involves breeding and producing showjumping horses, which is a low-intensity rural activity appropriate for the setting.

The landscaping and natural screening of the site, consisting of existing trees and hedgerows, will continue to provide a buffer between the equestrian facilities and surrounding land. The external appearance of the buildings will remain unchanged, preserving the visual character of the area and ensuring that the proposal does not result in any detrimental impact on residential or rural amenity.

The development aligns with Policy 33 of the HDPF, as it protects and respects the amenity of surrounding land users while ensuring that the site remains in active rural use, contributing to the local economy in an appropriate and sustainable manner.

Public Right of Way Impacts:

The Public Rights of Way (PROW) officer raised concerns regarding potential conflicts between vehicular traffic and public users of Public Bridleway 2587, which passes through the application site. The officer recommended that the applicant implement a traffic management plan to mitigate these issues, including a 10mph speed limit for construction traffic and signage to ensure vehicles give way to pedestrians, cyclists, and equestrians. Additionally, the officer noted that the applicant's proposal to replace an existing five-bar gate lacked sufficient detail to assess its impact on public access and safety. The officer requested further information to ensure the gate would allow lawful access for all users and advised that electric gates on public bridleways should not feature flashing lights or audible alerts, which could spook horses.

The agent subsequently clarified that only one gate would be installed at the yard entrance, with no gate at the access onto the lane. If a gate is added in the future, it will be a normal field gate with an equestrian handle. This updated information has been deemed acceptable to the PROW officer, and the applicant was reminded to consult with the West Sussex County Council Public Rights of Way team for any future alterations to the public rights of way.

Water Neutrality:

The application site falls within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone as defined by Natural England which draws its water supply from groundwater abstraction at Hardham. Natural England has issued a Position Statement for applications within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone which states that it cannot be concluded with the required degree of certainty that new development in this zone would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Arun Valley SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites.

Natural England advises that plans and projects affecting sites where an existing adverse effect is known will be required to demonstrate, with sufficient certainty, that they will not contribute further to an existing adverse effect. The received advice note advises that the matter of water neutrality should be addressed in assessments to agree and ensure that water use is offset for all new developments within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone.

The water neutrality strategy outlined in the report demonstrates that the proposed development achieves water neutrality. The existing consumption includes water for sheep farming (200 sheep), 5 horses, and one staff member, totalling 953 litres/day. After the cessation of sheep farming and the introduction of fixtures and fittings at Performance Level 3, the proposed consumption for 9 horses and one staff member is estimated at 253 litres/day. The reduction in water usage (from 953 litres/day to 253 litres/day) results in a 73% decrease in water demand, thus achieving water neutrality. The adoption of Performance Level 3 fixtures and fittings, as specified in the report, is critical to achieving water neutrality. Conservative estimates for staff water usage. The cessation of sheep farming is a key factor in reducing water consumption. In conclusion, the proposed water strategy complies with water neutrality requirements.

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) and that every planning permission granted for the development of land in England shall be deemed to have been granted subject to the condition that development must not be begun unless a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority and the planning authority has approved the Plan.

The Biodiversity Gain Plan must show how the development will achieve the required minimum 10% BNG using the statutory biodiversity metric tool, and must demonstrate how the habitats will be managed and maintained for 30 years, starting from the date the development is completed. Off-site gains and significant on-site enhancements will be secured over this period by way of a Legal Agreement.

The development qualifies as 'de minimis' under Regulation 4 of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024.

Conclusions:

The proposed development at New Inn Farm is in alignment with local and national planning policies that support the sustainable reuse of rural buildings, the diversification of the rural economy, and the protection of the countryside's character. The repurposing of existing agricultural buildings for equestrian use complies with Horsham District Council Policies 26 and 29, as well as national planning guidance in the NPPF 2024, which encourages the reuse of rural structures for appropriate commercial activities. The development will maintain the agricultural character of the site, repurpose existing structures, and ensure minimal environmental impact, all while contributing to the local economy through equestrian business operations.

The design of the proposed development is sensitive to the rural setting, incorporating high-quality materials and ensuring that the built form integrates seamlessly with the existing environment. The stable barn conversion, staff facilities, and new gated entrance all respect the rural character, preserving the site’s openness and minimizing any visual intrusion. The proposal also safeguards residential amenity by ensuring that there is no significant increase in traffic movements, and the development maintains the low-intensity rural use of the site.

In addressing potential impacts on the Public Right of Way (PROW), the applicant has provided an acceptable solution to mitigate potential conflicts between vehicular traffic and public users, as advised by the PROW officer. The revised gate proposal ensures that it will not obstruct public access, and future alterations will be subject to consultation with the WSCC PROW team.

Moreover, the development has successfully addressed water neutrality requirements. By reducing water consumption through the cessation of sheep farming and the installation of water-efficient fixtures, the proposal achieves a 73% reduction in water demand, ensuring compliance with water neutrality guidelines for the Sussex North Water Supply Zone.

Overall, the proposed development is a sustainable and appropriate use of the land, in line with planning policies, environmental requirements, and the character of the countryside. It supports rural employment and the equestrian economy while minimizing adverse effects on the surrounding environment and community. Therefore, the proposal is considered acceptable and worthy of approval.

Recommendation: Application Permitted

Conditions:

2 **Standard Time Condition**: The development hereby permitted shall begin before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

3 **Pre-Occupation Condition**: The development hereby permitted shall be undertaken in full accordance with the water neutrality strategy (Water Neutrality Statement received 06.12.2024. No part of the site hereby permitted shall be first used until evidence has been submitted to and been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority that the approved water neutrality strategy for that site has been implemented in full. The evidence shall include the specification of fittings and appliances used, evidence of their installation, and completion of the as built Part G water calculator or equivalent. The installed measures shall be retained as such thereafter.

Reason: To ensure the development is water neutral to avoid an adverse impact on the Arun Valley SACSPA and Ramsar sites in the imposition of the following conditions: accordance with Policy 31 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015), Paragraphs 193 and 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), its duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), and s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (Priority habitats & species).

4 **Regulatory Condition**: The materials to be used in the development hereby permitted shall strictly accord with those indicated on the application form and approved plans.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to control the development in detail in the interests of visual amenity and in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

5 **Regulatory Condition**: No exterior lighting or floodlighting shall be installed other than with the permission of the Local Planning Authority by way of formal application.

Reason: In the interests of the amenities of the locality and in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

6 **Regulatory Condition**: There shall no amplified sound (e.g. PA or playing of music) without prior written approval from the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of adjacent occupiers in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

7 **Regulatory Condition**: The development hereby permitted shall only be used for agricultural and / or private equestrian purposes and shall not be used for or in connection with any form of livery establishment.

Reason: In the interests of amenity, to enable the Local Planning Authority to regulate and control the development and in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

8 **Regulatory Condition**: The conversion of the existing barn shall be used solely for incidental purposes (as a staff facility as set out in the approved drawings) related to the occupation and enjoyment of New Inn Farm, West End Lane, Henfield (as identified on the approved plans). The outbuilding shall not be used as a separate unit of accommodation, as habitable living accommodation, for any commercial purposes or for any other purpose(s)/use(s).

Reason: To ensure the development is water neutral and avoid an adverse impact on the Arun Valley SACSPA and Ramsar sites, and as the establishment of an additional independent unit would lead to an unsatisfactory relationship between independent units of living accommodation, and in accordance with Policies 31 and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

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/24/1767

Schedule of plans/documents **approved**:

Plan Type	**Description**	**Drawing Number**	**Received Date**
Supporting Docs	Water Neutrality Statement	20240516P1 REV V1.0	06.12.2024
Supporting Docs	Planning Statement	NONE	15.11.2024
Location plan		24/2202-201	15.11.2024
Site plan		24/2202-202 REV B	12.02.2025
Elevation & Floor plan	Existing and Proposed Barn	24/2202-211 REV B	15.11.2024
Elevation & Floor plan	Existing and Proposed Outbuilding	24/2202-210	15.11.2024
Elevation plan	Gate and Site Plan	24/2202-212 REV A	11.02.2025
Supporting Docs	Heritage Statement	NONE	01.12.2024

DELEGATED

Case Officer sign/initial Shazia Penne Date: 26.02.2025

Authorising Officer sign/initial RHERMITAGE Date: 28.02.2025