HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL CONSULTATION

TO:	Horsham District Council – Planning Dept
LOCATION:	Land At 509354 126590 Hilland Road Billingshurst West Sussex
DESCRIPTION:	Workshop, storage building with associated vehicular parking, yard area and access.
REFERENCE:	DC/25/0458
RECOMMENDATION:	~~Modification / More Information~~ **Holding objection / Modification**

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATION:

The baseline has been amended to account for the loss of modified grassland and 1x medium tree. The calculation now demonstrates the development will have a -69.62% net loss (-8.40 units) in area habitats and a 141.53% net gain (+0.23 units) in hedgerow habitat.

However, the condition for the tree on the access road (habitat reference B10 on the submitted individual tree condition sheet) states that 5 criterions were passed, meaning this tree is in **good** condition, although this entry within the metric states it is in moderate condition. Please can the metric be amended accordingly.

Concern resolved, with thanks.

There are still outstanding discrepancies between the number of existing individual trees on the most recent baseline habitat plan (All Ecology, received September 2025 showing 12x trees) and within the metric (detailing 9x trees, not incl. tree to be removed for access). Please can the correct number be confirmed, and the appropriate document amended.

The comments provided do not address this issue, as the issue relates to the baseline, not post-development habitats. The trees are not marked within any other habitat types that are classified by the presence of trees, as per the plan in Section 6 of the PEA.

Without the above information and required amendments, the baseline assessment within the metric is to be taken as incorrect. The baseline is required to be an accurate reflection of the site prior to grant of planning permission.

It does not appear the post-development habitat changes resulting from increased buffer planting in the south-east of the site has been correctly accounted for within the metric. Note that many proposed trees (>23) are present on the soft landscaping plans,

however only 23 are detailed within the metric. Such changes and further information will be expected at the pre-commencement stage with regards to these points.

In response to the comments pertaining to the post-development tree planting, with the inclusion of the trees along the western hedgerow, this is considered more than a non-native ornamental beech hedgerow. Also note that the biodiversity metric user guide states that '*you should not count trees planted as part of hedgerow creation or enhancement*'. As such, this habitat should be inputted as a native hedgerow with trees to abide by the metric guidance and avoid double counting.

If there are any further amendments made to plans considering Landscape or Arboricultural Officer concerns, then I request to be notified.

The solution of creating off-site habitat within the Hilland Farm Industrial Estate for the purposes of fulfilling the 10% requirement for this development has been raised. If choosing to pursue this route, the off-site area must be secured by a S106 legal agreement with HDC or by a conservation covenant with a Responsible Body, and subsequently registered on the Biodiversity Gain Sites Register. All habitat created for BNG purposes must be additional and beyond the delivered and still outstanding landscaping obligations from previous permissions. Any units from the off-site registered area must then be allocated to this development, and details of such will need to be provided in the forthcoming Biodiversity Gain Plan to discharge the biodiversity gain condition.

~~Many of the amendments are welcome, resolving some concerns as detailed below. Considering the modified layout and landscaping plans, the BNG calculation now demonstrates a net loss of -66.20% (-7.17 units) in area habitat, and a net gain of +155.69% (+0.23 units) in hedgerow habitat. However, outstanding concerns regarding discrepancies between maps and no provision of a statement of intent on achieving the 10% BNG requirement remain. In addition, it is noted that a new access route has been proposed, which will involve removal of 1x tree and grassland. No baseline information has been provided, and the loss of these habitats are not accounted for in the updated metric. Therefore, further amendments are required.~~

~~Modifications and amendments are advised below to ensure the baseline and subsequently the BNG calculation is correct. Completed condition assessment sheets, management information, and further information on how the 10% BNG requirement will be met are also requested. Concern is also raised with regards to sewing of other neutral grassland adjacent to retained modified grassland. The below information and further clarifications requested should be received and approved prior to grant of planning permission.~~

MAIN COMMENTS:

The comments below relate solely to the BNG requirement for the above application. All other ecology matters are reviewed by Place Services.

~~As there is no gain on this site, this is not considered significant on-site BNG and therefore a S106 legal agreement to secure is not required. Note that this may change with the suggested modifications below.~~

It is noted that new layout and landscaping plans have been submitted, which requires the amendment of the BNG assessment. The BNG calculation now demonstrates there will be a net loss of -66.20% (-7.17 units) in area habitat, and a net gain of +155.69% (+0.23 units) in hedgerow habitat. Despite there now being a net gain in the hedgerow module, the habitats proposed are of very low distinctiveness, and do not amount to a

net increase of 0.5 units or more. As such, this still constitutes non-significant on-site BNG and therefore a S106 legal agreement to secure is not required.

Strategic significance

The site lies partially within a high potential site area of the Wilder Horsham District Nature Recovery Network. As such, all habitats at baseline and post-development with a biodiversity value greater than zero (as determined by the metric) should be assigned as being locally ecologically desirable, but not in formal strategy (medium strategic significance). Please see HDC's BNG webpage for more information on strategic significance in the absence of a published LNRS.

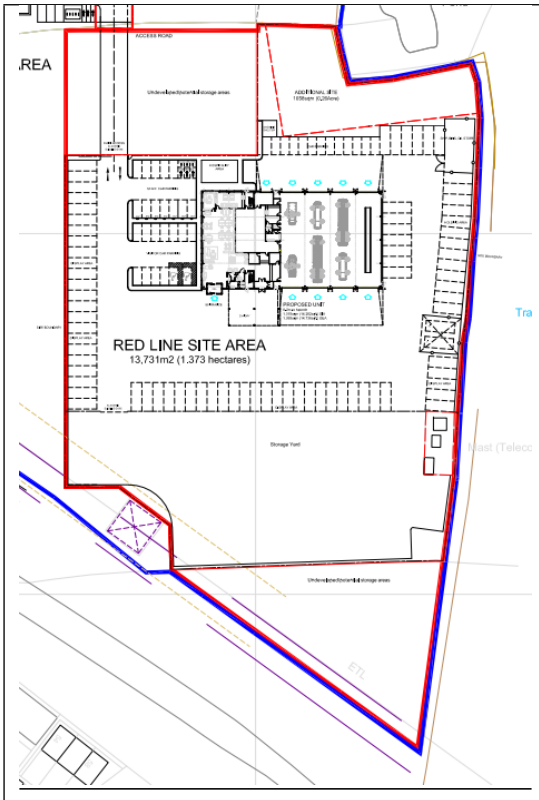
Amendments to the metric have been made to account for HDC's view on strategic significance. Concern resolved, with thanks.

Red line boundary

The red line boundary appears to differ between documents, with the BNG Report showing (1.37ha, as per metric):



And location plan showing (1.71ha, as per application form):



The difference being the inclusion of the north-west corner and the southern triangular area of the site. Please can the correct red line boundary be confirmed, and the BNG calculation redone where necessary (to account for the additional 0.34ha).

The red line boundary has been amended for the application, and as such the BNG assessment has been recalculated. These new calculations are based on the same red line boundary and area for the main site.

However, it is noted that the red line comprising the newly proposed access road running west of the site now proposes removal of 1x tree to facilitate this access route (see Tree removal/Tree protection plan, Davies Landscape Architects 2025, drawing ref DLA-2275-L-10-P01). Presence and subsequent removal of this tree has not been accounted for in the updated metric, nor the loss of grassland. As such, further baseline information including a tree survey and corresponding updates to the metric are required.

Furthermore, it does not appear that any further ecological information with regards to bat roost potential has been provided, and therefore it is advised to reconsult Place Services in response to this change. In addition, it is also advised to consult the HDC Arboricultural Officer for comments on this tree and any impacts on surrounding trees.

Concerns resolved, with thanks.

Habitats to be retained, enhanced, and created

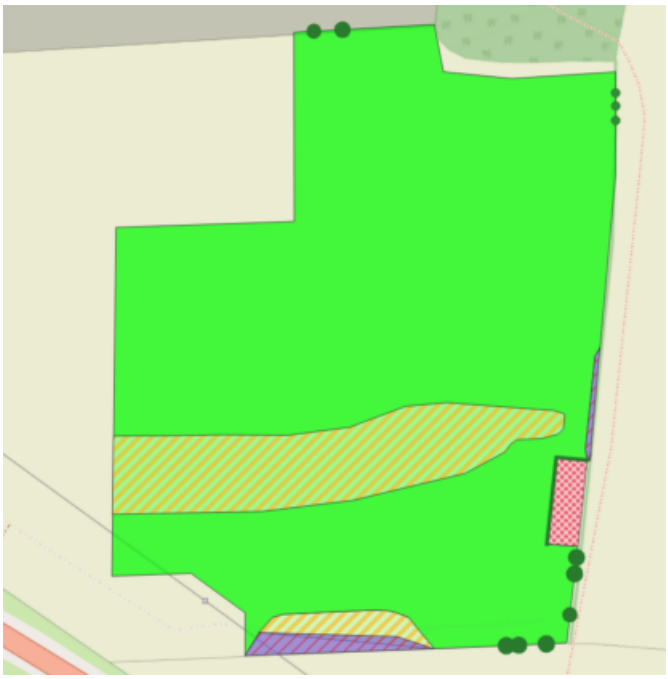
Para 3.8-3.9 of the BNG Report states that no-on site habitats are to be retained, however Para 3.18 states that 3 small trees, 8 medium trees, and 0.025km of hedgerow alongside (and including) the telecommunications compound are to be retained. The metric marks all trees, the existing developed sealed surface and hedgerow to be retained.

The new soft landscaping plans, BNG report and metric state that all existing grassland, tall ruderal and bramble scrub habitat will be cleared, and all trees (incl. 1x small, 6x medium, and 2xlarge), hedgerows and hardstanding currently present on-site will be retained.

Other neutral grassland in good condition is proposed along the eastern border of the site, and in the north-east corner. However, there are concerns that in the absence of delineation, management of the grasslands in the north of the site will merge and risk the other neutral grassland not reaching the habitat type or condition. It is strongly recommended that the design is altered e.g., to extend to the top north-eastern corner and adjoin the proposed hedgerow or introducing a green barrier for clear demarcation, or alternatively including the whole northern area as other neutral grassland planting (see comments on this further below, in 'Meeting 10% BNG' section). This also applies to the pocket of other neutral grassland proposed to the south-west of the site, adjacent to the pylon.

All grassland proposed on-site has been amended to achieve modified grassland in moderate condition. This is considered achievable and appropriate – concern resolved, with thanks.

The landscape masterplan (Davies Landscape Architects, 2025) and the soft landscaping plan do not clearly mark the retained trees as recorded in the BNG Report, specifically the 3 small trees to the north-east of the site, and **6** trees to the south-east of the site (see dark green dots on map below):



Also note that the locations for tree (and hedgerow) planting on the proposed site plan (Design to Build, 2024) and the landscape masterplan / soft landscaping proposals (Davies Landscape Architect, 2025) do not match. Given the latter maps are most recent, it is presumed these are the planned locations for the trees.

The number and size classes of the trees on site appear to have changed, from 11x (comprising 3x small and 8x medium) to 9x (comprising 1x small, 6x medium, and 2x large). However, the new stated figure of 9x trees existing on site does not correspond with the UKHab Baseline Habitat Map in Section 6.0 of the updated PEA (July 2025) or the updated soft landscaping plans.

Concern does not appear to be addressed.

Meeting 10% BNG

Further justification is required to explain why no further on-site habitat creation/enhancement is achievable to ensure a net gain on site. For example, in the area of retained modified grassland in the north (and south) of the site.

Para 4.4 of the BNG Report states 'the developer would either need to find additional land to use for off-site offsetting or use an offsetting provider'. Para 4.6 also refers to the purchase of statutory credits as a last resort.

Please can the Applicant state the intent on how they plan to reach the 10% BNG requirement, to assure HDC that this requirement will be met. If choosing to offset on developer-owned landholdings, it is strongly encouraged for the Applicant to liaise with the Case Officer prior to determination, to minimise the risk of the Biodiversity Gain Plan being refused, and the 'general biodiversity gain' condition not being discharged. This is particularly important if the Applicant is seeking to enter a S106 legal agreement with HDC to register any off-site gain site(s).

Does not appear to be provided.

The need to purchase statutory credits from the national scheme must be evidenced to HDC, in line with government guidance. This includes evidencing that the Applicant has approached 3 local or national suppliers, habitat banks or trading websites and that insufficient off-site options are available in England.

Please also note, that the 10% BNG requirement must be met for both area habitats and hedgerow habitats individually – they cannot be interchanged.

Condition assessments

No completed condition assessment sheets have been submitted as part of the application. Please can these be provided, to evidence the baseline assessment.

These have been provided. Concern resolved, with thanks.

HMMP

No draft HMMP has been submitted, as per the local validation list. Please can further information be provided regarding the condition assessment criterions to be met for each proposed habitat on-site and a summary on how these will be managed to achieve this target condition, to assure HDC that these proposals are feasible.

This information has been provided together with the condition assessments for the baseline. Concern resolved, with thanks.

Further management information will need to be forthcoming in the HMMP as per planning condition (see below). This will need to include how the individual trees within the proposed scrub habitat will be managed differently than that of scrub, to ensure these are not accidentally trimmed in accordance with the scrub management.

ANY RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS:

If minded to approve:

Informative

Scenario 1: BNG Required

Conditions

Pre-commencement condition:

1.1 The development shall not commence until a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (the HMMP), prepared in accordance with the Biodiversity Gain Plan and including:

(a) a non-technical summary;

(b) the planned habitat creation and enhancement works to create or improve habitat to achieve the biodiversity net gain in accordance with the Biodiversity Gain Plan; and

(c) the management measures to maintain habitat in accordance with the Biodiversity Gain Plan from the completion of development.

has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure the development delivers a biodiversity net gain on site in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Policy 31 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

Regulatory Condition:

1.2 The created and/or enhanced habitat specified in the approved HMMP shall be managed and maintained in accordance with the approved HMMP. Any proposed or retained planting, which within a period of 5 years after the completion of development, dies, is removed, or becomes seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species unless the Local Planning Authority gives written consent to any variation.

Reason: To ensure the development delivers a biodiversity net gain on site in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Policy 31 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

NAME:	Linsey King Ecology Officer (Planning)
DEPARTMENT:	Strategic Planning - Specialists
DATE:	23/04/2025 29/07/2025 05/09/2025 **26/09/2025**