



**Horsham
District
Council**

DELEGATED APPLICATIONS - ASSESSMENT SHEET

APPLICATION NO./ADDRESS:

DC/26/0695

Hammes Barn, Washington Road, Steyning, West Sussex, BN44 3DA

DESCRIPTION:

Change of Use of an existing building from commercial use (Use Class E) to a single residential dwelling (Use Class C3) at the Cow Shed Studio.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

DC/25/1745

Application to confirm the continuous use of the building for business and commercial activities (Lawful Development Certificate Existing) Split Decision on 05.01.2026

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 3 - Strategic Policy: Development Hierarchy
Policy 4 - Strategic Policy: Settlement Expansion
Policy 7 - Strategic Policy: Economic Growth
Policy 9 - Employment Development
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 36 - Strategic Policy: Appropriate Energy Use
Policy 37 - Sustainable Construction
Policy 38 - Strategic Policy: Flooding
Policy 39 - Strategic Policy: Infrastructure Provision
Policy 40 - Sustainable Transport
Policy 41 - Parking
Policy 42 - Strategic Policy: Inclusive Communities

Steyning Neighbourhood Development Plan (SNDP) 2019 - 2031:

SNDP3 – Contribution to Character

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF requires that all development plans complete their reviews no later than 5 years from their adoption. Horsham District Council is currently in the process of reviewing its development plan however at this stage the emerging policies carry only limited weight in decision

making. As the HDPF is now over 5 years old, the most important policies for the determination of this application must be considered as to whether they are 'out of date' (NPPF paragraph 11d). This includes, for applications involving the provision of housing, whether the Council can demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites (NPPF footnote 8).

The Council is currently unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, with the supply currently calculated as being 1.7-years. The presumption in favour of development within Paragraph 11d) of the NPPF therefore applies in the consideration of all applications for housing development within the District (unless footnote 7 or Paragraph 14 applies to relevant applications), with Policies 2, 4, 15 and 26 now carrying only moderate weight in decision making.

All other policies within the HDPF as itemised above have been assessed against the NPPF and are considered to be consistent such that they continue to attract significant weight in decision making.

Horsham District Local Plan (2023-40) (Regulation 19):

Strategic Policy 1: Sustainable Development

Strategic Policy 2: Development Hierarchy

Strategic Policy 3: Settlement Expansion

Strategic Policy 6: Climate Change

Strategic Policy 7: Appropriate Energy Use

Strategic Policy 8: Sustainable Design and Construction

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 23: Infrastructure Provision

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

Strategic Policy 37: Housing Provision

Strategic Policy 38: Meeting Local Housing Needs

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:

Southern Water: Comment

WSSC Highways: Summary

The LHA does not consider that this proposal would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety or result in 'severe' cumulative impacts on the operation of the highway network, therefore is not contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 116), and that there are no transport grounds to resist the proposal.

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS:

Representations:

None received

Parish Comments:

No objection

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

This application is for Change of Use of an existing building from commercial use (Use Class E) to a single residential dwelling (Use Class C3) at the Cow Shed Studio at Hammes Barn, Washington Road, Steyning. The proposal sits to the north of Washington Road with the application building located within a group of agricultural / former agricultural buildings; accessed down a private access track in a countryside location. Beyond the buildings to the north, south, east and west lies open countryside comprised of agricultural fields and paddocks.

Planning permission was granted under reference DC/08/0677 (Demolition of barn and erection of artist's studio for teaching and exhibition) for the application building in April 2008. The approved, development replaced a former barn that was sited.

The DC/08/0677 included a condition (3), restricting the use as such:

- 3 *The development hereby approved shall be used for an artists studio for teaching and exhibition and for no other purpose (including any other purpose in any class in the schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987.*

Reason: Changes of use as permitted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 are not considered appropriate in this case under policy DC9 of the Horsham District Local Development Framework: General Development Control Policies (2007).

Principle of Development:

Section 5, Paragraph 84 of the NPPF (December 2024) states that “[p]lanning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances apply:

- a) there is an essential need for a rural worker, including those taking majority control of a farm business, to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside;
- b) the development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets;
- c) the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting;
- d) the development would involve the subdivision of an existing residential building; or
- e) the design is of exceptional quality, in that it:
 - i. is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and
 - ii. would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.

Policy 1 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) states that the council will take positive approach to development proposals, aligning with the National Planning Policy Framework's emphasis on sustainable development. It collaborates proactively with applicants to find solutions that enable project approval and enhance economic, social, and environmental conditions. Planning applications that comply with the Local Plan and relevant neighbourhood plans will be approved promptly unless material considerations suggest otherwise. If policies are absent or outdated, the Council will grant permission unless significant adverse impacts outweigh the benefits, or specific policies in the Framework restrict development.

Policy 4 of the HDPF refers to the expansion of settlements outside the built-up area, and states that such development is only supported where: the site is allocated in the Local Plan or in a Neighbourhood Plan and adjoins an existing settlement edge; the level of expansion is appropriate to the scale and function of the settlement type; the development is demonstrated to meet the identified local housing needs; the impact of development individually or cumulatively does not prejudice comprehensive long term development; and the development is contained within an existing defensible boundary and the landscape and townscape character features are maintained and enhanced

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 must:

- 1) Contribute to the diverse and sustainable farming enterprises within the district or, in the case of other countryside-based enterprises and activities, contribute to the wider rural economy and/or promote recreation in, and the enjoyment of, the countryside; and either
 - a) Be contained wherever possible within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion or, in the case of an established rural industrial estate, within the existing boundaries of the estate; or
 - b) Result in substantial environmental improvement and reduce the impact on the countryside particularly if there are exceptional cases where new or replacement buildings are involved. New buildings or development in the rural area will be acceptable provided that it supports sustainable economic growth towards balanced living and working communities and criteria a) has been considered first.
- 2) Demonstrate that car parking requirements can be accommodated satisfactorily within the immediate surrounds of the buildings, or an alternative, logical solution is proposed.

Proposals for the conversion of rural buildings to business and commercial uses will be considered favourably over residential in the first instance.

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.

The proposal is outside the built-up area boundary and would represent countryside development. The site is not allocated within any local or neighbourhood plan. Whilst the proposal would not be isolated in the truest sense of the word given the existing dwellings located in close proximity to the site, the proposal is isolated in terms of access to service, approximately 1.5km away from the nearest built up area boundary of Steyning. There does not appear to be any usable walkable infrastructure to facilitate walking to Steyning from the site. Residents of any dwelling would be reliant on private vehicles to facilitate day to day living at the site.

Furthermore, it is considered that the proposal has not satisfied the Council's wider economic policies, including Policy 10 of the HDPF which prefers the conversion / retention of rural buildings to business and commercial uses favourably / in the first instance over residential uses. As the building is conditioned as an art studio only, a limited Class E use, evidence was requested which showed that the use of the building has been marketed in order to prove that the commercial function was unviable to be continued. However, this was not received. Equally, the applicant has not demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority that the building would not be viable for other wider / more flexible Class E uses. It is considered therefore that the buildings function as a commercial premises is still viable as a business unit and in this instance Policy 10 protects these uses before they are repurposed to residential accommodation.

Given this, the scheme is considered outside of the built-up area and is not allocated within the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) and would conflict with the change of use from a commercial building to a residential dwelling which has not been substantiated by evidence to prove that its existing commercial use is unviable. It is therefore considered that the proposal conflicts with Policy 1; 4; 10; 26 of the HDPF.

Design and Appearance:

Paragraph 135 of the NPPF (December 2024) should ensure that development is high-quality, functional and enduring, creating visually attractive places through good architecture, layout and landscaping. They should respect and enhance local character and history while allowing for appropriate innovation, establish a strong sense of place, and make efficient use of land to support a suitable mix of uses and community infrastructure. Development should also deliver safe, inclusive and accessible environments that promote health and well-being, provide a high standard of amenity for all users, and avoid impacts that could undermine quality of life or community cohesion.

Policy 25 of the HDPF seeks that the natural environment and the local character of Horsham District including the landscape, the landforms and development pattern will be protected from inappropriate development. The policy aims to:

- Protects, conserves and enhances the landscape and townscape character, considering areas identified as being of landscape importance, the individual settlement characteristics, and maintains settlement separation.
- Maintain and enhances the Green Infrastructure Network and addresses any identified deficiencies in the District.

- Maintains and enhances the existing network of geological sites and biodiversity, including safeguarding existing designated sites and species, and ensures no net loss of wider biodiversity and provides net gains in biodiversity where possible.
- Conserve and where possible enhance the setting of the South Downs National Park.

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.

SNDP3 (Contribution to Character) of the SNDP seeks to ensure that development can contribute positively towards Steyning's character and that proposals are respectful of the local amenity of the property and local area. Development should respond respectfully and sensitively to the form, scale, massing, height and material palette of neighbouring properties.

No exterior changes to the building are proposed with their thought to be limited impact from this. It is considered that the proposal would abide by the policies identified above and is therefore considered acceptable.

Residential Amenity:

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.

It is thought that the use of the building would be sited within a wider site that is largely made up of other existing residential dwellings and would be thought to lead to a less intensive use of the building compared to its existing commercial function in a countryside setting. Given this, it is thought that the addition of a residential dwelling would not harm the neighbouring amenity and would be considered acceptable.

It is considered that the resulting relationship with adjoining properties would be sufficient to prevent any unacceptable harm to neighbouring amenity.

Highways Impacts:

Policy 41 seeks to find the right balance between ensuring that adequate parking is provided and that it is suitably located and does not conflict with other uses. It should be of good urban design and be appropriate to ensure highway safety. Development which involves the loss of existing parking spaces will only be allowed if suitable alternative provision has been secured elsewhere the need for the development overrides the loss of parking and where necessary measures are in place to mitigate against the impact.

The proposal is considered to provide adequate parking and is served by an existing track which served other residential development on the wider site. The barn has an existing private driveway where on site turn can be achieved to exit the site in forward gear. It would be considered this would be acceptable.

Water Neutrality:

A 2021 Position Statement from Natural England identified that it could not be concluded with the required degree of certainty that new development in the Sussex North Water Supply Zone would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Arun Valley SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites. As a consequence, and to comply with the legal duties set out in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (known as the Habitat Regulations), all new development since has been required to demonstrate water neutrality.

On 31st October 2025 Natural England formally withdrew the 2021 Position Statement, citing a package of measures that they were satisfied would safeguard the Arun Valley sites. Principal amongst

these measures is a reduction in the Southern Water abstraction licence 'by March 2026'. However, given the licence change has not yet taken place Horsham District Council, as competent authority under the Habitats Regulations, cannot yet be certain that new development will not result in adverse impacts on the Arun Valley sites.

To ensure development can come forward as water neutral in the meantime, the Council has agreed with Natural England to use the significant water savings made by Southern Water in 2024/25 through their programme of leakage reduction (amongst other measures). This has generated some 3,240,000 litres per day of water savings that can now be attributed to new development without increasing water abstraction in the Arun Valley beyond baseline. These savings were previously to be used to launch the Sussex North Water Certification Scheme (SNWCS), however following the withdrawal statement SNWCS will no longer be launching. Natural England standing advice dated 10 November 2025 raises no objection to using these savings to enable development to come forward. The standing advice clarifies that it functions as Natural England's formal response pursuant to Regulation 63(3) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 to all relevant planning applications which seek to achieve water neutrality using the above Southern Water savings.

Officers have undertaken an Appropriate Assessment which demonstrates that the anticipated increase in mains water consumption from this development, alongside all other development granted since the 31st October 2025, will not exceed 3,240,000 litres per day.

Accordingly, Officers consider that the proposed development will not have an Adverse Effect on the Integrity of the Arun Valley Site, either alone or in combination with other plan and projects, thereby complying with Regulations 63 and 70 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, HDPF Policy 31, and paragraph 193 of the NPPF.

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:

In addition to these measures conditions are attached to secure the following if acceptable:

- o Water consumption limited to 110litres per person per day
- o Requirement to provide full fibre broadband site connectivity
- o Refuse and recycling storage
- o Cycle parking facilities
- o Electric vehicle charging points

Subject to these conditions the application will suitable reduce the impact of the development on climate change in accordance with local and national policy.

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

Conclusions:

Planning permission is sought to convert the existing barn to 1no. dwelling. As the site is not allocated for development within the HDPF or a made neighbourhood plan, owing to the site's location outside of

the built-up area boundary, the principle of the development is resisted under Policies 1, 2, 3, 4 and 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF), and paragraphs 2, 11, 12 and 47 of the NPPF. Furthermore, the proposal would result in the loss of potentially viable commercial space within the Countryside, for which no evidence has been provided to demonstrate its loss would be acceptable, contrary to Policy 10 of the HDPF.

The Council published its Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) in December 2025. Chapter 3 of the AMR revealed that the Council currently benefits from a deliverable supply of housing sites of 1.7-years. Therefore, the presumption in favour of sustainable development at paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF is engaged in this instance, meaning the 'tilted balance' applies to the assessment.

NPPF paragraph 11(d)(ii) states that where the policies most important for determining the application are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

The Shaping Development in Horsham District Planning Advice Note (SDPAN) was endorsed at Cabinet on 17 September 2025. The SDPAN recognises at 5.12 that the Council is likely to receive applications outside of defined BUABs and on unallocated sites (such as this proposal) as it is unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. Given this position and the principles behind HDPF Policy 4, it will consider positively applications that meet all of the criteria:

- The site adjoins the existing settlement edge as defined by the BUAB;
- The level of expansion is appropriate to the scale and function of the settlement the proposal relates to;
- The proposal demonstrates that it meets local housing needs or will assist the retention and enhancement of community facilities and services;
- The impact of the development individually or cumulatively does not prejudice comprehensive long-term development; and
- The development is contained within an existing defensible boundary and the landscape character features are maintained and enhanced.

The site is located in a countryside location, though not isolated in the truest sense, it is a relatively remote location that does not adjoin the settlement edge. Therefore, the proposal fails on the first criterion and therefore the development does not benefit from the provisions of the SDPAN.

In the context of the Council's current five-year housing land supply position, the provision of housing as a general principle is a matter of significant weight. However, because this proposal would provide for only one market dwelling, it makes no meaningful contribution toward recovering this shortfall. As such, the weight attributable to this specific scheme's housing delivery is tempered to *moderate weight*.

It is acknowledged that any development would bestow socio-economic benefits, such as the creation of temporary jobs during the construction phase in the short-term, and local expenditure and contribution to the local economy in the medium to long-term arising from increase occupancy. However, this is not a particularly unique benefit that would result from this development. Nonetheless, this benefit is afforded *limited weight* in the overall planning balance.

The proposal's ability to demonstrate an absence of adverse amenity harm, acceptable highways impact, and suitable design are neutral considerations that demonstrate general policy compliance rather than positive benefits weighing in favour of the scheme. No other discernible benefits would arise from the granting of this permission.

As per the preceding sections of this report, the granting of this permission would conflict with Policies 1, 2, 3, 4 and 26 of the HDPF. This conflict with the development plan is afforded *significant weight*, as it would undermine the strategic process of allocating housing sites for development in appropriate locations, and the democratic process of selecting sites within Neighbourhood Plans. Furthermore, the applicant's complete failure to submit robust marketing evidence or financial viability data to demonstrate that the building is no longer viable for commercial uses directly contradicts the provisions of Policy 10 of the HDPF, in addition to the rural economic objectives of the NPPF

While the Council's housing land supply shortfall (1.7 years) triggers the presumption in favour of sustainable development under NPPF Paragraph 11(d), the tilted balance is not a green light for unsustainable development. In this case, the complete absence of marketing evidence to justify the loss of a rural commercial asset (contrary to HDPF Policy 10), combined with the site's failure to meet the location criteria of the SDPAN, results in clear harm to the rural economy and settlement strategy. These combined adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of delivering a single market dwelling when assessed against the policies of the NPPF taken as a whole. As such, the presumption is displaced, and the proposal is therefore recommended for refusal.

Recommendation: Application Refused

Reason for Refusal:

1. The development would enable a residential use within a countryside location outside of the built-up area boundary of any settlement, on a site which has not been allocated for development within the Horsham District Planning Framework or an adopted Neighbourhood Plan. Furthermore, the applicant has not demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority that the building is no longer viable for commercial purposes. The development would therefore be contrary to the overarching strategy and hierarchical approach of concentrating development within the main settlements which would not be essential to its countryside location, and would result in the unjustified loss of a potentially viable employment asset, undermining the sustainable growth and vitality of the local rural economy. There are no material considerations which outweigh this harm, and the proposal therefore represents unsustainable development contrary to Policies 1, 2, 3, 4, 10, and 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015), and the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

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/26/0695

Schedule of plans/documents **not approved**:

Plan Type	Description	Drawing Number	Received Date
Location & Block plan		22538-101 REV A	28.04.2026
Floor plan	Existing and proposed	22538-102 REV A	28.04.2026
Elevation plan	Existing	22538-103	28.04.2026
Supporting Statement	Planning statement	NONE	28.04.2026
Elevation plan	Proposed	22538-104	28.04.2026

DELEGATED

Case Officer sign/initial

JBurrowes

Date: 22.06.2026

Authorising Officer sign/initial

Date: