Appeal 6007772

Interested party comments

Appeal type	Planning
Appeal procedure	Written
Appeal site	The Lamb Inn, Lambs Green, Rusper, RH12 4RG
Agent contact details	Charlotte Catton-Giltinane [redacted]
Local planning authority	Horsham District Council
Application number	DC/25/0657

Interested party 1

Comments	see attachement
Supporting documents	letter of representation.pdf (/published-document/63cf4be1-27f4-4191-909a-5ea55df094a2)

The Planning Inspectorate
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol
BS1 6PN

Ref: 143/2026
Date: 15 May 2026

Dear Sir or Madam,

Planning Inspectorate Reference: 6007772

Horsham District Council Reference: DC/25/0657

Site Address: The Lamb Inn, Lambs Green, Rusper, RH12 4RG

We write further to our previous representation submitted in objection to the above proposal and following review of the appellant's Statement of Case prepared in support of the appeal.

Whilst the appellant has sought to strengthen the planning case for the development through additional supporting information and reliance upon the Council's current housing land supply position, it remains our view that the appeal proposal is fundamentally contrary to the Development Plan and represents an unsustainable and unjustified form of residential development in the countryside.

The proposal should therefore be dismissed.

Policy background

The Development Plan for Horsham District Council is the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) (HDPF). The following policies are relevant for the proposed development:

- Policy 1 - Sustainable Development
- Policy 3 – Development Hierarchy
- Policy 15 - Housing Provision
- Policy 25 – Natural Environment and Landscape Character
- Policy 26 – Countryside Protection
- Policy 32 – The Quality of New Development
- Policy 33 – Development Principles
- Policy 34 - Heritage Assets and Managing Change within the Historic Environment
- Policy 41 – Parking

- Rusper Neighbourhood Plan
  - Policy RUS3 – Design
  - Policy RUS8 – Community Facilities

- Horsham District Local Plan (2023-40) (Regulation 19):
  - Policy 1 - Sustainable Development
  - Policy 2 - Development Hierarchy
  - Policy 9 - Water Neutrality
  - Policy 11 - Environmental Protection
  - Policy 13 - The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
  - Policy 14 - Countryside Protection
  - Policy 19 - Development Quality
  - Policy 20 - Development Principles
  - Policy 21 - Heritage Assets and Managing Change within the Historic Environment
  - Policy 24 - Sustainable Transport
  - Policy 25 - Parking
  - Policy 28 - Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation
  - Policy 37 - Housing Provision

- Policy 38 - Meeting Local Housing Needs

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) also remains a material consideration, particularly in relation to the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

However, whilst the appellant places significant emphasis on paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF and the Council's housing land supply position, the Framework is clear that the tilted balance does not automatically override all policy conflict or render unsustainable development acceptable in principle.

Principle of Development

The site lies outside of any defined Built-Up Area Boundary and is therefore located within the countryside for planning purposes.

Policies 3 and 26 of the HDPF seek to direct new residential development towards sustainable settlements and resist unjustified forms of residential development within countryside locations.

The proposal seeks to construct an additional detached coach house building containing two new residential units within the former car park area associated with The Lamb Inn public house.

Importantly, the principle of residential development previously established at the site arose from very specific circumstances relating to the retention and viable reuse of the former public house building, identified as a non-designated heritage asset.

The previously approved schemes under applications DC/23/0153 and DC/24/0874 were accepted largely because they secured:

- the retention of the existing historic building;
- the removal of unsympathetic additions;
- and the long-term viable reuse of the heritage asset.

The current proposal is materially different.

The proposed coach house development does not form part of the historic building itself, nor is it required to secure the retention of the former public house. Instead, it represents additional speculative residential development extending beyond the original justification for redevelopment of the site.

The appellant attempts to characterise the proposal as a "logical extension" of the approved residential conversion scheme. However, this significantly understates the extent to which the proposal would intensify the residential use of the site beyond what was previously considered acceptable.

The appeal proposal would therefore result in incremental expansion of built form and residential activity into the countryside without sufficient policy justification.

The Council's delegated report correctly identifies that the proposal represents:

- additional built form unrelated to the original justification for redevelopment of the site;
- over-intensification of the development;
- and an urbanising form of development harmful to the rural character of Lambs Green.

These conclusions remain sound and should be afforded significant weight.

Sustainability and Spatial Strategy

The appellant places considerable reliance upon Horsham District Council's current housing land supply shortfall and argues that reduced weight should therefore be afforded to countryside protection policies.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the Council cannot currently demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, the proposal nevertheless remains contrary to the wider spatial strategy of the Development Plan.

The appeal site is located within a small rural hamlet lacking meaningful day-to-day services and facilities. Lambs Green does not function as a sustainable settlement and future occupiers would be heavily reliant upon private vehicle use for access to employment, shopping, healthcare, education and public transport connections.

The appellant seeks to downplay this issue by referring to the relative proximity of Rusper and nearby rail connections. However, the reality remains that the site is poorly connected by sustainable modes of transport and occupiers would remain predominantly car dependent.

The Council's delegated report correctly notes that:

- the site is remote from local services;
- public transport provision is limited;
- and pedestrian connectivity is poor.

These concerns remain unchanged notwithstanding the appellant's submissions.

The proposal would therefore fail to represent a sustainable pattern of development and would conflict with the settlement hierarchy and countryside protection objectives of the HDPF.

Appeal Decisions

The appellant relies upon several appeal decisions where Inspectors have allowed residential development in rural locations within Horsham District.

However, these decisions should be treated with caution as each appeal turns upon its own facts, planning balance and site-specific circumstances.

Of considerably greater relevance is the recent dismissed appeal at The Royal Oak, Friday Street, Rusper (APP/Z3825/W/25/3361573), referenced extensively within the Council's delegated report.

That appeal involved circumstances highly comparable to the current proposal, including:

- additional residential development within the grounds of a former public house;
- development on previously developed land;
- a countryside location outside the Built-Up Area Boundary;
- and reliance upon private vehicle use.

Importantly, the Royal Oak appeal was determined within the same context of Horsham's acknowledged housing land supply shortfall.

Despite this, the Inspector concluded that the proposal represented an unsustainable form of development and that the identified harm outweighed the benefits arising from the provision of additional housing.

The parallels between the Royal Oak appeal and the current proposal are significant and it is considered that the Inspector's conclusions in that case should attract substantial weight in the determination of this appeal.

The appellant's Statement of Case does not adequately distinguish or overcome the findings of that appeal decision.

Character and Appearance

The appellant argues that the proposal would enhance the appearance of the existing car park area and would reflect a traditional coach house form.

Whilst the proposed building may be designed using traditional materials and detailing, this does not overcome the broader concern regarding the cumulative impact of additional built form within this rural location.

The existing approved development already represents a substantial intensification of the site through:

- conversion of the former public house;
- demolition and replacement extensions;
- increased residential activity;
- parking provision;
- and associated domestic paraphernalia.

The addition of a further detached residential building within the former car park area would materially alter the character of the site and contribute towards a more consolidated and suburban appearance.

The proposal would erode the existing semi-rural character of Lambs Green and would appear visually at odds with the sporadic and dispersed pattern of development characteristic of the locality.

Accordingly, the proposal remains contrary to Policies 25, 32 and 33 of the HDPF.

Heritage Considerations

It is acknowledged that the Council's Conservation Officer raised no objection to the proposal in heritage terms.

However, this does not negate the broader planning concern that the cumulative scale and extent of development now proposed at the site materially exceeds what was originally justified through the heritage-led conversion of the former public house.

The original planning rationale centred upon securing the future of the non-designated heritage asset itself. The current proposal moves beyond that justification and introduces additional residential development unrelated to the conservation objectives underpinning the earlier permissions.

As such, whilst direct heritage harm may be limited, the proposal nevertheless represents inappropriate intensification of development within the setting of the former public house and surrounding rural environment.

Drainage and Flood Risk

We note that the appellant has now submitted additional drainage information and a drainage strategy as part of the appeal process.

However, the Council's reason for refusal correctly reflected the fact that insufficient information had been submitted during the application stage to properly assess:

- surface water drainage;
- foul drainage;
- flood risk;
- and wider drainage impacts.

Whilst additional technical information may now have been provided, this does not alter the fundamental concerns relating to the principle and sustainability of the proposal.

Furthermore, it remains notable that the Council's Drainage Officer identified concerns regarding:

- the suitability of infiltration drainage;
- the need for further technical evidence;
- and surface water flood risk considerations affecting the site.

These matters reinforce the constrained nature of the site and the inappropriateness of further residential intensification in this location.

Planning Balance

The appellant places substantial weight upon the delivery of two additional dwellings within the context of the Council's housing land supply shortfall.

However, the benefits associated with the provision of two additional flats are limited and should not outweigh the identified planning harm arising from:

- development within an unsustainable countryside location;
- conflict with the spatial strategy of the HDPF;
- incremental suburbanisation of the site;
- and unjustified intensification beyond the original heritage-led redevelopment.

The proposal would not represent sustainable development when assessed against the Development Plan as a whole.

Conclusion

The proposal represents an unjustified and unsustainable form of additional residential development within the countryside, unrelated to the original planning justification for the conversion of the former public house.

Despite the appellant's reliance upon the Council's housing land supply position and additional technical submissions, the proposal remains fundamentally contrary to the spatial strategy and countryside protection objectives of the Development Plan.

The recent dismissed Royal Oak appeal provides strong support for the Council's position that additional speculative residential development within former public house sites in unsustainable rural locations should continue to be resisted notwithstanding the current housing land supply shortfall.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the Council's housing supply position currently reduces the weight afforded to certain settlement boundary policies, the appeal proposal would nevertheless result in clear and identifiable harm. The development would introduce further standalone residential built form into a rural location that remains heavily reliant upon private vehicle use and would extend the level of residential activity on the site

beyond what was originally considered acceptable through the heritage-led conversion proposals.

The Inspector is therefore required to consider not simply whether the proposal would deliver additional housing, but whether it would do so in a sustainable and policy compliant manner. In this instance, the proposal would conflict with the fundamental objectives of the Development Plan by encouraging incremental and piecemeal residential expansion within the countryside, undermining the settlement hierarchy and contributing towards the erosion of the semi-rural character of Lambs Green.

Furthermore, the approved redevelopment of the former public house should not be viewed as establishing a wider principle for unrestricted additional residential development across the site. The earlier permissions were accepted within a very specific planning context relating to the retention and viable reuse of a non-designated heritage asset. The current proposal moves materially beyond that justification and instead seeks to maximise residential development within the site through the addition of two further standalone units unrelated to the historic building itself.

The cumulative impact of the approved conversion, extensions and proposed coach house would result in an over-intensive and increasingly suburban form of development that would appear at odds with the existing dispersed and rural character of the locality. When assessed in the round, it is considered that the limited benefits associated with the delivery of two additional residential units do not outweigh the clear conflict with the Development Plan, the unsustainable nature of the location, and the wider harm arising from incremental countryside development.

Therefore, for the reasons set out above, it is respectfully requested that the appeal be dismissed.

Your faithfully



Doug Wright

WPS Planning