

Swains Farm, Brighton Road, Henfield, West Sussex, BN5 9RP

Proposed Development

Demolition of existing agricultural building and erection of 4 no. residential dwellings with associated landscaping, parking, access and ecological enhancements

Planning Statement

Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application at Swains Farm, Brighton Road, Henfield, West Sussex, BN5 9RP. The application seeks planning permission for the demolition of the existing agricultural building and the erection of 4 no. dwellings together with associated landscaping, parking and ecological enhancement works.

The proposal has been carefully developed in response to the reasons for refusal attached to application ref. DC/25/0781 and is informed by the fallback position established through the extant prior approval consent under application ref. DC/25/1661.

The revised scheme closely reflects the form, scale and layout of the approved Class Q conversion scheme, whilst repositioning the development slightly further north within the site to increase separation from the pond located to the south.

This statement demonstrates that the revised proposal successfully addresses the previous concerns raised by the Local Planning Authority and that the development represents an appropriate and sustainable form of residential development.

Description of Development

Demolition of existing agricultural building and erection of 4 no. residential dwellings with associated landscaping, parking, access and ecological enhancement works.

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision
DC/22/2118	Prior Notification for Change of Use of an Agricultural Building to residential (Use Class C3) to form 4 no. dwellinghouses	Prior Approval Required and Permitted – 04.01.2023
DISC/24/0193	Application for Approval of Details Reserved by Condition 1 to approved application DC/22/2118	Approved – 27.09.2024
DC/24/1164	Demolition of agricultural building and erection of 4 no. residential dwellings	Pending consideration
DC/25/1039	Prior Notification for Change of Use of Agricultural Building to 8 no. dwellinghouses	Prior Approval Required and Permitted – 19.08.2025
DC/25/1661	Prior Notification for Change of Use of Agricultural Building to 4 no. dwellinghouses (Class C3)	Prior Approval Required and Permitted – 08.12.2025
DC/25/0781	Demolition of agricultural building and erection of 4 no. residential dwellings with associated landscape works	Refused – 08.04.2026

An application to discharge Condition 1 (contamination details) attached to prior approval consent DC/25/1661 has now been submitted.

Once discharged, the prior approval consent will represent a lawful and implementable fallback position capable of being implemented at the site.

Description of the Site

The application site lies within the countryside outside the defined built-up area boundary of Henfield and comprises an existing agricultural building and associated hardstanding areas. The site forms part of the wider Swains Farm complex and is accessed from Brighton Road via an existing shared access track which also serves the nearby cricket club.

To the east of the site is the Grade II listed Swains Farmhouse together with two workers' bungalows. Agricultural land and open countryside extend around the wider site, contributing to its rural setting and character. A pond is situated to the south of the application site and forms an ecological feature within the wider landscape.

The existing agricultural building is utilitarian in appearance and occupies a previously developed area within the farmstead grouping. The surrounding site contains a mix of hardstanding, gravel and informal landscaping associated with the agricultural use.

Principle of Development

The application site lies outside of the defined built-up area boundary of Henfield and is therefore identified as countryside in planning policy terms. Notwithstanding this designation, the site benefits from an extant prior approval consent under application ref. DC/25/1661 for the conversion of the existing agricultural building into 4 no. residential dwellings under Class Q permitted development rights.

At the time application DC/25/0781 was determined, the Local Planning Authority concluded that the fallback position associated with DC/25/1661 did not attract substantial weight due to the presence of an outstanding pre-commencement contamination condition. However, an application to discharge Condition 1 of DC/25/1661 has now been submitted and, once approved, the prior approval consent will remain fully implementable.

The existence of an extant and implementable fallback position is a material consideration of substantial weight. The principle of delivering 4 dwellings on the site has therefore already been accepted by the Local Planning Authority through the prior approval process.

The revised proposal seeks to deliver the same quantum of residential development already capable of being implemented under DC/25/1661. As such, the proposal does not introduce additional residential intensification beyond that already approved and accepted by the Council.

Furthermore, Horsham District Council continues to be unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. As acknowledged within the officer report for DC/25/0781, the tilted balance under paragraph 11(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework is therefore engaged. In this context, the principle of the proposed development is considered acceptable, particularly given the existence of the extant fallback position and the delivery of additional housing within the district.

Design and Appearance

The revised proposal has been specifically designed to address the concerns previously raised under Reason for Refusal 2 of application DC/25/0781.

The refused scheme was criticised for introducing a suburban form of development that was materially different in character and scale from the approved Class Q fallback position. In response, the revised scheme now adopts a form, scale and architectural approach that is near identical to the approved development under DC/25/1661.

The proposed dwellings replicate the proportions, footprint and general appearance of the approved fallback scheme and therefore reflect a built form already accepted by the Local Planning Authority as appropriate within the site context.

Importantly, the revised layout has been repositioned slightly further north within the site. This amendment reduces the relationship between the development and the pond to the south, while also reducing perceived encroachment into the adjoining landscape.

The development remains closely associated with the established farmstead grouping and existing built form at Swains Farm. The proposal therefore reads as a logical evolution of the previously approved Class Q scheme rather than a materially different or more intrusive form of development.

The use of traditional and high-quality materials ensures the development responds positively to the rural setting and reflects the established agricultural character of the site.

Accordingly, the revised proposal addresses the Council's previous concerns regarding scale, massing, design and suburbanisation and is considered compliant with Policies 25, 32 and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework and Policy 12 of the Henfield Neighbourhood Plan.

Residential Amenity

The proposed dwellings have been designed and positioned to ensure an appropriate relationship with neighbouring properties and surrounding land uses.

Separation distances between the proposed dwellings and neighbouring residential properties are sufficient to prevent unacceptable overlooking, overshadowing or loss of privacy. The siting and orientation of the dwellings also avoids any material overbearing impacts.

Each dwelling benefits from private external amenity space appropriate to the scale of development proposed. The revised siting arrangement further improves the relationship between the dwellings and the pond to the south, reducing any future pressure for encroachment into this ecological feature.

The proposal therefore provides an acceptable standard of residential amenity for both future occupiers and neighbouring residents in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework.

Highways Impacts

The development will utilise the existing access arrangements from Brighton Road which already serve the wider Swains Farm complex and associated uses.

West Sussex County Council Highways previously raised no objection to the principle of 4 dwellings at the site and confirmed that the proposal would not result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety or severe cumulative impacts on the operation of the local highway network.

Adequate parking and turning provision is provided within the site to serve the proposed dwellings, together with secure cycle storage facilities.

Given that the proposal seeks the same number of dwellings as the approved fallback scheme under DC/25/1661, the development would not generate materially different transport impacts from those already accepted through the prior approval process.

The proposal is therefore considered compliant with Policies 40 and 41 of the Horsham District Planning Framework.

Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain

The revised proposal has been carefully designed to respond positively to the ecological characteristics of the site.

A key amendment within the revised scheme is the repositioning of the dwellings slightly further north in order to increase separation from the pond located to the south of the site. This amendment reduces the potential impact upon the pond and associated habitat areas and responds directly to comments raised during the previous application process.

Ecological assessments accompanying the application confirm that the development can proceed without unacceptable ecological harm subject to appropriate mitigation and precautionary working measures.

The proposal also incorporates biodiversity enhancements and habitat improvements as part of the landscaping strategy. Biodiversity Net Gain calculations demonstrate that the development is capable of achieving in excess of the mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain requirement through on-site habitat enhancement measures.

The ecological strategy therefore ensures compliance with Policy 31 of the Horsham District Planning Framework and the Environment Act 2021.

Conclusions and Planning Balance

This revised application has been carefully prepared in direct response to the reasons for refusal attached to application DC/25/0781.

The proposal seeks permission for 4 no. dwellings that are near identical in form, scale and appearance to the extant fallback scheme approved under prior approval application DC/25/1661. The only substantive amendment is the repositioning of the development slightly further north within the site to improve separation from the pond and further reduce ecological impacts.

An application to discharge Condition 1 attached to DC/25/1661 has now been submitted. Once discharged, the prior approval consent will represent a lawful and implementable fallback position capable of being carried out at the site. The Council's previous concerns regarding the viability of the fallback position have therefore been addressed.

Similarly, the revised design approach now mirrors the approved Class Q scheme and therefore overcomes the previous concerns relating to scale, suburbanisation and visual impact identified under Reason for Refusal 2.

The proposal would deliver 4 additional dwellings within Horsham District at a time when the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. The development would do so in a manner that reflects the established fallback position, protects residential amenity, provides appropriate ecological mitigation and delivers measurable biodiversity enhancements.

When assessed against the development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework as a whole, the proposal represents sustainable development for which planning permission should be granted.