



DELEGATED APPLICATIONS - ASSESSMENT SHEET

APPLICATION NO./ADDRESS:

DC/26/0149

Oakwood Farm, Storrington Road, Thakeham, West Sussex, RH20 3QT

DESCRIPTION:

Erection of a chalet style (self-build) dwelling.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

DC/24/1698

Erection of kiosk for use to sell produce from
Oakwood Farm (Retrospective)

Application Permitted on
17.04.2025

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

The application site comprises a small rural holding known as Oakwood Farm to the east of Storrington road. At the time of the site visit there was a number of small sheds, a caravan, multiple garden chairs and tables, cars, pallets a polytunnel and some residential items. Four sheep were the only visible livestock.

The site lies outside of any defined built-up area boundary and is therefore located within the open countryside where development is subject to restrictive planning policies aimed at protecting rural character. Within the application site there lies a barn and a kiosk towards Storrington road that sells meat and eggs.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION

The application seeks permission for a residential dwellinghouse to be used

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 15 - Strategic Policy: Housing Provision

Policy 16 - Strategic Policy: Meeting Local Housing Needs

Policy 20 - Rural Workers Accommodation

Policy 24 - Strategic Policy: Environmental Protection

Policy 25 - Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character

Policy 26 - Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection

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 37 - Sustainable Construction

Policy 38 - Strategic Policy: Flooding
Policy 40 - Sustainable Transport
Policy 41 - Parking

Thakeham Parish Neighbourhood Plan (TPNP) to 2031:

Thakeham1 - A Spatial Plan for the Parish
Thakeham6 - Design
Thakeham7 - Heritage Assets

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 year. 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 6: Climate Change
Strategic Policy 7: Appropriate Energy Use
Strategic Policy 8: Sustainable Design and Construction
Strategic Policy 9: Water Neutrality
Strategic Policy 10: Flooding
Strategic Policy 11: Environmental Protection
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
Policy 31: Rural Economic Development
Policy 33: Equestrian Development
Policy 41: Rural Exception Homes
Policy 44: Rural Workers accommodation

Supplementary Planning Guidance:

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

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:

NatureSpace Officer: The applicant has identified that there is a potential risk to GCN as a result of developments works, and therefore likely GCN presence should be established via further survey work, in order to inform mitigation/the need for a licence. As it stands, this information has not been received, and therefore the applicant has the following options.

Reading agricultural consultants: Initial comment

[Summary]

The application proposes a self-build rural worker's dwelling to support an organic smallholding (approx. 7.68ha) with poultry and livestock.

- Policy context: The key test under the NPPF and Horsham Policy 20 is whether there is an *essential need* for a rural worker to live on site and whether the enterprise is *financially viable*.
- Current situation:
 - Applicants live off-site and visit daily.
 - Limited information provided on livestock numbers (except 114 hens), farm operations, and no financial accounts.
- Assessment findings:
 - While general animal welfare and security needs are acknowledged, the scale of the enterprise is unclear.
 - Insufficient evidence to demonstrate an *essential functional need* for on-site residence.
 - No evidence provided to assess the *financial viability* of the business.
- Other considerations:
 - Alternative nearby housing exists, though affordability is questionable.

Conclusion

The proposal fails to comply with Policy 20 because:

- Essential need for a rural worker's dwelling has not been justified.
- Financial sustainability of the agricultural enterprise has not been demonstrated.

Reading agricultural consultants:

[Summary]

RAC considers there is not a justified essential need for a full-time worker to reside on site to meet the needs of the poultry and livestock. The business has not been planned on a sound financial basis. The proposal for the self-build siting of a rural worker's dwelling at the application site is not compliant with national and local planning policy, in particular Local Plan Policy 20.

Natural England: Standing Advice issued.

Arboricultural Officer: Comment

[Summary]

- No tree survey submitted.
- Mature trees on site are important and could be affected by the development (access, services, construction).
- Impact can be managed through conditions requiring tree protection and an arboricultural method statement.

WSCC Highways: No objection

[Summary]

- The site is accessed via an existing junction onto Storrington Road, with no visibility issues and no changes proposed.
- A single dwelling would not significantly increase traffic or impact the highway network.
- Proposed parking (2 spaces) and turning arrangements are acceptable.
- The location is reasonably accessible to local services, and cycle storage is recommended to support sustainable travel.

Southern Water: Comment

[Summary]

Construction of the development shall not commence until details of the proposed means of

foul/surface water drainage disposal have been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Southern Water.

Place Ecology Officer: Objection

[Summary]

Further information would be required to be able to determine with certainty that no protected species would be harmed as part of the development.

Representations:

1 representation received, objecting for the following reasons: -

- No site notice displayed
- Lack of genuine farming activity, only a very few number of animals on the site at any given time
- The applicants live in very close proximity to the site so there is no requirement for a dwelling in the site
- Contrary to countryside development policies
- The scale of the barn on the site is already larger than it needs to be given that there are few animals within the site
- Amenity concerns
- Drainage and infrastructure

1 representation received, supporting for the following reasons: -

- Too few houses being built
- The house would not be visible

1 comment was received stating that the proposal would support a local business but could set a precedent for building dwellings in agricultural land.

Parish Comments: Object: -

- Number and types of livestock vastly overstated
- The applicants live within a two minute cycle of the application site and own their house such that there is no requirement for an additional house within the site

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 application site extends to approximately 7.68 hectares and operates as a smallholding centred on keeping chickens and a small number of other livestock. The applicant is understood to sell eggs and some meat produced from the site but no functional business plan has been submitted as part of the application. The application proposes a rural workers dwelling on the site.

Policy 26 of the HDPF states that outside built-up area boundaries, the rural character and undeveloped nature of the countryside will be protected against inappropriate development. Any proposal must be essential to its countryside location and meet one of the identified criteria, including supporting the needs of agriculture or enabling the sustainable development of rural areas.

Policy 20 of the HDPF states that outside the defined built-up area, new housing for rural workers will be supported provided that: there is a functional need for the dwelling and the occupation of the dwelling is to support the established business use; and evidence is submitted to demonstrate the viability of the rural business for which the housing is required.

The Council's Agricultural Consultant has reviewed the submission and has advised that the proposal does not currently demonstrate a justified essential need for a rural worker to reside on site. Whilst it is recognised that there is a need for the applicant's to visit the site regularly to ensure the wellbeing of the livestock, it was evident during the Officer site visit that the very limited number of livestock on site amounted to a hobby smallholding rather than an established agricultural need. The existing scale of operations is limited and characteristic of a small hobby farm and does not generate sufficient functional demand to justify a full-time on-site presence. It is understood that the applicant lives a 9-minute journey from the site which is not considered an unacceptable commute should an emergency arise.

The applicant has provided further information as part of the application process, including preliminary financial information, and a business plan up to 2028 which sets out future expansion plans. The additional information does not justify an essential need for a full-time rural worker to live on the site. In addition, the further information does not set out how sales income would be increased and there is a lack of detail relating to the poultry and livestock enterprise. Finally, the submission does not make allowances for wages / salaries in the accounts. It is instead apparent that the development would be funded by the sale of a property elsewhere in the District, rather than funded through the enterprise taking place on the site. There is a lack of detail to conclude that the business has been planned on a sound basis or that it could sustain a dwelling and any related labour.

The proposal therefore fails to meet the requirements of Policy 20 of the HDPF and paragraph 84 of the NPPF. In the absence of a clearly demonstrated essential need, the development represents an unjustified form of residential development in the countryside, which is not essential to its location and is therefore contrary to Policy 26 of the HDPF.

The site is in a rural countryside location where the provision of a dwelling unrelated to an essential rural need would be contrary to Policies 3 and 26 of the HDPF. In such a location future occupants would be heavily reliant on private vehicles to access neighbouring settlements and the related services. The site is therefore considered to be located within an inappropriate location for residential development not necessary for agriculture or equestrian related activities.

Design and Appearance:

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.

Thakeham 6 ensures that the scale, massing, appearance and materials for development proposals and alterations to existing buildings be reflective of architectural and historical styles of the parish.

The introduction of residential built form in this locality would not fit into any ribbon of development as dwellings in the rural locality are sporadic. Whilst the dwelling would be sited next to the existing agricultural barn, this would not be sufficient precedent of built form to justify incursion into the agricultural field. It is therefore advanced that the dwelling would form an inappropriate permanent development that would appear at odds with the prevailing character of the area. It is therefore considered that the proposal would be out of character with surrounding development, contrary to Policies 32 and 33 of the HDPF.

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.

The dwelling is remotely located such that there are no immediate neighbours to the application site and it is considered that given the site circumstance the proposal would not result in harm to the amenities of nearby residential neighbours. The dwelling size would be sufficient to be in accordance to NDSS space standards and would include residential garden space and a vegetable plot to serve as sufficient amenity space. There are no objections to the proposal in regards to policy 33 of the HDPF.

Highways Impacts:

Policies 40 and 41 of the HDPF promote development that provides safe and adequate access, suitable for all users.

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 site is accessed via an existing access onto Storrington Road, with no visibility issues and no changes proposed. Two parking spaces would be proposed to serve the future occupiers and this would be provision for a dwelling of the proposed size. The level of traffic generated from a single dwellinghouse would not be such that it would result in a materially larger number of vehicle trips.

Overall, the proposal is not considered to result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety or the operation of the surrounding road network. The development is therefore considered to accord with Policies 40 and 41 of the Horsham District Planning Framework, as well as the relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Ecology:

Policy 31 of the Horsham District Planning Framework requires development to protect, conserve and enhance biodiversity and the District's green infrastructure network by retaining important natural features such as trees and habitats, maintaining and strengthening ecological networks, and avoiding harm to designated sites and protected species wherever possible.

Place Services Ecology Officer have been consulted and have objected to the proposal after reviewing The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Dec 2025). In particular, further bat survey results, mitigation, and enhancement measures are required before a decision can be made.

Furthermore, the submitted information has been assessed in respect of Great Crested Newts by the NatureSpace Officer. Upon review of the application, they have responded with a holding objection as the applicant has identified that there is a potential risk to GCN as a result of the developments works. Further survey work would be required to identify if mitigation or a license is required. Overall, insufficient information has been submitted for the local authority to conclude with certainty that the development would be acceptable in light of policy 31 of the HDPF.

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 would include the following measures to build resilience to climate change and reduce carbon emissions: -

- Water consumption limited to 110 litres per person per day
- Requirement to provide full fibre broadband site connectivity
- Dedicated refuse and recycling storage capacity
- Cycle parking facilities
- Improved pedestrian and cycle links
- electric vehicle charging points

If the application were to be approved these measures could be secured through condition.

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 applicant has outlined within the description of the application that the dwelling would be a 'self-build' such that it would be exempt from mandatory BNG requirements.

Conclusions:

The application seeks full planning permission for the erection of a permanent rural worker's dwelling at Oakwood Farm. The principle of providing residential accommodation in the countryside to support a rural enterprise is acknowledged in national and local planning policy, including Paragraph 84 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Policy 20 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF). However, proposals for permanent dwellings in such locations are subject to a more stringent assessment, requiring clear evidence of an established essential functional need for a worker to reside permanently on site, alongside robust evidence of a financially sound and sustainable enterprise.

In this case, it is proposed that the dwelling would be occupied by the owners of Oakwood Farm. The Council's Agricultural Consultant (RAC) has reviewed the submitted information and advises that they would object to the proposal, as there does not appear to be a functional need for a permanent dwellinghouse. The enterprise is not fully established and operates at a small hobby farm scale, with a very limited number of livestock present within the site. The present level of activity is limited and does not generate a sufficient functional requirement to justify the provision of a permanent on-site dwelling.

Furthermore, concerns have been raised regarding the financial robustness of the enterprise. Although a business plan has been submitted outlining projected income and expenditure, the information lacks sufficient detail and supporting evidence.

Notwithstanding the above, the Council cannot currently demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply, where the most relevant policies directing growth across the District are out of date. The tilted balance as outlined within paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF is therefore engaged, where it is outlined that where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, permission should be granted unless the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed, or 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, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places, and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

The Council have published a guidance document titled "Shaping Development in the Horsham District" where it is recognised that there are likely to be applications submitted outside of defined built-up area boundaries and on unallocated sites. Given the lack of a 5-year housing land supply, and the principles behind Policy 4 of the HDPF, the guidance document outlines that applications which meet the following criteria will be considered positively:

- The site adjoins the existing settlement edge as defined by the built-up area boundary;
- 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 application site does not adjoin a settlement edge as defined by the built-up area boundary, and the development would not therefore meet all of the above criteria. The proposed development would not therefore be supported by the above document.

Future occupiers would be reliant on private vehicles to access everyday services, amenities and facilities. The site is therefore considered to be located within an inappropriate location for residential development not necessary for agriculture or equestrian related activities. As the site would not be easily accessible by sustainable means and given this the proposal would not accord with the Framework's objectives. It is therefore considered that the adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. As such, having regard to Paragraph 11 (d)(ii), the proposal would not benefit from the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out within the Framework.

In addition to the above, insufficient ecological information has been provided to enable the Local Planning Authority to fully assess the impacts of the proposed development on biodiversity. The site is located within a rural area where there is reasonable potential for protected and priority species, including the Great Crested Newt. In the absence of further it has not been demonstrated that the development would avoid harm to protected species. The proposal therefore gives rise to unacceptable uncertainty and fails to demonstrate compliance with statutory duties under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Recommendation: Application Refused

Reason(s) for Refusal:

1. The development would be sited within an unsustainable location in the countryside, outside of a defined built-up area boundary, and on a site not allocated for housing development within the Horsham District Planning Framework or a Made Neighbourhood Plan. It has not been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority that the development is essential to its countryside location and that there is an essential and functional need for a rural worker to live on-site. Notwithstanding the absence of a five-year land housing supply, and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) at paragraph 11(d), it is not considered that there are any material considerations which would outweigh harm arising from conflict with Policies 1, 3, 4, 20 and 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).
2. Insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that the proposed development would have no adverse impact on protected species and its habitat, most notably Great Crested Newts, contrary to Policy 31 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) and the National Planning Policy Framework.

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/26/0149

(The approved plans will form Condition 1 on the Decision Notice of all Permitted applications)

Schedule of plans/documents not approved:

Plan Type	Description	Drawing Number	Received Date
Block plan	and proposed, first and second floor and roof	3008/2A	29.01.2026
Location plan		NONE	29.01.2026
Site plan	proposed	3008/1A	29.01.2026

Elevation plan	Proposed	3008/3A	29.01.2026
Supporting Docs	Cover letter	25/209	29.01.2026
Supporting Docs	Appendices 1 - 4	NONE	29.01.2026
Supporting Statement	Farm Statement	NONE	29.01.2026
Design & Access Statement		NONE	29.01.2026
Supporting Statement	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal	C-NJA-085-001-001	29.01.2026

DELEGATED

Case Officer sign/initial Hannah Darley Date: 19th June 2026

Authorising Officer sign/initial Guy Everest Date: 24.06.2026