



Horsham District Council
Parkside
Horsham
West Sussex
RH12 1RL

Our ref: 22306
Date: 18 September 2026

For the attention of: Shazia Penne

Application ref: DC/26/0723
Location: Chandos, Billingshurst Road, Coolham, West Sussex
Proposal/Description: Change of use of land from paddock to residential, formation of access and closure of existing access.

Thank you for consulting with Place Services on the above application. This letter sets out our consultation response on the landscape impact of the application and how the proposal relates and responds to the landscape setting and context of the site.

Summary

Not supportive on landscape grounds	☒
No landscape objection, subject to attached recommendations and/or conditions	☐
Further information required prior to determination	☐
No landscape comments / does not wish to comment	☐

This review is based on a desktop study of the above-referenced application and its submitted documents. Our Landscape comments are as follows:

1.0. Site Context

- 1.1. The site is located outside the built up area boundary and therefore within a countryside location. The site is to the west of the settlement of Coolham, and to the north of Billingshurst Road, adjacent to existing property Chandos.
- 1.2. The application site forms part of a paddock field which is enclosed to the north by mature trees. The southern boundary is made of native species hedge.
- 1.3. There are small clusters of residential properties in the surrounding area, together with farmstead and scattered small scale business development sites. The surrounding landscape is rural in character with a mix of field pattern and a sense of enclosure provided by shaws, woodlands, hedgerows and hedgerow trees.

- 1.4. The Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment identifies the site within J2: Broadford Bridge to Ashington Farmlands Landscape Character Area (LCA). Key characteristics include:
- Flat to gently undulating landscape.
 - Mostly small scale patterns of fields with a strong sense of enclosure, larger arable fields in parts.
 - Mostly strong network of hedgerows/shaws with mature oak standards although there has been some loss of these trees.
 - Narrow lanes.
 - Small historic farms and some small scale ribbon development along lanes.
- 1.5. Amongst the key issues, notable is “*Loss of hedgerows*”. The Planning and Land Management Guidelines include:
- Conserve existing woodlands, shaws and mature hedgerow trees.
 - Restore hedgerows.
 - Promote the replacement of hedgerows trees by replanting, or by natural regeneration.
- 1.6. There are no landscape designations within the site or in the surrounding area. A Grade II Listed Building is located to the north-west of the site. The application site forms part of the open field between the heritage asset and Chandos residential property, therefore potential impacts on the setting of this heritage asset should be considered.

2.0. Planning Policy Context

Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) (2015)

- 2.1. The Horsham District Planning Framework Proposals Maps identifies the site as being located outside of the defined built-up area boundary and therefore the site is designated as countryside. The following policies are considered relevant to this application:
- Policy 24: Environmental Protection
 - Policy 25: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
 - Policy 26: Countryside Protection
 - Policy 31: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
 - Policy 32: The Quality of New Development

Shingley Neighbourhood Development Plan (SNP) (2019-2031)

- 2.2. Relevant to this application and in landscape terms is Policy Ship HD3: High quality design. Within the neighbourhood plan is also the Parish Village Design Guidance (December 2018).

3.0. Review of the proposal/submitted information

Landscape Character

- 3.1. The Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment identifies the site within J2: Broadford Bridge to Ashington Farmlands Landscape Character Area (LCA). The application site forms part of an open field which is considered to contribute to the field pattern of this character area.
- 3.2. The verdant character of Billingshurst Road in the vicinity of the application site is generally consistent, with hedgerows along both sides of the carriageway and narrow grass verges where present. Hedgerow trees are limited; however, they become more prominent along the section of road approaching the site from the west and towards Coolham, where they make an important contribution to the verdant character and enclosure of the route.
- 3.3. The character of the site area remains rural. Recent boundary treatment alterations associated with Goodwin Cottage property demonstrate how small-scale changes can erode local character with the introduction of visually prominent and suburban style boundary treatment.

The proposal

- 3.4. Proposals under approved application DC/25/0504 were considered visually appropriate for its rural location and in keeping with the established character of both the dwelling and the wider area. The proposals did not include or required any alterations to the existing access point arrangements.
- 3.5. The current application is seeking approval for a change of use of land from paddock to residential, formation of access and closure of existing access. It is understood that the change of use of land from paddock to residential is for the creation of the new access point and vehicle route to Chandos and paddock field.
- 3.6. Paragraph 4.7 of the submitted Planning Statement refers to the hedge as species-poor and with limited ecological value, however, this is not supported or evidenced by an ecological assessment to establish the condition, species mix and ecological value of the existing hedge. Further detailed information is required.
- 3.7. Paragraph 4.8 also says “*there is no overriding heritage or valued landscape basis for retaining the frontage hedgerow*” however, the hedgerow is considered an important feature in landscape character terms as it contributes to the verdant character along Billingshurst Road (A272) and forms part of the continuous line of hedgerow planting along this route.
- 3.8. Policy 26 of the HDPF says “*Development will be considered acceptable where it does not lead, either individually or cumulatively, to a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside, and protects, and/or conserves, and/or enhances, the key*

features and characteristics of the landscape character area in which it is located”, and notable point 2, which states “2. The pattern of woodlands, fields, hedgerows, trees, waterbodies and other features;”

- 3.9. Policy 25 makes reference to the protection of landscape character and conservation of the distinctive characteristics of the district. And Policy 32 requires development to respond positively to local character and context.
- 3.10. The proposals include the removal of the existing hedgerow, and proposed hedgerow as replacement planting. However, the alignment of the new hedgerow is proposed to be set back quite a distance from the carriageway to incorporate visibility splay. Green verge is present outside Goodwin Rise, but this is narrow. We query the need for such a wide set back of the proposed hedgerow. The submitted information does not demonstrate why a reduced set back, more consistent with the verge width in front of Goodwin Rise, could not be achieved. It may be possible to explore alternative hedge alignments in the immediate vicinity of the proposed access that would better reflect the existing roadside landscape structure; however, no such options have been provided as part of the submission.
- 3.11. We also note the proposed second hedgerow line to the north of the new access road. We query the need for this and appropriateness in landscape terms as this will create an additional field boundary which does not reflect the historic field pattern of the wider field, and would therefore conflict with Policies 25, 26 and 32 of the HDPF. If a degree of separation between the proposed access route and paddock field is considered necessary, alternative forms of rural boundary treatment should be explored. For example, a simple two rail cleft chestnut post and rail fence may better reflect the rural character of the area and avoid introducing an additional hedgerow field boundary. However, no justification has been provided to demonstrate the need for the proposed internal hedgerow arrangement.
- 3.12. The proposed species mix for the new hedge consists of Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Hazel, Field Maple, Dog Rose / Guelder Rose. Whilst the proposed species are appropriate in landscape terms, further details of the landscape specification such as plant sizes, species percentages, number, etc are required. The appropriateness of the proposed species mix will be subject to approval by the LPA Ecology Officer in relation to providing a hedgerow mix of greater biodiversity value than the removed hedgerow.
- 3.13. Whilst the proposed hedgerows and tree planting would contribute towards biodiversity enhancements, and potentially biodiversity net gain in accordance with Policy 31, their location and form do not appear to reflect the historic field pattern or established landscape structure of the area. Consequently, the proposal risks eroding landscape character and local distinctiveness, and would therefore conflict with the objectives of Policies 25 and 32 of the HDPF.

Other matters

- 3.14. The application site forms part of the open field located between Chandos and the Grade II listed building to the west/north-west. Whilst a detailed assessment of heritage impacts has not been undertaken, it is noted that the proposed additional hedgerow line and associated changes to the field pattern have the potential to alter the relationship between the listed building and the surrounding open land. The Local Planning Authority's Conservation Officer should therefore be consulted regarding any potential effects on the setting of the listed building.

4.0. Summary

- 4.1. We consider that the submitted information does not provide sufficient justification to demonstrate the need for the proposed removal of the existing hedgerow, having regard to its contribution to the rural character of Billingshurst Road (A272) and the wider landscape structure. The extent of hedgerow loss proposed has also not been adequately justified.
- 4.2. Whilst replacement hedgerow planting is proposed, the mitigation strategy does not adequately demonstrate that it responds appropriately to the established landscape structure, roadside character or historic field pattern. The proposed set-back alignment would appear out of character within the local landscape and would therefore conflict with Policies 25, 26 and 32 of the HDPF.
- 4.3. Concerns are also raised regarding the proposed additional hedgerow to the north of the access road, which would introduce a new field boundary that does not reflect the historic landscape pattern. Whilst alternative boundary treatments may be available, insufficient justification has been provided for the proposed arrangement.
- 4.4. In addition, the altered field boundary arrangement could potentially affect the relationship between the nearby listed building and the surrounding open land. We therefore recommend seeking advice from the LPA Conservation Officer regarding any potential effects on the setting of the heritage asset arising from the proposals.
- 4.5. Further details of the proposed replacement planting are required, including plant sizes, species proportions within the mix, quantities, establishment specifications and maintenance tasks. The species mix should be agreed in consultation with the LPA Ecology Officer to ensure it delivers an appropriate landscape and biodiversity outcome.

Please contact us if you have any queries in relation to this advice.

Place Services – Landscape Team

Email: landscape@essex.gov.uk



This advice has been provided by Place Services on behalf of Horsham District Council.

Please note:

This letter is advisory and should only be considered as the opinion formed by specialist staff in relation to this particular matter.

We are unable to respond directly to applicants/agents or other interested parties. Any additional information, queries or comments on this advice that the applicant/agent or other interested parties may have, must be directed to the Planning Officer at the relevant LPA, who will seek further advice from us where appropriate.

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