Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 April 2026

by C Housden BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14th May 2026

Appeal Ref: 6004095
Denhams, Andrews Hill, Billingshurst, West Sussex RH14 9JT

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs Chris Williamson against the decision of Horsham District Council.
- The application ref is DC/25/1108.
- The development proposed is the construction of 1 x detached dwelling and 2 x semi detached dwellings.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:

    - the effect on the character and appearance of the area, including whether the proposal would preserve the setting of the Grade II listed buildings Flagstones, Home Cottage & Webb Cottage and St Andrew's House, and the non-designated heritage asset Denhams;
    - the location of the development situated outside of a defined settlement boundary; and
    - the accessibility to services and facilities for future occupiers of the development.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site is situated within the setting of Flagstones, Home Cottage & Webb Cottage and St Andrew's House, all of which are Grade II listed buildings. In accordance with the statutory duty set out in Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, I have had special regard to the desirability of preserving the settings of these assets.

4. In addition, the host dwelling Denhams is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset. Paragraph 216 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) sets out in weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

5. The significance of Flagstones derives from its architectural and historical interests as a sixteenth century rural property with notable features including tile hung gables, with a white render and black timber front elevation.

6. In relation to Home Cottage and Webb Cottage, their significance also derives from their architectural and historical interests as rural dwellings. In the case of Home Cottage it is timber framed fronted in red brick, whilst Webb Cottage is also finished in red brick with grey headers.

7. In relation to St Andrew's House the significance of this asset is derived from both its architectural and historical interests as a detached seventeenth century rural dwelling with notable design features including its timber frame with central chimneystack, a tile hung first floor front façade and a white rendered ground floor front elevation.

8. In relation to Denhams, the evidence shows that its significance is derived from its appearance on the first edition of the 1870s OS Map, forming an addition to the cluster of dwellings of Andew's Hill, as further described below.

9. The group of designated assets originally formed a small rural historic settlement known as Andrew's Hill, which was later added to through the host property Denhams. Group significance, including Denhams, is also therefore derived through the historical interest of the cluster of properties as a small scale, rural settlement that has evolved through an informal and piecemeal pattern of development.

10. The parties do not agree to the extent of which the significance of these assets, including their setting, has been altered over time. The appellant contends that the utilitarian agricultural buildings opposite the site detracts from the setting of all the buildings. In addition, the 20th century dwellings of St Andrew's Cottages detracts from both Flagstones and Home Cottage & Webb Cottage. Furthermore, recent works undertaken within the curtilage of the heritage assets, including a concrete garage at Flagstones, and incremental alterations to the buildings themselves and to the historic boundaries detracts from their significance. In relation to Denhams, the appellant contends that ongoing alterations and additions to the property and its boundary, along with the incremental alterations and additions within the curtilage of the neighbouring properties, including the rooftops of modern outbuildings nearby is considered to have diminished its setting. Overall, the appellant contends that the significance, including the settings, of the heritage assets has been demonstrably impinged upon by recent development.

11. Based on my observations on site, I do not agree that the significance of the assets has been eroded to the extent purported by the appellant. On the ground, I observed that the assets retain a prominent and positive appearance as an informal cluster of historic rural properties and appear distinct and distinguishable from the more recent additions to the area. In particular, the development within the curtilages of these buildings and to the dwellings themselves is small in scale, and only marginally affects the appreciation of the significance of the heritage assets as historic rural properties. The modern farm buildings, whilst utilitarian in appearance are clearly separate from the cluster of heritage assets. In addition, the agricultural use is in keeping with the wider landscape and therefore the setting is only eroded to a limited extent by this development. St Andew's Cottages whilst encroaching into the historic boundary of Home Cottage and Webb Cottage, still

retains considerable separation between the buildings, helping to retain an informal loose cluster of development.

12. Overall, I consider that the significance of the assets is still readily perceptible on the ground as a group of historic rural dwellings, set in an informal and piecemeal pattern of development and has only been impacted upon by the more modern development to a limited extent.

13. In this regard, the appeal site positively contributes towards this setting as an open green space which helps to retain spacing and the overall low-density and informal pattern of historic rural development.

14. The appeal proposal would introduce a detached dwelling and a pair of semi-detached dwellings set between Denhams, Home Cottage and Flagstones. The dwellings would be broadly set in a linear arrangement with hardstanding and parking set to the rear.

15. The proposed development would result in the loss of the open rural character of the appeal site and harmfully urbanise it through the proposed rigid sub-division. In addition, the regular design across the proposed properties would be out of keeping with the varied appearance of the surrounding dwellings. Overall, the appeal scheme would result in a regimented linear sprawl along Stane Street which would be distinctly out of keeping with and contrary to the low-density cluster of development and spacious informal rural character and appearance of the area.

16. Therefore, the development would detract from and fail to preserve the settings of the designated assets of Flagstones, Home Cottage & Webb Cottage and St Andrew's House, along with the non-designated asset Denhams and therefore harm the significance of these assets.

17. The harm to the setting of Flagstones, Home Cottage and Denhams would be more prominent given the appeal site is set directly adjacent to these properties, and thereby the development would appear more intrusive in the surroundings in which these assets are experienced. In relation to Webb Cottage and St Andrew's House, as they are respectively separated from the appeal site by Home Cottage and Stane Street, the effect of the development on the surroundings in which these assets are experienced would not be as notable from all views, particularly in the case of St Andrew's House set on the opposite side of the road. However, the development would still detract from their settings, in particular in the views when travelling along Stane Street.

18. With regard to paragraph 216, the harm to the significance of Denhams would be moderate.

19. In the context of paragraphs 212 and 215 of the Framework, the level of harm as described above to the significance of all the designated assets would be less than substantial. In relation to the assets closest to the site Flagstones and Home Cottage, within the spectrum of less than substantial, the harm to their significance would fall within the middle-lower end. In relation to Webb Cottage, the extent of the harm to the significance of this asset would be at the lower end of the spectrum and in the case of St Andew's House the harm would be a negligible amount of less than substantial harm. In this regard, I note that the harm to St

Andrew's House was not included within the Council's associated reason for refusal.

20. The proposal would not preserve the settings of these designated heritage assets which is a matter of considerable importance and weight. Paragraph 215 requires that less than substantial harm to the significance of designated heritage assets is to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, which I shall return to later on.

21. The appeal proposal would conflict with Policies 25, 32, 33 and 34 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) (HDPF) and Policy Bill 2 of the Billingshurst Parish Neighbourhood Plan (2021) (NP). These policies, amongst other matters, seek to ensure development protects, conserves and enhances the landscape character, complement the locally distinctive character and heritage of the district, provide an attractive environment, ensure that the scale, massing and appearance of the development is of a high standard of design and layout and where relevant relates sympathetically with the built surroundings, landscape, open spaces and retains and improves the setting of heritage assets.

Location of development

22. Policy Bill 1 of the NP sets out that development within the parish shall be focused within the proposed built-up area boundary of Billingshurst village, or, within the countryside only when a number of criteria apply.

23. Policy 2 of the HDPF sets out that development will be focused in and around the key settlement of Horsham, and allow for growth in the rest of the district in accordance with the identified settlement hierarchy. Policy 3 identifies Horsham as a main town and the top of the settlement hierarchy, along with stating development will be permitted within defined built-up areas. Policy 4 supports the expansion of settlements where a number of criteria apply. Policy 26 states that development outside built-up area boundaries must be essential to its countryside location and meet one of a number of further criteria.

24. In addition, the Facilitating Appropriate Development Document (2022) (FAD) sets out criteria whereby development outside of settlement boundaries may be supported within the district.

25. On the ground, the appeal site appears distinctly separate from the built-up area of Billingshurst owing to its rural form and lack of visual association with the established settlement. I therefore do not consider the appeal site to be adjoining to the existing settlement edge of Billingshurst. The proposed residential use of the land is also not essential development for its location. Therefore, the proposal would not meet the criteria of HDPF Policies 4 and 26, NP Policy Bill 1 or that of the FAD.

26. The location of development would therefore conflict with NP Policy Bill 1 and Policies 2, 3, 4 and 26 of the HDPF which defines the evidence based spatial strategy and plan-led approach to development within the district.

Accessibility to facilities and services

27. Whilst situated outside of the built-up area, I observed that along Stane Street there was a continuous made footpath that runs to the settlement of Billingshurst.

The evidence shows that the distance to the settlement boundary from the appeal site is approximately 430m.

28. Paragraph 110 identifies that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in decision-making. As a result, whilst the appeal site is situated within a rural location outside of the defined settlement boundary, future occupiers would have alternatives to the private vehicle through utilising this footpath to access the facilities and services of Billingshurst to help meet their daily needs. Therefore, in this regard, the proposal would not conflict with Policy 2 of the HDPF which, amongst other matters, seeks to ensure development has suitable access to services and local employment.

Other Matters

29. The evidence shows that the appeal site is situated within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone where additional development that is not water neutral could have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Arun Valley SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites through ground water abstraction.

30. The appellant has submitted a package of water neutrality measures, and the Council conducted an Appropriate Assessment during the planning application and concluded that the proposal would not adversely impact the integrity of the Arun Valley habitats site alone, or in combination. If I was to allow the appeal, I would be required to undertake my own appropriate assessment. However, since I am dismissing it for other reasons, I do not need to consider this further since it does not impact the outcome of the appeal.

31. A previous appeal within the District has been brought to my attention[1]. Whilst this appeal was allowed, each case should be assessed on its individual merits which I have done so in this case. Also, it is unclear whether this case is directly comparable to the appeal before me, given the localised specific harms to designated heritage assets that I have identified in this appeal.

Heritage Balance

32. With regard to the public benefits, the proposal would provide three dwellings within a district which the evidence shows only has a housing land supply of 2.9 years, a significant shortfall. It would be located in an area where future occupiers would have alternative means to the private car to meet daily needs. It is the Government's objective to significantly boost the supply of housing, including through small and medium schemes which the proposal would do and contribute to the Council's housing land supply. It would lead to small and time limited economic benefits during the construction phase, as well as some limited social and economic benefits from the spend of future occupiers of the development and council tax receipts. However, given the overall small scale of the development these public benefits would only carry limited positive weight.

33. I have given the desirability of preserving the significance and setting of the designated heritage assets considerable importance and weight. Therefore, in this instance, the limited public benefits would not outweigh the respective less than

[1] APP/Z3825/W/25/3361339

substantial harms to the significance of Flagstones, Home Cottage and Webb Cottage.

34. In the case of St Andrew's House, due to the negligible amount of less than substantial harm identified, the public benefits would outweigh the harms to the significance of this specific asset. Nevertheless, this does not change my findings in relation to the other assets.

Planning Balance

35. The proposed development is not in accordance with the aforementioned policies of the HDPF and NP, by virtue of the appeal site being situated outside a defined settlement boundary, and the effect on the character and appearance of the area, including on the setting of designated and non-designated heritage assets.

36. As set out above, the Council can only demonstrate a five year housing land supply of 2.9 years. Therefore, the provisions of paragraph 11d) of the Framework are engaged.

37. Footnote 8 confirms in these circumstances, the policies which are most important for determining the application are deemed to be out-of-date. Paragraph 232 of the Framework confirms due weight should be given to policies, according to their consistency with the Framework.

38. Paragraph 14 of the Framework is not engaged as the NP does not contain policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement.

39. In relation to the location of development, the Council is not meeting its local housing needs through the policies of its development plan. It is therefore not meeting paragraph 61 of the Framework which sets out the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes and ensuring a sufficient amount of land can come forward. Therefore, the conflict that arises with NP Policy Bill 1 and Policies 2, 3, 4 and 26 of the HDPF carries very limited weight.

40. In relation to matters of character and appearance, paragraphs 135 and 139 seek to ensure development adds to the overall quality of the area and sets out that development which is not well designed should be refused. Paragraph 187 seeks to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. In addition, paragraph 212 attributes great weight to the conservation of designated heritage assets and paragraph 216 sets out in weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset. Policies 25, 32, 33 and 34 of the HDPF and Policy Bill 2 of the NP are therefore broadly consistent with the Framework. On this basis, and on the various harms identified, the conflict with these policies carries significant weight against the development.

41. Overall, the appeal proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole and the above-mentioned paragraphs of the Framework.

42. Paragraph 11d)i) of the Framework sets out that planning 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. Footnote 7 confirms that this includes policies relating to designated heritage assets. The respective less than substantial harms identified

to the significance of the designated heritage assets Flagstones, Home Cottage and Webb Cottage would amount to a strong reason for refusing the development. As such, the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply.

43. The other material considerations, which I have previously identified in my public benefits balance, carry limited positive weight in favour of the proposed development for the reasons that I have given and would not outweigh these harms.

Conclusion

44. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

C Housden

INSPECTOR