



**READING
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Your Ref: DC/25/1502
Our Ref: 11046-sp

10 April 2025

For the attention of Shazia Penne

Horsham District Council
Albery House
Springfield Road
Horsham
West Sussex
RH12 2GB

Dear Ms Penne,

Site: Land at 511723 114322, Rock Road, Washington, West Sussex.

Application: DC/25/1502

Proposal: Erection of a Forestry Barn

Thank you for your instruction dated 24 February 2026 requesting Reading Agricultural Consultants Ltd (RAC) comments on the above planning application.

In preparing this response I have had regard to:

- the application form and associated plans; and
- a Planning Statement (PS) (dated September 2025) produced by MME Planning Services (the applicant's agent).

I have not visited the site or discussed the application with the applicant or the agent.

Background

1. The application site extends to 7 hectares (17.29 acres).
2. The Planning Statement details that the site comprises fields, nursery amenity trees and wild trees.
3. The site benefits from Prior Approval for the erection of an identically sized forestry building under DC/24/1892 (approved January 2025) which has a ridge height of 3m.



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4. This application proposes the erection of an identically designed storage building with an increased ridge height to 4m which it is advised will provide better access for the applicant's machinery.
5. The PS details that the woodland management plan is formed of felling the nursery trees on site and replanting over a 3-5 year period. It is understood that the Forestry Commission have granted the applicant a new felling licence for the site which covers the period November 2024 to 2029.
6. The applicant currently stores machinery and tools off-site but proposes to store this on site in the secure building.
7. The applicant intends to plant up to 1,000 fruit trees on site and purchase additional machinery for the horticultural/forestry use. This includes the provision of a potting, planting, propagating and covered growing area within the proposed building.

Proposal

8. The application proposes the erection of a storage building measuring 25m x 18m (450m²) with an eaves height of 3.2m and a ridge height of 4m.
9. The building will be constructed with green profile metal sheeting walls and roof. It will be clad on all sides and accessed via a roller shutter door and pedestrian door on the eastern elevation.

Relevant Planning Policies

10. National planning policy guidance for development in the countryside is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) updated in December 2024.
11. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF sets out the core land-use planning principles that should be adopted and these expressly include:
 - A presumption in favour of sustainable development;
 - Positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of the area and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change;
 - Provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses;
 - Approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; and,
 - Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission.
12. Section 4 requires that decision makers:
 - should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way; work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic; social and environmental conditions of the area;
 - seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
13. Section 6 of the NPPF is concerned with 'Building a strong, competitive economy' and at paragraph 85 it notes:

“planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt...”

14. At paragraph 88 ‘Supporting a prosperous rural economy’ it notes:

“Planning policies and decisions should enable:

- a) The sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;*
- b) The development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based businesses;...”*

15. Policy 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (excluding South Downs National Park) deals with countryside protection and enhancement and states:

“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 in addition meet one of the following criteria:

- 1. support the needs of agriculture or forestry;*
- 2. enable the extraction of minerals or the disposal of waste;*
- 3. provide for quiet informal recreational use; or,*
- 4. enable the sustainable development of rural areas.*

In addition, proposals must be of a scale appropriate to its countryside character and location. 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, including:

- 1. the development pattern of the area, its historical and ecological qualities, tranquillity and sensitivity to change;*
- 2. the pattern of woodlands, fields, hedgerows, trees, waterbodies and other features; and*
- 3. the landform of the area.”*

Appraisal

16. RAC would comment that it is advisable to store agricultural machinery under cover to protect it from the elements. It protects machinery from corrosion and in particular damage to any moving parts and therefore minimises maintenance requirements and periods of downtime.

17. It is generally considered within the industry that an additional 25% to 30% of machinery storage space is acceptable to allow for the safe manoeuvring and handling of agricultural/forestry machinery within the building.

18. RAC considers that the building has been appropriately designed for safe and secure machinery storage. However, it is unknown if the indicative machinery shown on the Floor Plan are of an appropriate scale. RAC considers that the building is oversized for the safe handling and manoeuvring of machinery.

19. RAC considers the storage of felled trees within a building with no ventilation is inappropriate as it will not allow the trees to dry out and can lead to damp and mould growth on the trees.

20. RAC acknowledges that the building size had previously been considered acceptable by the Council in the approval of DC/24/1892 however RAC consider that the building is larger than the requirements of the forestry/proposed horticultural uses of the holding.

21. The increase in the ridge height of the building by 1m is considered appropriate to allow safe access of machinery in and out of the building.

I trust these comments are helpful in your deliberations.

Yours sincerely,

Olivia Wojniak