



DELEGATED APPLICATIONS - ASSESSMENT SHEET

APPLICATION NO./ADDRESS:

DC/25/2017

Post Office Stores, Church Street, West Chiltington, West Sussex, RH20 2JW

DESCRIPTION:

Change of Use from post office store to residential (Class C3) (Full Application).

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

DC/25/2018	Change of Use from post office store to residential (Class C3) (Listed Building Consent).	Pending Consideration
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DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

The Post Office Stores is situated on Church Street, West Chiltington, on the corner of the central crossroads, connecting The Hollow, East Street, Church Street and Broadford Bridge Road. The site is within the built-up area boundary of West Chiltington, and the West Chiltington Conservation Area. The immediate surroundings are characterised by predominately residential properties, with the Queens Head Public House sited opposite.

The building itself is a two-storey timber-framed building refaced with brick and stone, painted in white and is Grade II Listed, dating back to the 17th Century. The property is partially residential, comprising a single dwelling with a post office store at the East Street end. The store consists of a shop with a rear store and a small office providing Post Office services. The residential parts consist of a living room, dining room, kitchen, cloaks, four bedrooms and a bathroom. There is a private rear garden, a small workshop and driveway.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION

This application seeks full planning consent for the change of use of the Class E part of the building, to a Class C3 Use, allowing the extension of the existing dwelling. The retail unit will be replaced with an open plan Kitchen/dining and family area, bathroom and a further bedroom. No external alterations are proposed.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Horsham District Planning Framework (2015):

Policy 2 - Strategic Policy: Strategic Development

Policy 3 - Strategic Policy: Development Hierarchy

Policy 7 - Strategic Policy: Economic Growth

Policy 9 - Employment Development

Policy 10 - Rural Economic Development

Policy 12 - Strategic Policy: Vitality and Viability of Existing Retail Centres

Policy 14 - Shop Fronts and Advertisements

Policy 32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development
Policy 33 - Development Principles
Policy 34 - Cultural and Heritage Assets
Policy 43 - Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation

Neighbourhood Plan:

West Chiltington Parish Council has prepared West Chiltington Neighbourhood Development Plan (WCNDP). The independent examination of the West Chiltington Neighbourhood Plan has now concluded and the final Examiner's report was received on 11 February 2026. In accordance with the relevant legislation, Horsham District Council must now consider its response to the Examiner's recommendations with input from the Parish Council.

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 2: Development Hierarchy
Strategic Policy 3: Settlement Expansion
Strategic Policy 6: Climate Change
Strategic Policy 7: Appropriate Energy Use
Strategic Policy 9: Water Neutrality
Strategic Policy 17: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
Policy 18: Local Green Space
Strategic Policy 19: Development Quality
Strategic Policy 20: Development Principles
Policy 21: Heritage Assets and Managing Change within the Historic Environment
Policy 22: Shop Fronts and Advertisements
Policy 28: Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation
Strategic Policy 30: Enhancing Existing Employment

Supplementary Planning Guidance:

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

Planning Advice Notes:

Shaping Development in Horsham District
Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

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:

INTERNAL CONSULTATIONS

HDC Conservation Team: Objection

The commercial use of this property is important to retain the vibrancy and character of the conservation area. Conversion to residential use will have an immediately harmful impact to the character of the conservation area and harm to the special interest of the listed building in the longer term. This harm will be less than substantial and towards the higher end of that scale.

OUTSIDE AGENCIES

Southern Water: Comment

Insufficient information provided. Pre-Commencement Condition requested, seeking details of foul drainage disposal.

WSCC Highways: Advice

The LHA does not consider that this proposal would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety or result in 'severe' cumulative impacts on the operation of the highway network, therefore is not contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (para 116), and that there are no transport grounds to resist the proposal.

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS:

Representations:

3 letters of Objection have been received from 2 addresses, objecting to the application on the following grounds:

- Vital community facility, of which the loss will cause significant harm to accessibility, social inclusion, sustainability of the local area
- Post Office and Shop are relied upon by elderly relatives, people with disabilities and those without private transport, closure would disproportionately affect these groups
- Nearest alternative 30-minute walking distance away
- Contrary to national and local policy
- Loss of facilities will weaken the viability of the area and reduce informal social interaction
- Increase reliance on vehicles, in contrast to climate change objectives
- Proposal will diminish community benefit
- Closure will impact grassroots businesses
- Current business is not being run viably and needs to adapt to meet existing and future demand
- The revised Marketing Statement is misleading, assuming that whilst the current business model is not successful, all future enterprises will be

4 letters for Support have been received from 4 addresses, supporting the application on the following grounds:

- Proposal is a practical and reasonable solution to the difficulties
- Alternative avenues have been fully investigated
- Original character of the building preserved
- Commercial amenities, including shops and a post office located nearby
- Allow the applicants to retire
- Historic exterior retained
- Attempts to sell or pass on the facility have been unsuccessful over several years
- Current business is no longer viable, volume of trade not sufficient
- Prevents the building deteriorating over time

Parish Comments:

West Chiltington Parish Council: No Comments

Member Comments:

None received

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:

Policy 9 of the HDPF seeks to protect and support employment development within the district. It sets out that proposals involving the redevelopment of employment sites or premises located outside designated Key Employment Areas must demonstrate that the existing employment use is no longer needed or viable. This should be evidenced through clear justification, typically including marketing information and viability considerations, to show that the site cannot reasonably continue to operate for employment purposes.

Policy 12 of the HDPF identifies a hierarchy of centres within the district, comprising a Primary Centre, Secondary Centres, Tertiary Centres, and smaller local retail units. The policy aims to support and enhance these centres by encouraging development that sustains their roles in meeting local needs and acting as focal points for retail, leisure, recreation, and other activities appropriate to their scale and character. It emphasises maintaining a diverse mix of uses, including retail, commercial, and residential, alongside ensuring a well-designed and attractive public realm. Proposals are expected to respect historic character and apply good urban design principles to reinforce the vitality and resilience of town and village centres.

Policy 43 of the HDPF resists the loss of sites or premises currently or last used for community facilities, leisure, or cultural activities, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that their continued use is no longer feasible. This includes consideration of factors such as the quality and usability of the facility, evidence of appropriate marketing, the level of demand, and potential for future occupation. Where a facility is not proven to be surplus to requirements, loss may only be supported if an alternative facility of equivalent or better quality is provided in an equally accessible nearby location, or if redevelopment will deliver a significant enhancement to the nature and quality of an existing facility on an appropriate part of the site.

The application site sits within the Built-Up Area of West Chiltington, and the building is partially both residential and retail use, which comprises a shop and a small office providing Post Office services. This application seeks full planning consent for the change of use of the retail unit, to a residential C3 use.

The applicant details within their submitted documents that, since the COVID-19 pandemic, the viability of the store has significantly reduced. The submitted Viability Statement demonstrates a decline in turnover in recent years, now making a financial loss, concluding that despite no fundamental changes in the operation of the store, the overall viability of the business has weakened considerably over time.

The revised Marketing Statement details that the applicants wish to retire and have attempted to market the whole building, both the residential and retail combined, since December 2021, without success. During this time, the building was marketed by different estate agents and whilst there were a

number of viewings, none of these led to offers. In February 2025, the building was removed from the open market.

Within this revised statement, the applicants have stated that advice was sought around the possibility of severing the building and marketing the Post Office separately from the residential accommodation. However, this was not pursued due to the age and juxtaposition of the building, which would make any separation complex and impractical in terms of maintenance, liability and day-to-day operation. The applicants note that significant alterations would be required, including the creation of a flying freehold, separation of services, improvements to sound and fire separation, new access arrangements and welfare facilities, which may result in harm to the historic fabric of the Listed Building. The applicants also advise that the commercial premises would share a party wall with the residential property, giving potential rise to amenity impacts, such as noise and privacy issues. Following the unsuccessful marketing exercise, the applicant approached West Chiltington Parish Council to explore the potential for a community purchase; however, no firm interest or viable proposal emerged.

As such, the proposal is for a change of use to convert the store and Post Office into residential accommodation for the benefit of the current dwelling to make the building more marketable. There is evidence before the Council that the applicants have demonstrated the retail use of the premises is no longer viable and/or needed, in accordance with Policy 12 of the HDPF. Furthermore, a premises in Haglands Lane, West Chiltington, located approximately 1.2 miles from the application site, provides both a shop and a Post Office service.

The premises occupies a peripheral location approximately 1 mile north of the main settlement and lacks off-street parking. Whilst the premises benefits from flexibility within Class E, the limited floorspace, listed building status, absence of off-street parking and location significantly restrict the realistic prospect of alternative uses operating viably from the site. Whilst the premises does provide a small amount of local employment, this is confined to the owners, and the site is not located within a designated Key Employment Area and is regarded as a small-scale employment use.

In conclusion, the applicant has demonstrated through financial and marketing evidence, that the existing retail use is no longer viable, with no realistic prospect of being sold in the current capacity, having been marketed unsuccessfully for a period in excess of 4 years. Given the small scale of this commercial unit, the loss of the unit would not undermine the function or vitality of the wider settlement. The proposal therefore accords with Policies 9, 12 and 43 of the HDPF.

Heritage Impacts

Policy 14 of the HDPF states proposals within Conservation Areas or on Listed Buildings, proposals will be expected to retain the existing traditional shop front and/or features of architectural or historic interest, through retention or restoration.

Policy 34 of the HDPF sets out that the Council recognises heritage assets as an irreplaceable resource and therefore seeks to sustain and enhance the historic environment through the positive management of development affecting such assets. Proposals should acknowledge and respond to the significance of the asset and follow current best-practice guidance, reinforcing the district's special historic character through appropriate siting, scale, form and design. Development must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness, particularly within conservation areas, ensuring it remains consistent with their established special qualities. The policy also seeks to preserve locally distinctive vernacular building forms, their settings, features, fabric and materials, while supporting the viable and sustainable future of heritage assets through uses that remain compatible with their significance. In addition, proposals should retain and, where possible, enhance the setting of heritage assets, including important views, public rights of way, trees, landscape features and historic public realm elements.

The Council's Conservation Team has been consulted as part of this application process, with The Post Office Stores being a Grade II Listed Building. The team acknowledges the applicant's personal circumstances and the decline in the commercial viability of the business; however, it identifies that the permanent loss of the commercial unit would result in less than substantial harm, towards the higher

end of that scale. The Team considers that once converted to residential use, the commercial space would be unlikely to revert to business use, resulting in the irreversible loss of commercial activity within this part of the historic village. It is noted that the building was listed as a combined shop and residence, reflecting a historically flexible arrangement typical of such premises, and that this dual function forms a significant part of its special interest. The Team advises that retaining the physical shopfront alone would not mitigate the loss of activity and vibrancy associated with a village shop, particularly given that this is the only remaining shop within the historic core of West Chilington and occupies a prominent position at the junction of historic routeways. The Conservation Team further considers that the character of the conservation area is derived not only from its built form but also from the commercial activity taking place within it, and that the removal of the opportunity for such activity would erode both the appreciation of the building's historic use and the wider character of the area over time. Concern is also raised that residential conversion could, in the longer term, give rise to incremental alterations driven by privacy or security requirements, potentially weakening the principal elevation. The Team therefore advises that clear public benefits would need to be demonstrated to outweigh the identified harm arising from the loss of the commercial space.

Paragraph 208 of the NPPF states LPAs *should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a, taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.*

Paragraph 210 further states *'In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:*

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness'.*

Paragraph 212 of the NPPF states when *'considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance'.*

Paragraph 215 of the NPPF, states where *'a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use'.*

There are clear benefits in retaining the Class E use of the building, however, the viability of the building and its optimum viable use must also be considered as part of the planning balance. As discussed earlier within this report, the evidence supplied confirms the commercial element is no longer viable, the property has been marketed unsuccessfully despite a flexible Class E Use and a robust account provided as to why the building cannot be separated.

In these circumstances, securing a viable long-term use for the building represents a public benefit, as it will ensure its continued maintenance and conservation in accordance with paragraph 212 of the NPPF. A viable residential use, ensuring the building's conservation has been considered and whilst the continued retail use would be preferable in principle, the proposal would continue to secure the building's future. Furthermore, as no external alterations are proposed, the building will continue to be appreciated from the public realm and will continue to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. On balance, Officers consider these public benefits outweigh the identified less than substantial harm to this heritage asset that would result.

Residential Amenity:

Policy 33 of the HDPF states development shall be required to ensure that it is designed to avoid unacceptable harm to the amenity of occupiers/users of nearby property and land.

The proposal relates solely to a change of use of the existing retail unit to residential accommodation and does not involve any external alterations to the building. Given the nature of the proposed use, which is considered less intensive, the development would not give rise to additional overlooking, loss of privacy, noise or loss of light impacts. As such, the development is considered to accord with Policy 33 of the HDPF.

Water Neutrality:

The proposed development will not result in any increase in mains water demand and therefore will not lead to adverse effects on the integrity of the Arun Valley SAC, SPA or Ramsar sites, either alone or in combination. The proposal can therefore be screened out at the HRA Stage 1 Screening and does not require progression to Appropriate Assessment. On this basis, the development is considered acceptable in ecological terms and compliant with Policy 31 of the HDPF and paragraph 193 of the NPPF

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 Biodiversity Gain Plan must show how the development will achieve the required minimum 10% BNG using the statutory biodiversity metric tool and must demonstrate how the habitats will be managed and maintained for 30 years, starting from the date the development is completed. Off-site gains (on unregistered sites) and significant on-site enhancements will be secured over this period by way of a Legal Agreement.

The Applicant has demonstrated that the development is exempt from the requirement to achieve a minimum 10% BNG by reason of:

- The development qualifies as 'de minimis' under Regulation 4 of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024

Conclusions:

Whilst the proposal would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the Grade II Listed Building, it is considered that securing a viable long-term use will ensure the continued maintenance and conservation of the building. The existing retail use has been demonstrated to be no longer viable and its loss would not materially undermine the wider settlement. On balance, the proposal is considered acceptable and accords with the relevant policies of the HDPF and the NPPF.

Recommendation: Application Permitted

Conditions:

- 2 **Standard Time Condition:** The development hereby permitted shall begin before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

NOTE TO APPLICANT

Paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 states that planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to the "biodiversity gain condition" which means development granted by this notice must not begin unless:

- (a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and
- (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

Under Regulations 4, 5, 7 & 8 of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024 the statutory biodiversity gain condition required by Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) does not apply in relation to planning permission for development which:

1. does not impact an onsite priority habitat (a habitat specified in a list published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006); and impacts less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat that has biodiversity value greater than zero and less than 5 metres in length of onsite linear habitat (a hedgerow habitat or watercourse habitat identified for the purposes of the biodiversity metric);
2. is the subject of a householder application within the meaning of article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015;
3. is undertaken solely or mainly for the purpose of fulfilling, in whole or in part, the biodiversity gain planning condition which applies in relation to another development (In determining whether a development is undertaken solely or mainly for this purpose, no account is to be taken of any facility for the public to access or to use the site for educational or recreational purposes, if that access or use is permitted without the payment of a fee);
4. consists of no more than 9 dwellings, is carried out on a site which has an area no larger than 0.5 hectares, and consists exclusively of dwellings which are self-build or custom housebuilding ("Self-build or custom housebuilding" has the same meaning as in section 1(A1) of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended)).

In addition, the Biodiversity Gain Plan Condition {ul does not apply} to applications for major development made before 12 February 2024, or non-major development made before 2 April 2024.

Based on the information submitted in the planning application documents, the Planning Authority considers that this permission is exempt from biodiversity net gain, and as such does not require approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun.

Statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements

There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply. These can be found at Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 74-003-20240214 of the Planning Practice Guidance, which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain>

Irreplaceable habitat

If the onsite habitat includes irreplaceable habitat (within the meaning of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024) there are additional requirements for the content and approval of Biodiversity Gain Plans.

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/25/2017

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

Schedule of plans/documents **approved:**

Plan Type	Description	Drawing Number	Received Date
Supporting Statement	Design, Access and Heritage Statement	NONE	05.12.2025
Supporting Statement	Viability Statement	NONE	05.12.2025
Floor plan	Proposed Floor Plans	0457 / 101	05.12.2025
Floor plan	Existing Floor Plans	0457 / 100	05.12.2025
Location & Block plan	Location & Site Plan	0457 / 102	05.12.2025
Supporting Statement	Marketing Statement	Rev A.	17.04.2026

DELEGATED

Case Officer sign/initial Sam Nye Date: 26/05/2026

Authorising Officer sign/initial Tamara Dale Date: 14.05.2026