



Horsham District Council
Parkside
Horsham
West Sussex
RH12 1RL

Our ref: 18550
Date: 15 June 2026

For the attention of: Sophie Moore

Application ref: DC/26/0696
Location: Land North West of The Hermitage, Tower Hill, Horsham, West Sussex
Proposal/Description: Erection of 5no. glamping pods for holiday accommodation, associated decking, footpaths, permeable track, parking and turning area, secure bicycle storage and recycling/refuse storage. Minor landscaping of the site, planting of native species trees, hedgerows, shrubbery and meadow grass with wildflowers throughout the site.

Thank you for consulting with Place Services on the above Full planning 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, with a site visit in June 2026. Our Landscape comments are as follows:

1.0. Site Context

- 1.1. The site lies to the south of Horsham, outside the defined settlement boundary, between Horsham and Tower Hill. The railway line forms a clear physical separation between the two settlements.
- 1.2. Despite its proximity to the urban edge and some influence from road and rail noise, the site retains a rural character. It forms part of an important undeveloped gap between Horsham and Tower Hill. Public Rights of Way within the surrounding landscape provide



connectivity, including links to the Downs Link (Route 223) long distance path to the south-west.

1.3. The site occupies elevated ground above the surrounding valley landscape associated with the River Arun to the north. It features an undulating topography, generally falling towards the north, and forms part of a larger field parcel which is somewhat enclosed by established vegetation. A copse comprising trees and scrub lies to the south-west, although this area is excluded from the red line boundary. The application site itself consists of modified grassland.

1.4. The Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment places the site within Landscape Character Area P1: Upper Arun Valleys. The area is considered to be in good condition, although with some localised decline in unspoilt character near Horsham. The overall character of the area is described as follows:

“The Upper Arun Valleys include the upper reaches of the Arun from Pulborough northwards to Horsham, and its main tributaries of North River and Boldings Brook. Throughout they meander through relatively narrow valleys, with gently to strongly undulating valleysides. Occasional curving strips of woodland are a feature of the valleysides whilst seasonally flooded wet pastures occur on the valley floor. There is very little settlement apart from small scattered farmhouses, except in the north around Rookwood Park and Tower Hill. Few roads cross the rivers, although those that do are busy in nature. As a result, the area has a mostly unspoilt rural character with only limited visual and noise intrusion around Horsham.”

1.5. Key issues for this character area include a decline in traditional land management, with a high overall sensitivity to change, reflecting the area’s inherent landscape qualities and the visual prominence of some valley sides. Relevant sensitivities include:

- Any development that would damage the integrity of the valley floors.
- Any large scale development on valleysides.
- Change in agricultural practices – pasture improvement and land drainage.

1.6. Relevant planning and land management guidelines include:

- Ensure any small scale development on the valleysides respects historic settlement pattern, form and building materials and is integrated into the existing landscape pattern of small woodlands and hedgerows.
- Conserve and manage valleyside woodland and hedgerows.
- Create new small wetland areas such as reedbeds and marsh.

1.7. Given the site’s proximity to Horsham, Section 5 of the Horsham District Character Assessment is also relevant, particularly in relation to the Horsham and Broadbridge Heath Settlement Character Area. This identifies key characteristics including extensive areas of

inter-war suburbs and later 20th-century estates, which are mostly undistinguished in character, but are softened by frequent greenspaces, treebelts and woodland around the settlement edge. The assessment identifies a high sensitivity to urban extensions due to the many intrinsic landscape qualities, making a very important contribution to distinctive settlement setting and high visual prominence albeit with low intervisibility.

- 1.8. Other relevant guidelines are the Horsham Town Design Statement (2008) particularly page 7 (The character of Horsham) and pages 24 and 25 where the transition from countryside to town, and approach routes is discussed.

2.0. Policy Context

- 2.1. The proposals should consider the following policies from the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) (2015):

- Policy 25 – District Character and the Natural Environment
- Policy 26 – Countryside Protection
- Policy 27 - Strategic Policy: Settlement Coalescence
- Policy 33 - Development Principles

3.0. Review of the proposal/submitted information

- 3.1. The proposal comprises the installation of five glamping pods for holiday accommodation, together with associated decking, footpaths, permeable track, parking, secure bicycle storage, external lighting and recycling/refuse facilities. Landscape interventions proposed include native tree, shrub and scrub planting along with meadow grass and wildflower seeding across the site.
- 3.2. The Horsham District Landscape Capacity Assessment (Rev C May 2021) identifies the site within the Local Landscape Character Area 21(Land North and East of Denne Park). This area is assessed as having No/Low overall landscape capacity for medium-scale housing development due to a combined high landscape character sensitivity and moderate-high landscape value. The assessment also highlights the importance of the area in providing an attractive landscape setting to the town and notes its visual prominence.
- 3.3. The site is considered to contribute to an important gap between Horsham and Tower Hill. Due to its elevated position on the slope, the site has the potential to be visually prominent within the local landscape. Although the proposal is relatively small in scale, its siting on higher ground increases the likelihood of visibility from the settlement edge and from parts of Horsham.
- 3.4. The site is visible from public footpath SOW-1639-1 (east of the site). As verified during the site visit, intervisibility from surrounding receptor BRH-1634 (to the west of the site) is limited and influenced by intervening vegetation and seasonal variation.

- 3.5. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has not been submitted to assess the effects of the proposed development on both the rural landscape character and views experienced by surrounding receptors, including long distance views from elevated areas to the west.
- 3.6. The proposal involves the use of the existing field access, which will be upgraded to asphalt to meet highway requirements. This would result in loss of rural character along Parthings Lane. A new access track and parking area are also proposed along the southern boundary. It is unclear whether existing vegetation around the site entrance and access track would be affected. Careful consideration should be given to avoiding impacts on root protection areas of existing trees and vegetation. A Tree Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment, and Method Statement has not been submitted to demonstrate how retained vegetation will be protected during construction.
- 3.7. The Proposed Layout Plan (240610-01-02) includes broad landscape strategy such as enhancement to existing grassland areas, new scrub and shrub planting, and native tree planting. However, the proposed linear scrub along the western boundary and around the parking area appears fragmented and does not reflect the characteristic field boundary pattern. While the intention to provide screening is acknowledged, planting should better integrate with the existing landscape, for example through more naturalistic areas of mixed scrub.
- 3.8. The proposals include native tree planting to the east. It is unclear whether this is intended to form a more comprehensive woodland structure, including shrub layers, or whether it will comprise isolated specimens, as no specification is included. The surrounding landscape is characterised by woodland blocks, shaws and copses, rather than individual trees in groups. The current approach therefore risks appearing incongruous, failing to reflect the prevailing landscape character or to strengthen green infrastructure connections. In addition, there are concerns regarding the potential loss of existing views arising from the proposed mitigation planting, including views out from within the site and those experienced from the footpath to the east.
- 3.9. The Design and Access Statement refers to minor cut-and-fill operations, with no surplus soil to be removed from the site. However, further details are required to clarify how any excavated material will be managed and distributed on site.
- 3.10. Based on our professional judgement, while the potential for significant visual effects is limited and localised, the introduction of development in this elevated and currently undeveloped location raises notable concerns in relation to landscape character and the perceived separation between settlements.
- 3.11. Policy 25 of the HDPF seeks to protect the natural environment and landscape character from inappropriate development. In this case, the proposals are considered to have an adverse effect on the character of the area and the setting of the settlement. They would also encroach into the settlement gap, resulting in conflict with the aims of the policy.

- 3.12. Policy 26 of the HDPF protects the countryside from inappropriate development, unless it is of an appropriate scale, essential to its rural location, and meets specific criteria. The proposed development would erode the rural character of the site through the upgrading of the access and an increase in activity associated with the proposed use of the site. Furthermore, the proposed landscaping does not reflect the established pattern of woodlands, fields and hedgerows, reinforcing the conflict with this policy
- 3.13. Policy 27 of the HDPF seeks to prevent the coalescence of settlements. The proposal is considered to conflict with criterion (1), as it would materially reduce the openness and integrity of the gap between Horsham and Tower Hill, and with criterion (2), as it would introduce urbanising influences within the gap, including built form, artificial lighting, and increased traffic movements along key routes.
- 3.14. Policy 33 of the HDPF sets out key development principles to ensure the conservation and enhancement of the natural and built environment. For the reasons set out above, the proposals are considered to be in conflict with criteria 3 and 4 of this policy.

4.0. Summary

- 4.1. Overall, the site is considered to display an attractive landscape character reflected in the combination of its open undeveloped character, its distinctive topography, boundary vegetation, and the long distance views available. Despite its elevated position, there are limited views into the site from surrounding Public Rights of Way.
- 4.2. We consider that the site makes a valuable contribution to the settlement setting and local sense of place, owing to its elevated landform and its role within a wider prominent green backdrop to the town. Despite the proposed limited scale, the introduction of development in this location would erode the openness and function of the settlement 'break' between Horsham and Tower Hill, contributing to incremental urban encroachment along Worthing Road.
- 4.3. Mitigation measures have been proposed, including screening and the use of natural materials to help integrate the new structures within the landscape. However, these measures are not considered sufficient to mitigate the loss of openness or the impact on the separation between settlements. While the intention to enhance ecology and biodiversity is welcomed, the proposed landscape strategy does not adequately reflect or respond to the existing landscape character, and risks appearing incongruous. There is also the potential to adversely affect existing views towards the north-east from within the site, and towards the west from footpath SOW-1639-1.
- 4.4. There is a lack of information regarding the impact of the proposals onto the existing vegetation and how this will be protected during construction. In particular, no Tree Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment, or Method Statement has been submitted. In addition,

no Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment or appraisal has been provided to robustly assess the effects of the development on landscape character and visual receptors.

- 4.5. The Horsham Town Design Statement (2008) highlights the importance of the surrounding countryside in providing views both towards and from the town, contributing positively to the character of the urban area, including more built-up locations. Development to the south of Horsham would significantly alter this relationship and weaken the strong visual and functional connection between the town and its rural setting.
- 4.6. There is also a concern that small-scale development on this site could establish a precedent for further incremental expansion over time, resulting in the gradual erosion of openness and the integrity of the settlement gap between Horsham and Tower Hill.
- 4.7. Taking the above into account, the proposal is considered to give rise to adverse effects on landscape character, settlement setting, and the function of the settlement gap. It is therefore considered to conflict with Policies 25 (natural environment and landscape character), 26 (the countryside), 27 (settlement coalescence), and 33 (development principles) of the Horsham District Planning Framework, and is not supported on landscape grounds.

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

Place Services – Landscape Team

Email: landscape@essex.gov.uk



Place Services provide landscape advice 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.