



Horsham District Council
Parkside
Horsham
West Sussex
RH12 1RL

Our ref: 21754
Date: 3 September 2026

For the attention of: Tamara Dale

Application ref: DC/26/0934
Location: Watermead Henfield Road Cowfold Horsham
Proposal/Description: Demolition of existing vacant storage buildings and erection of 9no. residential units, provision of open space and retention of pond.

Thank you for consulting with Place Services on the above Full planning application. This letter sets out our landscape comments and observations based on the submitted documents and plans, whilst also looking to provide recommendations for how to proceed.

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	☐

Our Landscape comments are as follows:

1.0. Site Context

- 1.1. The site is located in the south-westerly edge of the built-up area boundary of Cowfold village, and outside the Conservation Area. Currently the site contains some development including disused commercial buildings and hardstanding, and an access road coming off the A281, which also serves nearby residential properties.
- 1.2. The boundaries to the north, east and south of the site where the development is proposed are formed of existing close board fencing from adjacent private gardens, and some existing vegetation within the site. To the west where the site abuts the open countryside, the boundary is formed by some existing mature vegetation, but also the large existing commercial building. Beyond the site's boundaries to the north, east and south are residential properties and private gardens. To the south of the access road is a car-dealership. To the west is an open agricultural field.



- 1.3. Landscape features on-site include a pond and vegetation formed of trees, scrub, areas of grassland, and some non-native hedging.

There are no designations associated with the site.

2.0. Planning Policy Context

Horsham District Planning Framework (2015)

- 2.1. Within the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) (2015) the following policies are considered relevant to landscape:

- Policy 24 – Environmental Protection
- Policy 25 – District Character and the Natural Environment
- Policy 31 – Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
- Policy 35 – Climate Change

Cowfold Neighbourhood Plan 2019 – 2031

- 2.2. Within the Cowfold Neighbourhood Plan 2019 – 2031 (CNP) (Referendum version, September 2025), the following policies are considered relevant:

- Policy 2 – Green Infrastructure
- Policy 9 – Residential Development Principles

3.0. Review of the proposal/submitted information

Landscape character

- 3.1. The site already contains development and sits within, but on the edge of, the built-up area of Cowfold as identified in the CNP, therefore landscape impacts are mostly limited to visual amenity and keeping in context with the local built character. However, the site is also adjacent to the countryside, and the Horsham Landscape Character Assessment (2003) is considered relevant. The site is located within Landscape Character Area (LCA) J3 – Cowfold and Shermanbury Farmlands.

- 3.2. Key characteristics of this LCA include:

- Scattered small woodlands.
- Small and medium size pasture fields and some larger arable fields.
- Mostly small scale intricate landscape. Localised areas with more open character.
- Field ponds.
- Local building materials of half timber, brick, tile, Horsham stone and weatherboarding.

Guidelines for LCA J3 include:

‘Conserve and enhance existing network of hedgerows and shaws’ and to ‘Encourage the natural regeneration of hedgerow oaks and or plant new ones.

Layout

- 3.3. We note the application has benefited from a pre-application process with layout improvements made in response to planning officer's comments. Overall, the proposals are unlikely to impact the wider landscape surrounding Cowfold. We welcome the existing pond is to be retained and used as a feature within the proposed Public Open Space (POS).

Boundary Treatment

- 3.4. The proposed area of POS containing the pond shows fencing around most of the area, with access only to the front of Plots 7 and 9. The design principles in the DAS note knee-high post and rail fencing defining private/public spaces, but the Proposed Landscaping Scheme shows a 1.2m high metal estate fencing, which cannot be considered 'knee-high'. Additionally, placing estate fencing around the POS does not align with the design principles set out in the DAS as there is no change from private to public space, in public realm terms.
- 3.5. We recommend that no fencing is used around the POS, with the use of knee-high post and rail fence if fencing is strictly necessary. Additionally, we would not be supportive of any fencing around the existing pond as it reduces the amenity benefits and provides a barrier to easy maintenance.
- 3.6. We would recommend for all boundary treatment facing into the public realm to be specified as brick walls instead of close board fencing, to ensure the privacy and security of private residences. This is particularly relevant for the southern and eastern boundaries of the private gardens for Plots 5 and 6, and the small section south of Plot 1.
- 3.7. The boundary of the private gardens to the wider countryside to the west of the site is proposed as *Ligustrum ovalifolium* (privet) hedging backed by 1.8m high close board fencing. This does not represent a sensitive transition from built-up area into the countryside, and we recommend this is reviewed, with consideration given to a softer boundary treatment. Ideally, the hedge should be located facing the open field and a less intrusive type of fencing. Additionally, the single species hedge would appear out of character in the local landscape, and a native hedge-mix could instead be proposed, which would better reflect the guidelines set out in the Cowfold and Shermanbury Farmlands LCA guidelines, thereby softening the transition to the wider countryside.
- 3.8. Design Principle 10 in the DAS states that a green buffer is proposed along the northern and eastern boundaries. This is not reflected in the planting proposals. The boundary to the south-east to existing private properties and opposite Plots 2–5 is mostly proposed as close board fencing. A native hedge is proposed to the south-east, opposite Plot 1 and south of the lightly marked attenuation tank. We recommend for this native hedge to continue along the entire south-eastern boundary up to Plot 8, for visual amenity and to adhere to the Design Principles. The location/extent of the proposed underground attenuation tank should be reviewed to accommodate additional planting along this

boundary. If this is still not viable, alternative planting solutions should be explored, such as climbing plants.

- 3.9. Whilst we welcome the proposals include the planting of native hedges, we query the location of the native hedging around the POS adjacent to the roads. The documents, including the Draft Habitat Management Plan, do not state the height these hedges are proposed to be maintained to. If these hedges are too high, they would significantly reduce the opportunities for natural surveillance of the POS and pond, leaving only Plots 5 and 6 with a clear view over the POS. We recommend this is reviewed.

Planting

- 3.10. Overall, we welcome the planting proposals, however, we have the below comments:
- 3.11. We welcome the submitted Tree Planning Report & Arboricultural Method Statement (May 2026) prepared by David Archer Associates. To accommodate the proposals, 12 Category C trees proposed for removal, as well as three cypress hedges plus a section of a native group/thicket. The Appendix contains a tree protection plan showing the location of the proposed trees/planting for removal and shows the Root Protection Areas (RPAs) of the existing trees and the proposed protective fencing, which should assure the protection of the existing vegetation.
- 3.12. We would have expected to see the proposals to include more new trees, specifically along the proposed road. Most new trees are currently proposed within the private curtilage of residential front and back gardens where their retention, replacement and maintenance cannot be secured. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (August 2026) states under Policy N3 (Trees in new development) that trees can provide for biodiversity, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and the character and quality of the built environment, and that new streets should be tree lined.
- 3.13. The bioretention area along the road could benefit from tree planting, as could the green areas along the road to the front of the proposed dwellings. Additionally, the private gardens of Plots 5 and 6 feature no new trees, though the sites green infrastructure would benefit from trees in these gardens too.
- 3.14. It is unclear what is proposed in the southernmost section of the site along, and south of, the access road. The Proposed Landscaping Arrangements and Habitat Creation Map show this area proposed as grass, but currently there appears to be existing vegetation. This vegetation is not shown on the Tree Planning Report & Arboricultural Method Statement. If this existing vegetation is indeed proposed to be removed, this should be shown and the drawing should be updated to reflect this and the opportunity for further tree planting should be explored in this area.
- 3.15. The Native Hedge planting schedule includes *Sambucus nigra* (Common elder), and we advise that this species should not be specified as part of the hedge mix. The shrub is very

vigorous and will suppress the growth of the other species specified. It is also recommended that the hedge is planted as double staggered rows, preferably 5 plants per linear metre.

We generally recommend that *Viburnum tinus* 'Eve Price' is removed from the planting palette. The species *Viburnum tinus* spp. can be severely damaged by Viburnum beetle and often produces an unpleasant smell particularly when the foliage is wet, making it less suitable for use within residential areas.

4.0. Summary

Overall, we consider that the site can accommodate the proposed development and the proposals are unlikely to impact the wider landscape surrounding Cowfold. However, updates to the boundary treatments, planting proposals and landscape design details are recommended to improve the integration of the scheme within its setting and optimise landscape and visual benefits.

5.0. Recommended Conditions

- 5.1. If minded for approval, we would recommend the following conditions for your consideration:

ACTION REQUIRED PRIOR TO COMMENCEMENT OF DEVELOPMENT: HARD AND SOFT LANDSCAPING SCHEME.

No development shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved, in writing, by the Local Planning Authority a scheme of hard and soft landscaping and boundary treatment for the site, which shall include any proposed changes in ground levels and also accurately identify spread, girth and species of all existing trees, shrubs and hedgerows on the site and indicate any to be retained, together with measures for their protection which shall comply with the recommendations set out in the British Standards Institute publication BS 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction.

The soft landscaping plan should include plant species, number, density, location and sizes of the proposed planting. The planting specification should provide details of tree planting pits, green roofs, planting preparation and establishment operations. We would recommend an alternative to plastic guards, such as the use of perimeter protective fencing where appropriate, or guards manufactured from 100% biodegradable materials.

The hard landscaping plan should include details of specific materials, colours and finishes of paved or otherwise hard surfaces, built features and street furniture. The plans should clearly show the position of any new fencing and hard surfaces in relation to existing and proposed planting.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and the character and appearance of the area. This condition is required to be agreed prior to the commencement of any development to ensure matters of tree and hedgerow protection are secured early to ensure avoidance of

damage or lost due to the development and/or its construction. If agreement was sought at any later stage, there is an unacceptable risk of lost and damage to important trees and hedgerow that would result in harm to amenity.

ACTION REQUIRED PRIOR TO COMMENCEMENT OF DEVELOPMENT: LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN (LMP)

No development shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved, in writing, by the Local Planning Authority a landscape management plan for a minimum of 5 years. This should include:

- a) Drawing/s showing the extent of the LMP i.e. only showing the areas to which the LMP applies, areas of private ownership should be excluded.
- b) Written Specification detailing:
 - All operation and procedures for soft landscape areas; inspection, watering, pruning, cutting, mowing, clearance and removal of arisings and litter, removal of temporary items (fencing, guards and stakes) and replacement of failed planting.
 - All operations and procedures for hard landscape areas; inspection, sweeping, clearing of accumulated vegetative material and litter, maintaining edges, and painted or finished surfaces.
 - Furniture (Bins, Benches and Signage) and Play Equipment.
 - All operations and procedures for soft landscaping to SuDS features; inspection of linear drains, basins and swales, removal of unwanted vegetative material and litter, including inlets and outlets.
- c) Maintenance task table which explains the maintenance duties across the site in both chronological and systematic order.
- d) Mechanism for monitoring and review of the management plan and operations.

Reason - To support plant establishment and ensure appropriate management is carried out and to maintain functionality and visual aesthetic.

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.

AI may have been used in the preparation of this response, but its use will be limited to basic proof-reading, grammar, and spelling correction. This response has been reviewed by the author(s). If you have any queries, please contact us for information about our AI guidance.

