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16th April 2026

**RE: Permission in Principle Planning Application
Highdown Nursery, New Hall Lane, Small Dole, West Sussex, BN5 9YH**

I am pleased to enclose, for your consideration, a Permission in Principle (PIP) planning application for the demolition of the existing polytunnel, and the removal of hardstanding, to enable the erection of up to nine dwellings. Access to the development would be taken from The Beeches, which serves the Heatherdene development off Shoreham Road.

The PIP application includes the following drawings and documents:

- Architectural plans prepared by PAC Design:
 - Location Plan
 - Existing Site Layout Plan
 - Proposed Site Layout Plan
- This covering letter;
- The pre-application fee (to be paid separately by the applicant); and
- The completed Permission in Principle application form.

Site and Surroundings

The site is located to the west of Shoreham Road, Small Dole. It is roughly L-shaped and extends to approximately 0.48 hectares. The site was previously occupied by Highdown Nursery and is now known as New Orchard but has been vacant for circa 8 years. Existing development on the site includes a polytunnel with associated areas of hardstanding. Approximately 40% of the site was formerly growing areas, along with an informal car park and loading area.

The site lies on the north-eastern edge of the Small Dole settlement, abutting the settlement boundary along its eastern and southern sides. Permission has also recently been granted for residential development on the land to the north of the site. The site would therefore be surrounded on three sides by development.

To the east are “The Wickets,” “Little Ponderosa,” “Flints,” and “The Plyms,” which are chalet bungalows fronting Shoreham Road. To the south are residential properties, including “Downley,” “Highdown,” and the Heatherdene development, which provides five bungalows. To the north are the rear gardens of properties fronting Shoreham Road. Beyond this lies the Delta site, which recently received planning committee approval for a Permission in Principle application for up to nine single-storey dwellings. To the west is open greenfield land.

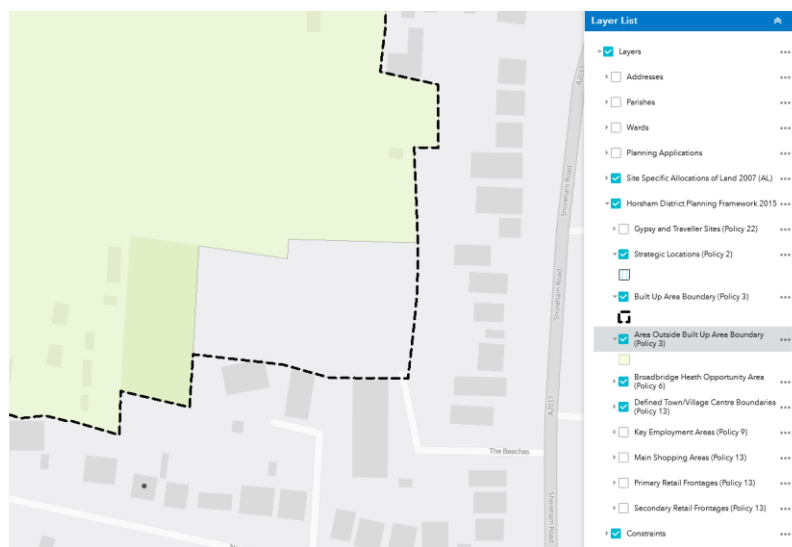
The existing access to the site is via a narrow single-track road from New Hall Lane.

The site is located approximately 350 metres from the village centre, which includes a post office, convenience store, public house, and small-scale offices. This enables future residents to access local services on foot.

Local Plan Designations and Policy

The site lies outside the Small Dole Built-Up Area Boundary (as defined by the dashed line) but adjoins the boundary to the east and south.

The site is unallocated and does not fall within the wider area designated as “Area Outside the Built-Up Boundary.”



Extract of Horsham Policy Area Map

Relevant Planning Policies

In accordance with Scion 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004, planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless other material considerations indicated otherwise.

The statutory development plan for Horsham comprises:

- The NPPF (December 2024)
- Horsham District Planning Framework (2015)
- Henfield Neighbourhood Plan (2021)

The Planning Advice Notes: Shaping Development in Horsham District is material consideration in determining planning applications.

The relevant policies are listed in Appendix 1 of this letter and discussed with the “Planning Assessment” section.

Relevant Planning History

Highdown Nursery

DC/06/2494 - In December 2006, planning application was granted for the replacement of glasshouse with polytunnel.

HF/105/02 - In November 2002, planning application was granted for the erection of polyethylene converted tunnel.

Delta (To the north of the site)

DC/22/2293 - In January 2023, Prior Approval was granted for the change of use of an agricultural building to residential (Class C3) to form 1 dwellinghouse.

DC/24/1912 – In March 2025, outline application was refused for the demolition of existing dwelling and erection of 4 x self-build dwellings with all matters reserved.

DC/24/1913 – In March 2025, outline application was refused for the demolition of existing buildings and erection of 2 x self-build dwellings with all matters reserved.

DC/25/0849 – In November 2025, an Permission in Principle application was submitted for the demolition of existing buildings and erection of up to 9 x single storey dwellings, and was considered at Planning Committee. The Committee resolved to grant planning permission subject to any comments from Natural England in response to the Appropriate Assessment. The application is pending for a decision.

In determining the PIP application, the Council provided the following comments:

The scope of Permission in Principle is limited to location, land use, and amount of development.

Location

- Plots 1–3 are wholly located within the Small Dole Built-Up Area Boundary, and the principle of development for these three dwellings is considered acceptable.
- Plots 4–9 are located on an unallocated site outside the Built-Up Area Boundary. Residential development in this location is therefore not considered acceptable in principle. However, the Council acknowledged that the Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, and that the development would make a meaningful contribution towards meeting local housing need. The site is unallocated, meaning it would not undermine or prejudice long-term strategic development.
- Plots 6–9 also benefit from physical containment, as they would be enclosed within existing field boundaries. Taken together, these factors led the Council to consider the site to be both sustainable and appropriate in principle.

Land Use

- Plots 1–3 are within the Built-Up Area Boundary, where residential use is considered acceptable.
- Plots 4–9 are located on former agricultural land, which is considered a partially acceptable location for residential development. Although the proposal would intensify residential use within a semi-rural setting, it would remain contained within a defensible boundary. The need for housing is also a material consideration weighing in favour of the proposal.

Amount of Development

- The application proposed a minimum of 5 dwellings and a maximum of 9 dwellings. The officer was

satisfied that the site can accommodate a minimum of 5 single-storey dwellings. However, development of up to 9 dwellings was considered unacceptable due to its suburbanising impact and encroachment into the countryside. Accordingly, Plots 6–9 were not supported under current planning policy. Final approval will depend on the details submitted at the Technical Details Consent stage.

Heatherdene Development Site

DC/15/2002 – In January 2016, planning application was granted for the retention of 5 dwellings (3 x 2 bedroom chalet bungalow and 2 x 3 bed bungalows).

HF/71/03 – In January 2005, outline planning application was granted for the demolition of 1 residential unit and erection of 4 residential units and access.

DC/06/0633 – In June 2007, planning application was granted for the demolition of existing dwelling; and erection of 3 x 2 bed chalet bungalows and 2 x 3 bed bungalows, garages and access land rear of Rose Cottage, Springfield and Windrush.

Description of Proposed Development

The proposal seeks to erect up to nine single-storey dwellings. All properties would be provided with on-site parking spaces.

The Beeches, which is an existing access serving Nos. 1–5 The Beeches, will be utilised to provide vehicular access to the site.

As illustrated on the Proposed Site Layout Plan, the site provides adequate space for refuse and service vehicles to enter and exit in forward gear.

Planning Assessment

The Permission in Principle (PiP) consent route is a two-stage planning process in England designed for small-scale, housing-led development of nine or fewer dwellings.

It separates the “principle” of development from the “technical details” of the proposal. As such, the PiP route comprises two stages: the first being the Permission in Principle stage (the subject of this application), which establishes whether the site is acceptable in principle; and the second being the Technical Details Consent stage, at which the detailed development proposals are assessed.

As set out in Paragraph 012 of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on Permission in Principle, the scope of a PiP application is limited to location, land use, and the amount of development.

Paragraph 020 further confirms that any conditions imposed on a PiP decision must relate only to the site location, the type of development, and the amount of development. However, local planning authorities may provide guidance on what they would expect to see at the Technical Details Consent stage.

Location

Small Dole is identified as a Small Village within the Development Hierarchy under Policy 3 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF). These are settlements with limited services, facilities, social networks but with good accessibility to larger settlements or settlements with some employment but limited services facilities or accessibility. Residents are reliant on larger settlements to access most of their requirements.

The site was formerly occupied by a nursery, which became vacant circa 8 years ago. The site lies immediately adjacent to the Built-Up Area Boundary (BUAB) of Small Dole on its eastern and southern sides. The northern boundary adjoins the rear gardens of properties fronting Shoreham Road. Immediately beyond this lies the Delta site, for which a Permission in Principle application has been approved for nine dwellings. The site is therefore enclosed by residential development on three sides.

In determining the Delta scheme, the Local Planning Authority acknowledged that proposed Plots 4–9 are located on an unallocated site outside the BUAB and are not considered essential to the countryside location. The scheme was therefore considered contrary to the principle of Policy 2 of the HDPF, which seeks to manage development at the edges of settlements to prevent coalescence and protect the rural character and landscape.

The Shaping Development in Horsham (SD) document, endorsed at Full Council on 17 September 2025, is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications in Horsham District. Paragraph 2.4 states that, in the absence of a five-year housing land supply and/or where Housing Delivery Test performance is below 75%, relevant housing policies in the HDPF are considered out of date. This reduces the weight that may be afforded to such policies and engages the “tilted balance,” whereby there is a presumption in favour of granting planning permission for housing development.

Paragraph 5.12 of the SD document states that the Council recognises it is likely to receive applications outside defined BUABs and on unallocated sites due to the lack of a five-year housing land supply. In this context, and having regard to HDPF Policy 4, the Council will consider positively applications that meet all the following criteria:

1. The site adjoins the existing settlement edge as defined by the BUAB;
 2. The level of expansion is appropriate to the scale and function of the settlement;
 3. The proposal demonstrates that it meets local housing needs or supports the retention and enhancement of community facilities and services;
 4. The impact of the development, individually or cumulatively, does not prejudice comprehensive long-term development; and
 5. The development is contained within a defensible boundary and maintains or enhances landscape character features.
1. The site lies outside the BUAB but adjoins it on two sides and therefore meets the first criterion.
 2. The proposed small-scale housing scheme is considered appropriate to the scale and function of Small Dole. The site is located approximately 350 metres from the village centre, placing future residents within reasonable walking distance of local services and facilities. The nearest bus stop is located at the junction of The Beeches and Shoreham Road, providing connections to larger settlements. The proposal therefore satisfies the second criterion.
 3. The scheme would provide up to nine dwellings, making a meaningful contribution towards local housing need. In addition, future residents would support local services and businesses within Small Dole. The proposal therefore meets the third criterion.
 4. The site is not allocated within the adopted Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plan, or any emerging development plan. As such, its release would not undermine or prejudice long-term strategic planning objectives. The proposal therefore meets the fourth criterion.
 5. The site is enclosed by existing residential development to the east, south, and north, with a retained field to the west. This provides a degree of physical containment and establishes a defensible settlement edge. The proposal therefore meets the fifth criterion.

Overall, the proposal represents a positive form of development that meets all criteria set out under Policy 4 of the HDPF and is therefore considered to be a sustainable and appropriate location for small-scale residential development.

Land Use

The proposal would involve the demolition of the existing polytunnel associated with the former nursery use, to enable the erection of up to nine dwellings with associated access, parking and private amenity space.

The proposed change of use represents a partial conflict with Policy 2. However, given that the Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, and that the proposal is considered to meet all criteria under Policy 4, the location of the site is, on balance, considered acceptable.

In considering the Delta scheme, the Council acknowledged that the six dwellings on former agricultural land would intensify residential presence within a semi-rural location; however, this would be contained within a defensible boundary. Furthermore, the need for housing was considered to weigh in favour of the proposal, resulting in an acceptable balance in land use terms.

The proposal has similar characteristics to the Delta scheme as the scheme of up to nine dwellings would intensify residential use within a semi-rural location but would remain contained within a defensible boundary. The scheme would make a significant contribution to the local housing need. These factors are considered to weigh in favour of the proposal.

The site currently comprises polytunnel with associated areas of hardstanding. These would be replaced by modest single-storey dwellings, together with appropriate landscaping within and along the site boundaries. The proposed residential use is compatible with the existing residential development on three sides. It is therefore considered that the proposed land use is acceptable.

Amount of Development

HDPF Policies 25, 32, and 33 promote development that protects, conserves, and enhances landscape character and resists inappropriate development. Proposals should take account of local landscape characteristics and seek to provide an attractive, functional, and accessible environment that complements the locally distinctive character of the District. Buildings should contribute to a strong sense of place and be of a scale, massing, and appearance that achieves a high standard of design, with layouts that relate sympathetically to both the landscape and surrounding built form.

The proposal would provide up to nine dwellings. The 0.48ha site is considered sufficient to accommodate single-storey dwellings with usable private gardens and associated landscaping at each plot. The proposed plot sizes would be larger than the houses within the Heatherdene development to the south, allowing additional space for landscaping and biodiversity enhancement.

The proposed access road and site layout ensure that adequate provision is made for refuse and emergency service vehicles to enter, turn, and exit the site in forward gear, as demonstrated by the vehicle tracking shown on the Proposed Site Layout Plan.

It is noted that this application is submitted at the Permission in Principle (PiP) stage only. Further details relating to detailed design, parking, cycle provision, servicing, waste storage, drainage, landscaping, biodiversity, and residential amenity will be addressed in full at the subsequent Technical Details Consent stage.

Conclusion

The proposal seeks Permission in Principle for the demolition of existing polytunnel and associated areas of hardstanding, and the erection of up to nine dwellings.

The site is located adjacent to the Built-Up Area Boundary and would make a positive contribution to housing land supply, particularly in addressing identified local housing needs. The site is also considered to be contained within a defensible boundary. It can accommodate up to nine plots, which would provide opportunities for meaningful landscaping and enhancements to the character of the site.

Further details will be provided at the Technical Details Consent stage to demonstrate how the site can appropriately accommodate up to nine dwellings in terms of design, layout, and associated infrastructure.

As such, it is respectfully requested that the Permission in Principle application be considered favourably.

Yours Sincerely,

Beverley Tourle BSC (Hons), MA, MRTPI
MAVEN PLAN LTD

Appendix 1

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

National Planning Policy Framework

Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF 2015):

Policy 1 - Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development
Policy 2 - Strategic Policy: Strategic Development
Policy 3 - Strategic Policy: Development Hierarchy
Policy 4 - Strategic Policy: Settlement Expansion
Policy 15 - Strategic Policy: Housing Provision
Policy 16 - Strategic Policy: Meeting Local Housing Needs
Policy 24 - Strategic Policy: Environmental Protection
Policy 25 - Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
Policy 26 - Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection
Policy 28 - Replacement Dwellings and House Extensions in the Countryside
Policy 30 - Protected Landscapes
Policy 31 - Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
Policy 32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development
Policy 33 - Development Principles

Henfield Neighbourhood Plan (2021):

Policy 1 - A Spatial Plan for the Parish
Policy 2 - Housing Site Allocations
Policy 12 - Design Standards for New Development

Planning Advice Notes:

Shaping Development in Horsham 2025