

PLANNING STATEMENT

Erection of a new milking parlour and
feed silo (part retrospective)

at

Merrion Farm
Bines Green
Horsham
RH13 8EH

On behalf of

Mr A Griffiths

Prepared by

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** This Planning Statement is prepared on behalf of Mr A Griffiths in support of a full planning application for the erection of a new milking parlour and feed silo (part retrospective) at Merrion Farm, Bines Green, Horsham, RH13 8EH.
- 1.2** This Planning Statement sets out the relevant background to assist Horsham District Council in its determination of the planning application. The statement includes a description of the site and its surroundings, relevant planning history, details of the proposed development, a summary of the planning policy context, and an appraisal of the scheme against all relevant planning considerations.
- 1.3** The application is supported by the following documents and plans:
- Application form
 - CIL form
 - Site Location Plan
 - Site Block Plan
 - Proposed Floor Plans
 - Proposed Elevation Plans
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
 - Biodiversity Net Gain Report

2 SITE AND CONTEXT

2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 The application site forms part of Merrion Farm which is a family dairy farm located within the parish of Ashurst. The Griffiths family have farmed the land for over 100 years with the applicant's son becoming the fourth generation to the farm.
- 2.1.2 Merrion Farm currently milk 150 cows and rear their own replacements. Most of the surrounding 63 hectares of farmland is grazed by the herd.
- 2.1.3 Within the farmyard is a number of buildings used in association with the dairy business, including the existing milking parlour that is used today dating back to 1965 and is therefore no longer fit for up to date farming practices and is in need of replacement.

Figure 2.1 – Site Plan



- 2.1.4 A large area of hardstanding surrounds the existing farm buildings to the south and east, with the farm access being located to the north.
- 2.1.5 The site is not readily visible from long distance views and is only apparent once within the farm boundary. The application site is part of an existing farmyard that has a number of buildings all of which are in use. The application site sits on an area of hardstanding.
- 2.1.6 A public right of way number WS|AST|2519/1 goes through the farm access and to the north and east of the application site.
- 2.1.7 A location plan is shown in figure 2.2, showing the farm and application site boundaries.
- 2.1.8 Two aerial photographs of the site are shown in figure 2.3, showing the wider farmland owned by the applicant and the farmstead. The farmstead is clearly identifiable with the fields used for cattle grazing surrounding the wider land.

Figure 2.2 – Location Plan

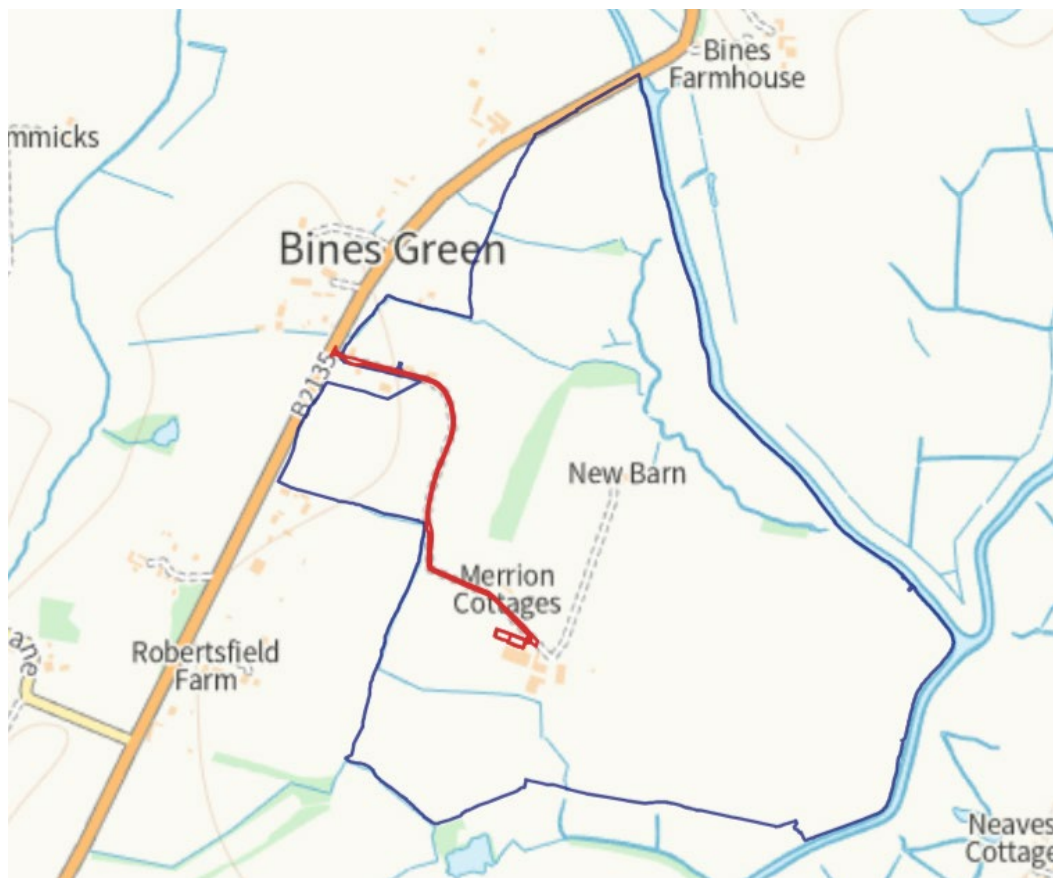


Figure 2.3 – Aerial Photographs of the Site



- 2.2 Figure 2.2 illustrates the existing cattle buildings associated with the dairy operation situated immediately south of the application site. This proximity makes the proposed location the most practical and efficient for the dairy's ongoing operations. Approximately 60 metres north of the proposed milking parlour and silo are two dwellings linked to Merrion Farm, both occupied by farm workers associate with the farm.

3.1 Access

- 3.1.1 The site is accessed directly from the B2135 via an existing entrance serving Merrion Farm. The village of Partridge Green is located approximately 1.5 miles to the north, while the town of Steyning lies about 3 miles to the south.

Figure 3.1 – Existing Access



4.1 Environmental and Heritage Designation

- 4.1.1 The entirety of the application site lies within Flood Zone 1. There are no heritage assets in or adjacent to the site there is however a listed building located over 370 meters to the west of the application site.

5.1 Planning History

5.1.1 A review of Horsham District Councils website notes the following planning applications of relevance to the wider site:

Planning Reference	Proposal	Decision Date
DC/21/2591	Non-Material Amendment to previously approved application DC/20/1769 (Installation of a 36m x 50m clay-lined earth walled slurry lagoon with associated surrounding engineering works) to allow for an amendment to the wording of Condition 3.	Permitted December 2021
DC/21/0264	Non-Material Amendment to previously approved application DC/20/1769 (Installation of a 36m x 50m clay-lined earth walled slurry lagoon with associated surrounding engineering works) to allow for amendments to the site area to be relocated 15 metres westwards.	Permitted March 2021
DC/20/1769	Installation of a 36m x 50m clay-lined earth walled slurry lagoon with associated surrounding engineering works.	Permitted December 2020
AH/6/01	Replacement cow cubicle building. Site: Merrion Farm Bines Green Partridge Green	Permitted July 2001
AH/10/99	Erection of cow cubicles & Dutch barn.	Permitted September 1999

6 PROPOSAL

- 6.1 Merrion Farm is a well-established dairy farm located within Bines Green, West Sussex. The Griffiths family have farmed the land for over 100 years with the applicant's son becoming the fourth generation to the farm.
- 6.2 Merrion Farm currently milk 150 cows and rear their own replacements. Most of the surrounding 63 hectares of farmland is grazed by the herd.
- 6.3 The existing milking parlour was erected in the 1960's and is no longer fit for purpose and in need of extensive modifications to bring it up to the latest standards which is not viable in the existing building. With part replacements no longer being able to be sourced, a new building therefore is proposed to the north of the existing farm buildings.
- 6.4 None of the existing buildings are suitable for repurposing or available for the use as a milking parlour hence the requirement for a purpose-built new farm building.
- 6.5 With regards to the silo, this is already in situ and is required for modern working standards, and the historic arrangement of a feed loft over the parlour is no longer acceptable or practical.
- 6.6 The proposed building will be of a typical agricultural design featuring a grey fibre cement roof, concrete panel sides and slate-coloured steel sheeting infilling up to the eaves. These materials will ensure the structure integrates visually with the existing farmstead.
- 6.7 The proposed building will have dimensions of 24 metres by 12 metres, with an eaves height of 3 metres and a ridge height of 4.6 metres.
- 6.8 The parlour will be of a herringbone design with an example of the layout shown in figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1 – Herringbone Layout Design Example



Figure 6.2 – Image of Proposed Milking Parlour



7 PLANNING POLICY

7.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the provisions of the statutory Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

7.2 Currently the Development Plan for the site comprises the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF), there is no neighbourhood plan for the area. Material considerations include the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

7.3 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the provisions of the statutory Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

7.4 The relevant planning policy for this development is contained in Local and National policy guidance, specifically:

- National Planning Policy Framework
- Horsham District Planning Framework

7.5 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2025)

7.5.1 The NPPF places a presumption in favour of sustainable development at the heart of the planning system. Paragraph 8 clarifies that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. Paragraph 8 also states that the planning system should contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.

7.5.2 It is submitted that this application conforms to Section 2, paragraph 8, of the NPPF, and constitutes 'sustainable development', fulfilling the three overarching objectives, as follows:

- i. An economic objective - The application is economically viable and sustainable and will ensure the continued longevity of the family business, generating and securing jobs for future generations of the Griffiths family. The proposal will assist in supporting economic activity in the local area.

- ii. A social objective - The business will contribute to the local rural economy which in turn provides social benefits improving social sustainability. The proposal will indeed assist in the provision of a service that will then be able to continue and be passed onto the next generation.
- iii. An environmental objective – the proposal will utilise an area of existing hardstanding within the farmstead and has been assessed from an ecological perspective as evidenced in the attached preliminary ecological appraisal.

7.5.3 Of particular relevance to this submission, is paragraph 88, 'Supporting a prosperous rural economy', which considers that that '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, beautiful new buildings;
- b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses...'

7.6 Horsham District Planning Framework (2015)

7.6.1 HDPF is in the process of being reviewed and a new Horsham District Local Plan 2023 - 2040 is currently at Regulation 19 stage. It is not sufficiently advanced to be a material consideration.

7.6.2 The policies of the HDPF (2015) of relevance to this application are as follows:

- Policy 1: Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development
- Policy 10: Rural Economic Development
- Policy 26: Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection
- Policy 33: Development Principles

8 APPRAISAL

5.1 The issues of relevance in the determination of the application are as follows:

- Agricultural justification
- Landscape and visual impact
- Impact on residential amenity
- Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain

5.2 These issues are considered in further detail below.

5.3 Agricultural Justification

5.3.1 As mentioned previously, Merrion Farm is a well-established dairy farm that has been farmed by the applicants for over 100 years with the applicant's son now being the fourth generation working within the dairy.

5.3.2 The existing dairy parlour has been on site since the 1960s and is now in urgent need of modernisation to meet contemporary farming standards. The current equipment is increasingly difficult to maintain, as replacement parts are no longer available due to its age. Additionally, the parlour's limited space cannot accommodate modern machinery, making the construction of a new building necessary. Replacing the parlour is essential to ensure the continued operation of the dairy business. With dairy farms representing only 1.9% of farming enterprises in the South of England, it is crucial to support them to preserve these historic farming practices.

5.3.3 The new parlour and silo will enhance the efficiency of the dairy business, providing space for an additional four cow standings. It will feature an improved drainage system and greater water efficiency compared with the existing parlour, which is less effective in its use of water.

- 5.3.4 Policy 26 of the HDPF states that 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 fall within prescribed criteria which includes supporting the needs of agriculture. In addition, a proposal 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.
- 5.3.5 The proposed development will provide essential support to the continued operation and growth of a well-established dairy business, in accordance with paragraph 88 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2025), which encourages the sustainable expansion of rural businesses through well-designed new buildings. Merrion Farm has no existing buildings suitable for conversion, and the current dairy parlour has reached the end of its functional life. The construction of a new, purpose-built facility is therefore necessary to ensure that milking operations can continue efficiently on site. The proposal aligns with Policy: 1 Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development and Policy: 10 Rural Economic Development of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015), which collectively seek to support the rural economy, promote the sustainable growth of agricultural enterprises, and safeguard the long-term viability of farming within the district.

5.4 Landscape and Visual Impact

- 5.4.1 The proposed milking parlour and associated silo have been carefully sited within the existing farmstead to minimise landscape and visual impact. The new building will be positioned adjacent to the existing group of agricultural structures, ensuring it reads as part of the established farm yard rather than as an isolated feature in the landscape. The design and choice of materials comprising a grey fibre cement roof, concrete panel sides, and slate-coloured steel sheeting to the eaves reflect the character and appearance of existing farm buildings, helping the new structure integrate seamlessly into its surroundings. The overall scale and form of the building are consistent with typical agricultural buildings in the locality and will not

appear visually intrusive when viewed from the surrounding landscape. The proposal therefore accords with Policy 25: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character and Policy 33: Development Principles of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015), which seek to ensure that new development protects and enhances local landscape character and visual amenity.

5.5 Impact on Residential Amenity

5.5.1 No.1 and No.2 Merrion Cottages are located approximately 60 metres to the north of the application site, both properties are associated with the farm and are occupied by agricultural workers. There are no other residential properties in close proximity to the application site.

5.5.2 The proposed development would remain well separated from residential dwellings that are not part of the farm holding and would not introduce any new activities beyond the long-established dairy production that has operated on the site for over 100 years. The existing milking parlour would become redundant and repurposed for storage, with milking operations relocated to the new facility. As a result, the proposal would not have any adverse impact on residential amenity.

5.6 Noise and Disturbance

5.6.1 The proposal would offer no change to traffic movements and a pattern of activity which accords with normal working hours currently undertaken on site. The containment of all activity within the farmstead and the nature of the use of the proposed building would mean that the noise and activity levels would be no more than the existing situation.

5.6.2 All use and activity would be fully contained within the farmsteads and would fully accord with the existing agricultural use. The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of its impact on noise and disturbance.

5.7 Trees

5.7.1 No trees that impact the character of the area would be directly affected. There will be no impact on boundary vegetation. The proposal would therefore have no harmful impact on trees.

5.8 Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain

5.8.1 AWEC were commissioned to undertake a preliminary ecological appraisal (PEA) and biodiversity net gain assessment which is attached to this application.

5.8.2 A summary of the PEA which was undertaken on 5 November 2025 confirmed the following:

- The whole site including the access track is approximately 0.37ha, with the main development area being approximately 0.05ha. The main development area is within a farmyard and comprises bare ground, areas of ruderal vegetation, an unsealed hardstanding track, a verge of modified grassland, and a square of concrete supporting a silo. The full red line boundary encompasses a hardstanding access track that leads from the development area to the B2135 to the north.
- The proposal is for a new milking barn measuring 24m x 12m.
- The habitats on-site are common and widespread, and of low ecological value with limited potential to support protected species.
- No further surveys have been recommended.
- Recommendations to avoid ecological impacts are detailed within Section 6 of the report. These include, but are not limited to, minimising and controlling lighting, following a precautionary approach to clearance to protect reptiles from harm, and controlling invasive plant species.

5.8.3 A summary of the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment is as follows:

- The proposed development is for the construction of a milking barn. This will involve the loss of areas of ruderal/ephemeral and bare ground on the site.
- Ecological enhancements built into the development design include the planting of nine native trees along the grass verge to the west of the farmyard. In terms of the BNG metric, this is sufficient to offset the loss of the baseline habitats on the site. Trading rules have been satisfied.
- The headline results indicate that there is an estimated net gain of 17.40% for habitat units.

6 SUMMARY

- 6.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for a milking parlour and silo (part retrospective) at Merrion Farm, Bines Green, Horsham, RH13 8EH.
- 6.2 The proposal will provide a new milking parlour that is essential for the established dairy farm to be able to function sufficiently due to the existing one no longer being fit for purpose or parts being available when the machinery breaks down or malfunctions.
- 6.3 The proposed agricultural buildings would be reasonably required for the purpose of agricultural use and would therefore represent an acceptable form of development and comply with paragraphs 8 and 88 of the NPPF and Policies of the Horsham District Planning Framework.
- 6.4 The proposal would be read in the context of the adjacent agricultural buildings and surrounding landscape would not appear as a discordant feature.
- 6.5 We submit that this would be an appropriate development that is policy compliant that the Horsham District Council can support and recommend for approval.