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Your Ref: DC/26/1072
Our Ref: 11208-jb

19 October 2026

For the attention of Jacques Burrowes
Horsham District Council
Albery House
Springfield Road
Horsham
West Sussex
RH12 2GB

Dear Mr Burrowes,

Site: **Land South Of Renvyle, Okehurst Lane, Billingshurst, West Sussex RH14 9HR.**
Application: **DC/26/1072**
Proposal: **Construction of a replacement barn building**

Thank you for your instruction dated 25 August 2026 requesting Reading Agricultural Consultants Ltd (RAC) comments on the above planning application.

In preparing this response I have had regard to an Agricultural Statement (dated September 2026); Farm Business Diversification Statement (dated May 2026); Design and Access Statement (dated July 2026); the application form; and associated plans.

I have not visited the site or discussed the application with the applicant or the agent.

Background

1. The submission documents do not detail the size of the holding, but RAC has measured the holding including the access and yard area (as marked on the Location Plan 1639/P013 A) which extends to 10.53 hectares (26 acres).

2. The Farm Business Diversification Statement details that the proposed barn will replace an existing building which has been damaged and collapsed during severe winds.

3. It details that the replacement barn will provide the same footprint of storage space. The barn will be internally subdivided into four units which will provide individual areas for machinery storage, feed storage, workshop space, and equipment maintenance.

Proposal

4. The application proposes the erection of a storage building measuring 32m x 15m (480m^2) with a height to the eaves of 4m and a ridge height of 5.3m.

5. The building will be constructed with juniper green profile metal sheeting walls and roof with solar panels installed on the eastern elevation. It will be clad on all sides and accessed via roller shutter doors and pedestrian doors on the eastern and western elevations.

Relevant Planning Policies

6. National planning policy guidance for development in the countryside is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) updated in August 2026.

7. The National Planning Policy Framework places a presumption in favour of sustainable development at the heart of the planning system. Policy S3 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development provides that decisions on development proposals should apply this presumption. This means that:

    - development proposals within settlements should be considered against Policy S4;
    - development proposals outside settlements should be considered against Policy S5; and
    - in all locations, proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan and the national decision-making policies in the Framework should be approved without delay.

8. Policy DM3 - Determining Development Proposals requires local planning authorities to work with applicants in a positive and proactive manner, seeking solutions to problems arising from initial proposals where necessary, taking a proportionate approach to the planning matters raised, considering whether otherwise unacceptable proposals can be made acceptable through planning conditions or obligations, and not refusing applications which should clearly be approved having regard to the development plan, the Framework and other material considerations.

9. The objective of Chapter 4 of the Framework is to promote sustainable patterns of development, including enabling development which supports the rural economy and rural communities while safeguarding the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

10. Within this context, Policy S5 - Principle of Development Outside Settlements recognises that certain forms of development should be approved outside settlements where the benefits are not substantially outweighed by adverse effects. These include development for rural businesses and services where a countryside location is necessary, the reuse, extension or replacement of existing buildings, the redevelopment of previously developed land, and limited infilling within groups of houses.

11. Chapter 7 - Building a Strong, Effective Economy seeks to ensure that planning decisions support economic growth.

12. Policy E1 - Supporting Economic Growth requires planning policies and decisions to create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt, and confirms that significant weight should be given to supporting economic growth and productivity, taking account of local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

13. Policy E2 - Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy states that planning policies and decisions should enable:
    a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, including through the conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;
    b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses; and
    c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside and contribute to local prosperity.

14. Policy 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (excluding South Downs National Park) deals with countryside protection and enhancement and states:

    "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 meet one of the following criteria:

    1. *support the needs of agriculture or forestry;*
    2. *enable the extraction of minerals or the disposal of waste;*
    3. *provide for quiet informal recreational use; or,*
    4. *enable the sustainable development of rural areas.*

    In addition, proposals 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, including:

    1. *the development pattern of the area, its historical and ecological qualities, tranquillity and sensitivity to change;*
    2. *the pattern of woodlands, fields, hedgerows, trees, waterbodies and other features; and*
    3. *the landform of the area."*

Appraisal

15. The Agricultural Statement details that the farm requires secure storage for tractors, mowers, toppers, trailers and maintenance tools associated with the hay and forage production and general land management.

16. RAC would comment that it is advisable to store agricultural machinery under cover to protect it from the elements. It protects machinery from corrosion and in particular damage to any moving parts and therefore minimises maintenance requirements and periods of downtime.

17. It is generally considered within the agricultural industry that an additional 25% to 30% of machinery storage space is acceptable to allow for the safe manoeuvring and handling of agricultural machinery within the building.

18. The Agricultural Statement details that the holding is a mixed agricultural operation which include *"seasonal hay and forage production; use of agricultural machinery for land maintenance; storage of feed, bedding, tools and equipment; and general farm workshop activities."*

19. RAC accepts that the storage of hay undercover protects the bales from the elements of the weather and prevents mould growth from wet and damp conditions when stored out in the open. Mould growth can be harmful to the health of livestock. Storage of fodder under cover maintains and maximises the hays nutrient value, an important consideration in ration formulation for livestock and horses.

20. The building is fully clad which RAC considers is appropriate for the storage of machinery and equipment however it will limit ventilation around the stored fodder bales and could lead to damp and mouldy conditions.

21. There are no details provided of a livestock enterprise on the holding and therefore the provision of storage for feed and bedding requires further details.

22. The Floor Plan (1639/P01 C) shows each area will have a translucent roof light but RAC notes that only the two end bays can be accessed externally via roller shutter and pedestrian access doors on the western and eastern elevations.

23. The two middle bays, which the Farm Business Diversification Statement details will be individual units are inaccessible from the plans and information submitted. If these two areas are to only be accessed via the end bays that is acceptable however, the submission documents detailing that there are four individual units is incorrect.

24. RAC considers that whilst the proposed building may be replacing a damaged and collapsed building, the design in its current form is not suitable for the intended storage purposes.

25. For the storage of hay and forage RAC considers that an area of the building requires ventilation. This can be through an area being open fronted or spaced timber boarding above concrete panels.

26. The principle of a replacement building is appropriate in terms of national and local planning policy, however RAC considers that further information regarding the storage of feed and bedding within the building and a redesign to meet the requirements of stored forage through adequate ventilation within that section of the building are required.

I trust these comments are helpful in your deliberations.

Yours sincerely,

Olivia Wojniak