

MME PLANNING SERVICES

Demolition of existing buildings and erection of 3no detached dwellings and associated works. (Application made in the alternative to Prior Approval ref: DC/23/2301).

at

Oakfield, Coolham Road, Coolham, West Sussex,
RH13 8QE

Planning Statement

Ref: P-085b

June 2026

Version 1

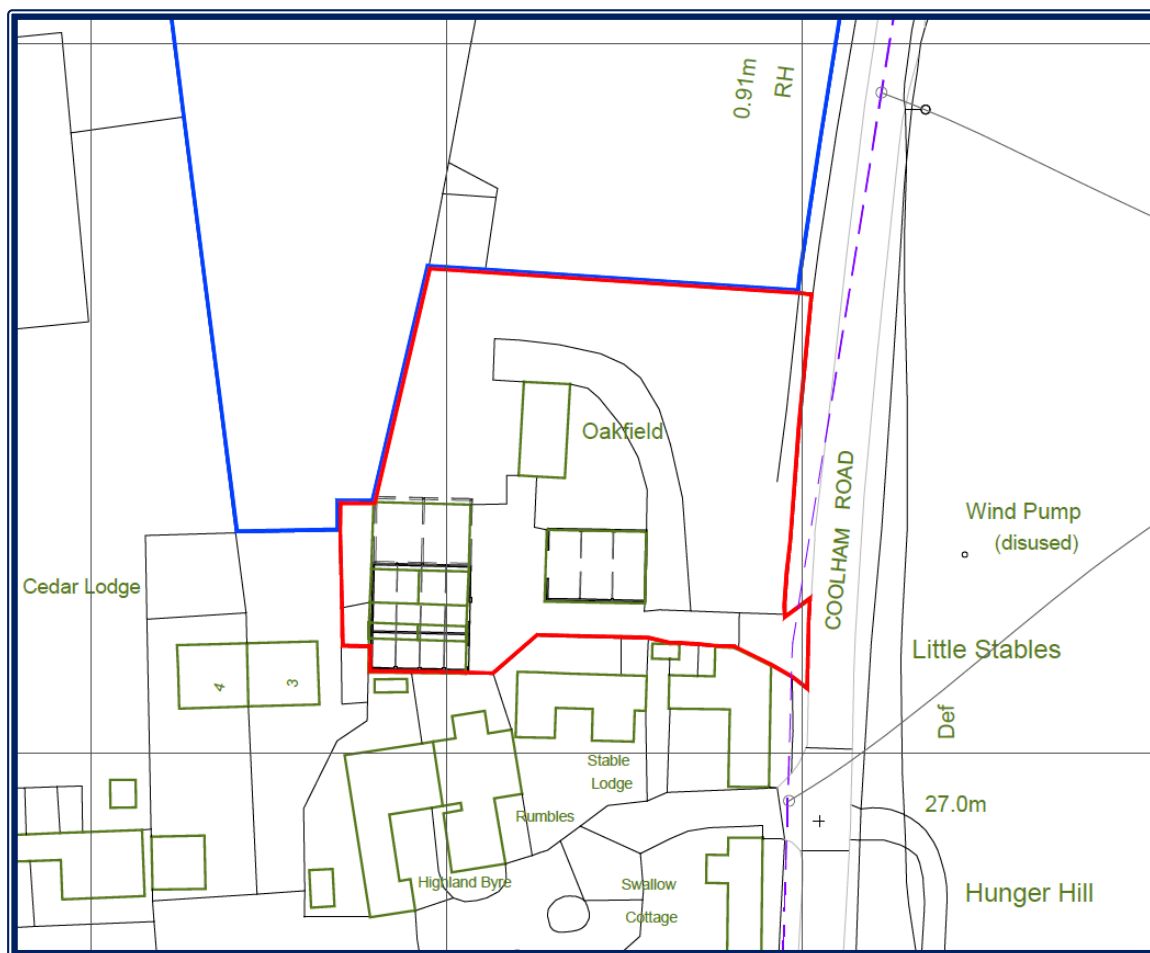


Figure 1: Site Location

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 We are instructed to prepare and submit this full planning application for the demolition of the existing buildings / structures on site and erection of 3no detached dwellings with associated works at Oakfield, Coolham Road, Coolham, West Sussex, RH13 8QE.
- 1.2 The application is made in the alternative to application reference DC/23/2301 which granted Prior Approval under Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q of the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) 2015 (as amended), for the change of use of the existing buildings on site to form 4no residential dwellings.
- 1.3 This statement sets out the proposed scheme with regard to the following aspects: the planning history of the site, the development proposals, the relevant planning policy, the planning merits of the scheme and how the proposals comply with the Council's policies. This application also seeks to address issues previously raised within a refused planning application under reference DC/21/1584.

2. Site, Surroundings and Background

- 2.1 The application site relates to a former agricultural farmyard located on the western side of Coolham Road, Coolham, outside of any defined built-up area boundary. The site is therefore located within the countryside in policy terms, but no other statutory designations cover the site.
- 2.2 The red line area, as indicated on the submitted plans, extends to some 0.31ha. The site is accessed via an existing access from Coolham Road. The site comprises a number of barn buildings and a mobile home, permitted under planning reference DC/06/2347. To the north of the site is an enclosed field.
- 2.3 The wider locality is characterised by open countryside, with sporadic built form. It is noted that there are a number of dwellings located directly to the south of the site which have a farmstead style arrangement.

3. Relevant Planning History

- Retention of mobile home.

Ref. No: DC/06/2347 | Status: Application Permitted, March 2007

- Demolition of existing buildings and erection of 4x dwellinghouses together with associated landscaping

Ref. No: DC/21/1584 | Status: Application Refused, May 2022

- **Prior Approval for Change of Use of agricultural buildings to 4No. dwellings (Class C3).**

Ref. No: DC/23/2301 | Status: Permit Prior Approval, February 2024

- **Application under Regulation 77 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 in respect of Prior Approval consent DC/23/2301**

Ref. No: HRA/23/0019 | Status: Application Permitted, June 2024

- **Application for Approval of Details Reserved by Condition 1 to approved application DC/23/2301.**

Ref. No: DISC/25/0376 | Status: Application Permitted, January 2026

- 3.1 As detailed above, prior approval has been granted under Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q of the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) 2015 (as amended) for the change of use of the existing buildings on site to form 4no dwellings, under reference DC/23/2301 in February 2024.
- 3.2 A subsequent HRA application in relation to water neutrality has been approved and the pre-commencement condition(s) attached to this prior approval permission have been discharged, allowing for commencement of the development, as detailed above. As such, 4no dwellings can be created / provided in this location outside of the settlement boundary and this represents a viable and realistic fall-back position which has substantial weight in the planning balance.

4. Proposals

- 4.1 As detailed above, planning permission is sought for the erection of 3no detached dwellings. The existing buildings within the red line area, including the existing mobile home, would be removed to facilitate the proposed development.
- 4.2 The application is made in the alternative to application reference DC/23/2301 which granted Prior Approval for the change of use of the existing buildings on site to form 4no dwellings.



Figure 2: Proposed Site Plan

- 4.3 The proposed dwellings are designed to resemble typical rural buildings which would be commensurate with the existing setting and the countryside location. The proposed configuration and layout takes its cues from the existing development to the south of the site, which consists of a mixture of single and two-storey dwellings, arranged in a farmstead style configuration, as detailed at Figure 3 below.

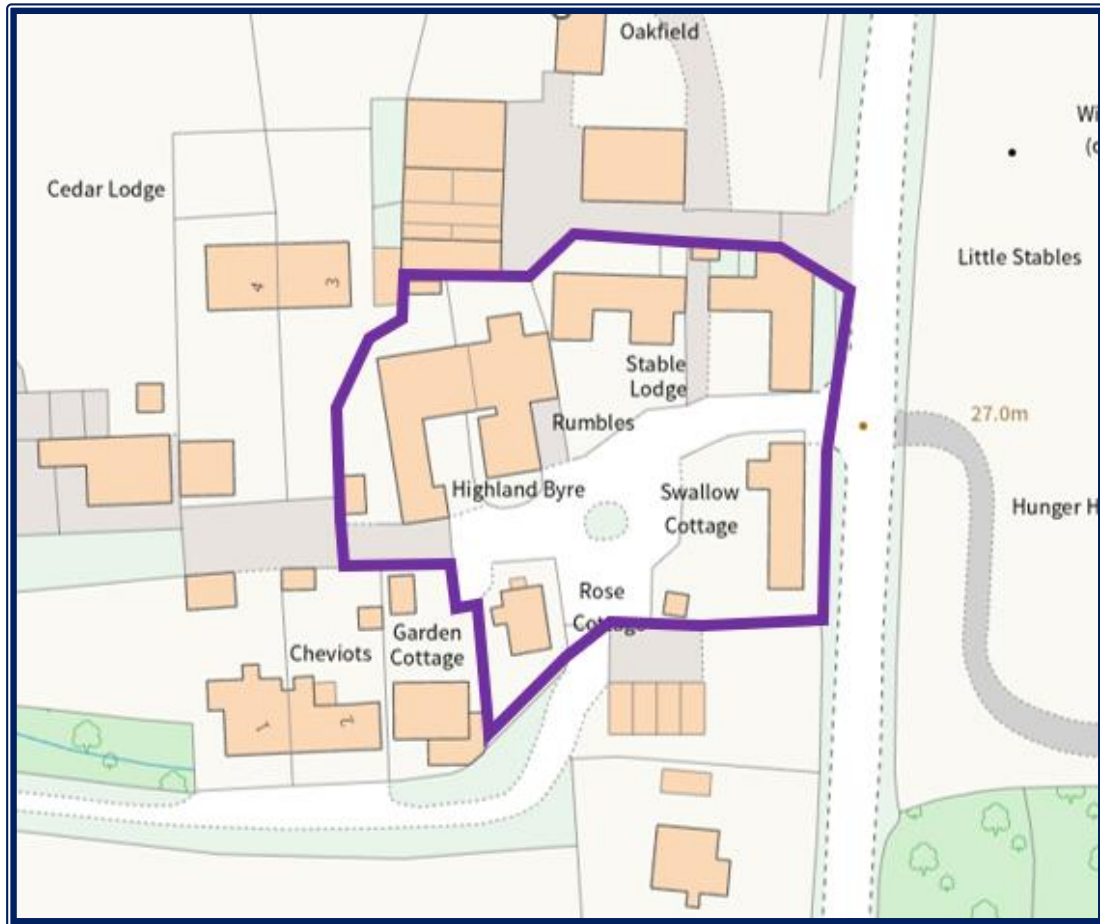


Figure 3: Existing farmstead style development to the south of the site

- 4.4 The proposed development would result in an enhancement to the site both in terms of the appearance of the buildings and the overall quantum of development, when compared to the prior approval granted under planning reference DC/23/2301. The proposals would be contained within the existing yard area, with appropriately sized plots created for each of the proposed dwellings, thereby retaining the existing character and boundaries surrounding the site.
- 4.5 The proposals would consist of a mixture of stained timber cladding, brick and stone to the walls, clay tiled roofs, and aluminium framed windows and doors, creating a rural appearance to the buildings with the use of natural materials. Given the topography of the site which slopes down slightly from south to north, the larger dwelling is positioned towards the north to ensure that it does not appear prominently within the setting, and in views from public vantage points. The proposed designs are considered to be in keeping with the setting and the overall scale would be comparable to existing development within the immediate vicinity. The proposed dwellings would have a Gross Internal Areas (GIAs) of approximately 157sqm and 276sqm respectively.

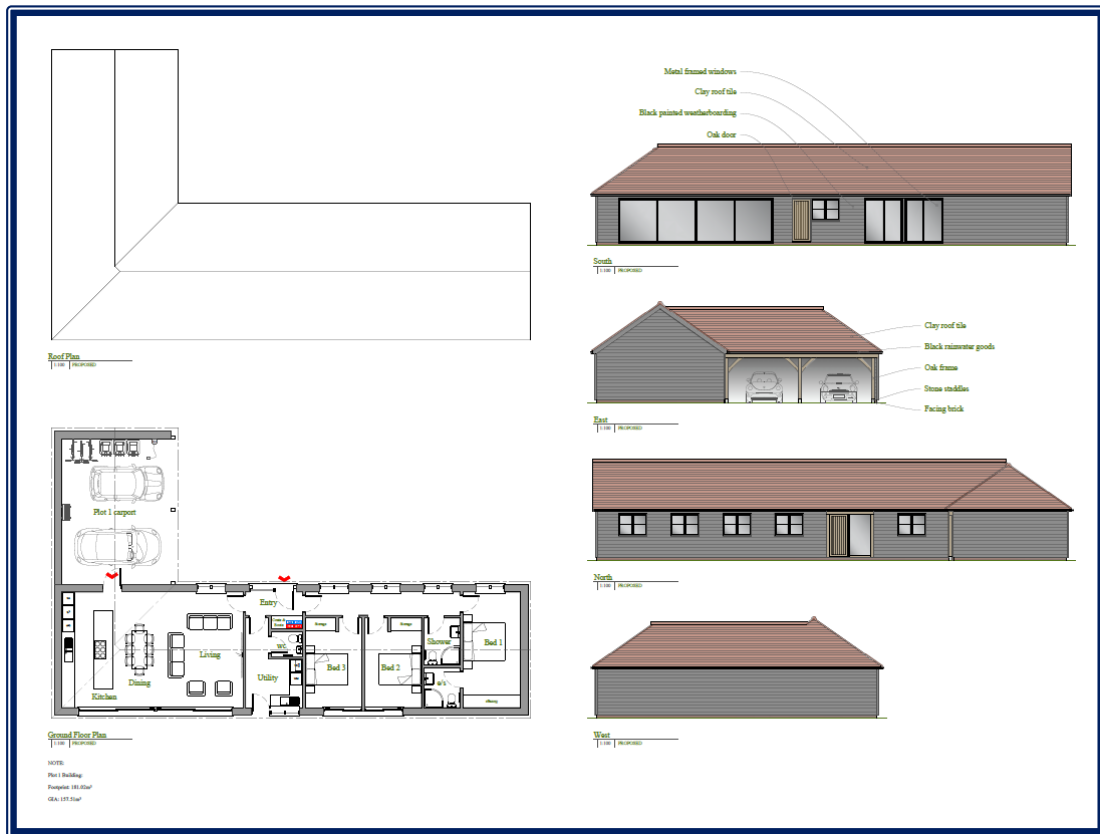


Figure 4: Plot 1 Proposed Elevations, Floor Plan and Roof Plan



Figure 5: Plot 2 Proposed Elevations, Floor Plan and Roof Plan



Figure 6: Plot 3 Proposed Elevations

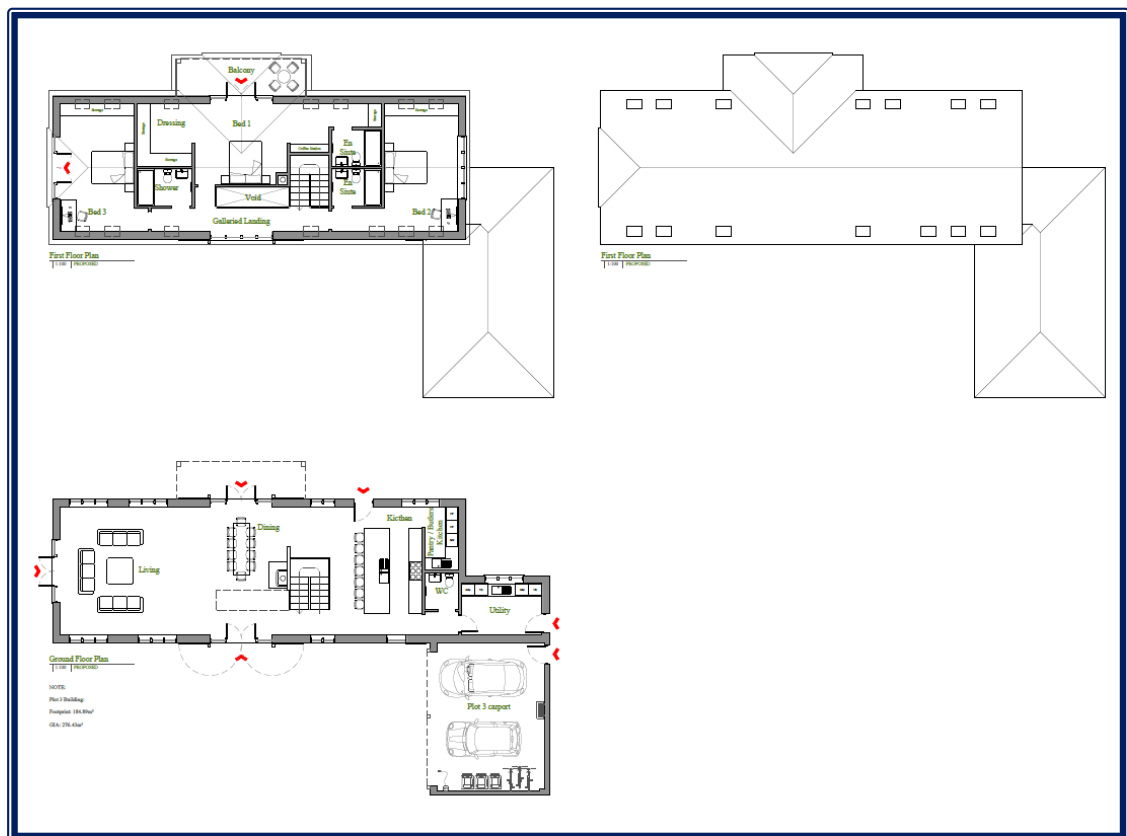


Figure 7: Plot 3 Proposed Floor Plans and Roof Plan

- 4.6 The proposed development is considered to be appropriately separated from neighbouring properties to avoid any impact on amenity and would provide a good level of accommodation for future occupiers. Sufficient parking would also be provided, with the development served by an existing access from Coolham Road to the east.
- 4.7 Given the extent and nature of the proposals and distances maintained, the development would not result in harm to any trees, nor would it unacceptably harm biodiversity, protected species or any priority habitats.

5. Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024) and National Guidance

- 5.1 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework for the preparation of local plans for housing and other development. The NPPF should be read as a whole.
- 5.2 Running throughout the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Sustainable development is achieved through three main objectives which are – economic, social and environmental.
- 5.3 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that for decision-taking, this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay. Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, planning permission should be granted unless the policies of the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provide a clear reason for refusing the development proposed, or, any adverse impact of doing so would 'significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits' when assessed against the policies of the NPPF when taken as a whole (NPPF paragraph 11 (d)).

Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) (2015)

- 5.4 Paragraph 34 of the NPPF requires that all development plans complete their reviews no later than 5 years from their adoption. Horsham District Council has submitted its new local plan for examination, however at this stage, the emerging policies carry limited weight in decision-making.

- 5.5 A Local Development Scheme (LDS) was published in February 2025 by the Council. The LDS sets out the production timetable for the New Local Plan anticipated to be adopted in April 2026. Notwithstanding the above, as the HDPF is now over 5 years old, the most important policies for determining this application are now considered to be 'out-of-date'. This position is further highlighted given that the Horsham District Local Plan examination hearing meetings scheduled for January 2025 were cancelled by the appointed Inspector, and in April 2025, advised that the Plan is withdrawn due to concerns about its legal compliance. Proceedings for the new Local Plan are due to re-open in April 2026, however the new local plan carries limited weight in decision-making at this stage.
- 5.6 The Council is currently unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites. The presumption in favour of development within Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF therefore applies in the consideration of all applications for housing development within the District, with Policies 2, 4, 15 and 26 now carrying limited weight in decision-making.
- 5.7 While considered to be out of date, the main HDPF policies relevant to this application are as follows:
- 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 25 - Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
 - Policy 26 - Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection
 - Policy 31 - Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
 - Policy 32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development
 - Policy 33 - Development Principles
 - Policy 35 - Strategic Policy: Climate Change
 - Policy 36 - Strategic Policy: Appropriate Energy Use
 - Policy 37 - Sustainable Construction
 - Policy 38 - Strategic Policy: Flooding
 - Policy 40 - Sustainable Transport
 - Policy 41 – Parking

Thakeham Neighbourhood Plan (TNP) (2017)

5.8 While also considered to be out-of-date, the Neighbourhood Plan policies relevant to this application are as follows:

- Thakeham 1 - A Spatial Plan for the Parish
- Thakeham 6 - Design

Planning Advice Note(s) (PAN)

5.9 Relevant PANs to this application are as follows:

- Shaping Development in Horsham District
- Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

6. Planning Considerations

Principle of Development

- 6.1 The HDPF spatial development strategy as contained within policies 2, 3 & 4 directs development to sites within built-up area boundaries, encourage the effective use of brownfield land, and aim to manage development around the edges of existing settlements in order to protect the rural character and landscape.
- 6.2 The site is located outside of the built-up area and is not allocated within Horsham's adopted development plan (which in this case comprises the HDPF and TNP), while it is again noted that these are now out of date. As a result, residential development in this location would conflict with the requirements of Policies 2 and 4 (Settlement Expansion) of the HDPF. The site is also not in an isolated location, therefore the opportunities afforded by Paragraph 84 of the NPPF do not apply in this instance.
- 6.3 Notwithstanding the above, the Council is currently unable to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply, with the latest Authority Monitoring Report (December 2025) detailing a supply of only 1.7 years. Therefore, the tilted balance contained in Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF is engaged.

- 6.4 While the Council has submitted the New Horsham District Local Plan for examination, as detailed above, the situation with this remains uncertain. As such, the weight given to the above policies and the New Local Plan is therefore limited to none at this stage.
- 6.5 In addition to the above, and as set out at paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2, the existing site benefits from Class Q Prior Approval permission under planning reference DC/23/2301, which established that 4no dwellings can be created in this location. This is a significant material consideration in the determination of this current planning application.
- 6.6 The Prior Approval permission has been shown to be water neutral and the pre-commencement condition(s) attached to application reference DC/23/2301 have been discharged, which allows the prior approval consent to be implemented. The presence of the Prior Approval to create 4no dwellings on the site, which could still be implemented, represents a viable and realistic fall-back position, were the current application to be refused. A refusal of the current application would not therefore prevent the introduction of dwellings outside of the defined built-up area boundary.
- 6.7 The proposed development seeks to improve the quality of the development for future occupiers through an enhanced design and appearance when compared to the prior approval consent. The proposal seeks to improve the quality of the dwellings through the use of higher quality materials and design, which would consequently improve the internal living spaces and appearance of the resulting buildings. The proposals would facilitate the creation of 3no dwellings which is one less than that secured under the prior approval. This would provide a better quantum of development, in keeping with the setting and existing development within the immediate vicinity.
- 6.8 These elements would result in social benefits that would improve the environment and quality of accommodation for future occupiers. In addition, the proposals would pull built form away from neighbouring boundaries, creating a better environment for neighbouring properties. These benefits are considered to be of weight in the assessment of the current application. It is also noted that the applicant has confirmed that they would implement the fall-back application should this application not be approved.
- 6.9 It is therefore considered that refusal of the application on the basis of the conflict with Policies 4 and 26 of the HDPF would not be warranted and would not prevent dwellings from being created on the site, given the fall-back position as set out above. On this basis, the principle of development is considered acceptable.

- 6.10 Lastly, it is noted that there are a number of recent decisions which have granted residential developments outside of the defined built-up areas. Examples include reference numbers DC/22/0495 and DC/22/2250 which each sought permission for 1no dwelling and were granted at appeal in August 2023 and March 2024 respectively, and DC/23/2278 which sought permission for 8no dwellings and was granted by the Council's planning committee in April 2024.
- 6.11 The Inspector within the appeal decision in relation to application reference DC/22/0495 states "I have attached limited weight to the conflict with HDPF Policy 26 in respect of development outside of built-up area boundaries. The housing shortfall dictates that those boundaries are out of date. I consider that some weight can still be given to the strategy set out within HDPF Policy 2, in terms of the general locations of new development, but the fact that a site may lie outside of the built-up area boundary does not, in and of itself, constitute a reason to refuse planning permission".
- 6.12 A very recent appeal decision issued in October 2025 under planning reference DC/24/1486, granted permission for a new build dwelling approximately 2 miles away from the closest built-up area boundary. Within the appeal decision the Inspector states that:
- "27. *The proposed dwelling would be in a location that is not considered suitable when assessed against the relevant HDPF and NP policies. The site lacks close proximity to a wide range of essential services and facilities. Although there are some opportunities for travel by means other than private car, reliance on car journeys is likely to be significant. In these respects, the proposal would conflict with key development plan policies.*
28. *Balanced against the harm are a number of benefits. The overall housing supply remains significantly deficient, and the provision of an additional dwelling would make a meaningful contribution to addressing this shortfall. The Framework recognises that small sites can make an important contribution to housing supply and are often built out quickly. There would also be modest economic benefits during construction and through local spending, as well as a small contribution to housing diversity. While the scale of these benefits is modest given that only one dwelling is proposed, in the context of current housing pressures, even a single additional home represents a valuable and positive contribution.*

29. *Taking all matters into account, the adverse impacts of granting permission would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the Framework as a whole. Consequently, the proposal benefits from the presumption in favour of sustainable development as defined in paragraph 11d of the Framework.”*

- 6.13 Other recent examples of permitted dwellings outside of a defined built-up area can be seen under planning reference DC/24/1887, which granted outline planning consent for 2no detached dwellings in December 2025; reference DC/25/1831, which granted outline planning consent for 1no dwelling in March 2026, and reference DC/25/0895, which granted full planning consent for 1no dwelling at appeal in March 2026 (Appeal Reference APP/Z3825/W/25/3375774).
- 6.14 The above examples clearly show that notwithstanding the distances to the respective settlement boundaries, these boundaries are now considered to be out of date given the lack of 5-year housing supply. Therefore, the tilted balance is engaged and the principle of residential development in this location is acceptable.
- 6.15 While it is acknowledged that every application and site context should be considered on its own merits, taking into account the current situation of the Council in terms of its 5-year housing supply and the above examples, there is an expectation that a consistent approach is applied to decision-making.
- 6.16 3no additional dwellings would contribute towards the much-needed supply of houses. Small sites can often be built out relatively quickly and there would be economic benefits arising from construction and spend in the local economy. In the context of the current circumstances, the additional dwellings would be valuable. Recent decisions that have been made by the Council and the Inspectorate confirm small scale developments such as this make a valuable contribution to the Council’s housing shortage.
- 6.17 In summary, given the lack of a 5-year housing supply, the realistic and viable fall-back position and relevant recent examples of housing developments permitted outside of settlement boundaries, the principle of residential development is therefore acceptable.

Design and Appearance

- 6.18 Policy 25 of the HDPF seeks to protect the natural environment and landscape character of the District, including the landform, development pattern, together with protected landscapes and habitats. Development will be required to protect, conserve, and enhance landscape and townscape character, taking account of areas or features identified as being of landscape importance, individual settlement characteristics and settlement separation. In addition, development will be supported where it maintains and enhances the Green Infrastructure Network.
- 6.19 Policies 32 and 33 of the HDPF require development to be of a high standard of design and layout. Development proposals must be locally distinctive in character and respect the character of their surroundings. Where relevant, the scale, massing and appearance of development will be required to relate sympathetically with its built-surroundings, landscape, open spaces and to consider any impact on the skyline and important views.
- 6.20 As detailed within the submitted plans, the existing buildings on site which have consent to be converted to dwellings, are not considered to be of any architectural merit or interest. The design of the proposed dwellings would take its cues from the surrounding rural character, appearing as rural dwellings within a farmstead configuration, laid out in an organic way which would be commensurate with the setting. Window and door openings have been kept to a minimum, with the design features appearing agricultural and rural in character, ensuring that the proposals do not appear overly domestic and would not have an urbanising impact.
- 6.21 The proposals, given the submitted designs, configuration, layout, scale and appropriate materials, are considered to appropriately address the concerns raised under planning reference DC/21/1584, where the Council considered that the development would formalise and suburbanise the countryside setting. The current proposals would be comparable to existing development within the immediate vicinity, and appropriate in terms of the size of the plot.
- 6.22 The resulting design of the buildings, overall, is considered to be a marked improvement when compared to the design of the dwellings permitted under the fall-back application, reference DC/23/2301. The proposed designs are considered to be in keeping with the setting and the overall scale would be comparable to existing development within the immediate vicinity, and appropriate in terms of the size of the plot.

- 6.23 As such, it is not considered that the proposed development would result in harm to the countryside location which would justify a reason to refuse this current application. Notwithstanding the above, even if some harm is identified in this regard, given the proposed design and appearance, this would not be considered to result in a strong reason to warrant refusal, as set out within Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF.
- 6.24 Additional planting is proposed, and the applicant would accept a planning condition requiring the submission and approval of a detailed landscaping scheme, which would result in a further enhancement to the site, when compared to the previous approval.
- 6.25 The proposed development would result in a higher quality development when compared to the previously approved application, and would appropriately reflect the character and visual amenities of the countryside location. Overall, the proposals would represent appropriate development within this setting and would be in accordance with Policies 25, 32 and 33 of the HDPF.

Neighbouring Amenity and Level of Accommodation Provided

- 6.26 Policy 33 of the HDPF states that permission will be granted for development that does not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of the occupiers/users of nearby properties and land.
- 6.27 Given the relationship and siting of the proposed dwellings, as indicated on the site plan provided, it is considered that the proposals would not have a detrimental impact in terms of overlooking, loss of privacy, overbearing impacts or loss of light to neighbouring residential properties. Indeed, as noted above, the proposals would bring the built form away from the boundaries, resulting in a better relationship with neighbouring properties.
- 6.28 Appropriate garden areas would be provided for the proposed dwellings which would provide adequate external amenity space for future occupiers. The proposals would also comply with Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS).
- 6.29 The application is therefore considered to be acceptable in this regard, in accordance with Policy 33 of the HDPF.

Parking and Highways

- 6.30 Policies 40 and 41 of the Horsham District Planning Framework relate to transport and parking, and state that more transport choice including community transport where appropriate will be encouraged, as well as a reduction in private car use and greater accessibility to more sustainable modes of transport. Adequate parking and facilities must be provided within developments to meet the needs of anticipated users.
- 6.31 The application is supported by a Transport Technical Note. The proposals would be served by an existing access to the site, and as such, no highway safety concerns would be apparent. Given the existing fall-back position where 4no dwellings could be provided, in addition to the existing mobile home on site, the provision of a total of 3no dwellings on the site would not result in a marked increase in trips to and from the site which would be detrimental to the function of the highway network.
- 6.32 Sufficient space for parking would be provided on site, and overall, the proposals would be acceptable in this regard, in accordance with Policies 40 and 41 of the HDPF.

Ecological and Biodiversity Considerations / Enhancements and Trees

- 6.33 Policy 31 of the HDPF states that –
- “Development will be supported where it can demonstrate that it maintains or enhances the existing network of green infrastructure. Development proposals will be required to contribute to the enhancement of existing biodiversity and should create and manage new habitats where appropriate. The Council will support new development which retains and/or enhances significant features of nature conservation on development sites. The Council will also support development which makes a positive contribution to biodiversity through the creation of green spaces, and linkages between habitats to create local and regional ecological networks”.
- 6.34 The application is supported by a detailed Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA). The submitted ecological information outlines that overall, the proposals would not have a detrimental impact on protected habitats or species, with mitigation and enhancement measures proposed. The application is also supported by a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) metric and a BNG report which show that the proposals would deliver measurable BNG (minimum 10%).

- 6.35 The development would not impact the main trees on site located along the western / north-western boundary, with the proposals being positioned outside of the Root protection areas of these trees, as detailed on the proposed site plan. The proposals incorporate extensive tree planting which would compensate for any small losses. The applicant would accept a planning condition requiring the submission and approval of tree protection measures, should the Council deem this necessary.
- 6.36 As such, the submitted details provided indicate that there would be no detrimental impact on habitats or protected species or trees, in accordance with Policies 31 and 33 of the HDPF.

7. Summary and Conclusion

- 7.1 Overall, given the position of the Council with regard to its 5-year housing supply, the viable and realistic fall-back position and recent decisions relating to residential development outside of built-up areas, the proposal represents an appropriate form of development in this location.
- 7.2 The proposals would be acceptable in terms of design and impact on the setting, and would not appear prominently within this context, resulting in an enhancement in terms of design and appearance when compared to the fall-back position.
- 7.3 The proposals would also be acceptable when considered against all other material matters, as detailed within this statement and supporting information.
- 7.4 As such, while now considered to be out of date, the proposals would be in accordance with Policies 4, 25, 26, 31, 32 and 33 of the HDPF and therefore, the Local Planning Authority is respectfully asked to grant planning permission accordingly.