



DELEGATED APPLICATIONS - ASSESSMENT SHEET

APPLICATION NO./ADDRESS:

DC/26/0581

Blackstone Gate Farm, Henfield Road, Albourne, West Sussex, BN6 9JJ

DESCRIPTION:

Conversion and extension of existing stables to create business / office units (Class E).

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

DC/24/0106	Application to confirm the change of use of residential annexe to a separate single dwelling (Lawful Development Certificate - Existing)	Application 14.06.2024	Refused	on
DC/22/0743	Change of use of land from agricultural to residential curtilage and erection of a detached garage building with home office above.	Application 16.06.2022	Permitted	on
DC/22/0077	Erection of a detached garage building with a home office above.	Withdrawn 08.04.2022	Application	on
DC/25/0524	Conversion of existing stables into 3 holiday-lets.	Application 28.04.2026	Refused	on

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

The application site is located at Blackstone Gate Farmhouse, situated on the eastern side of Henfield Road, in the parish of Albourne. The site lies within a rural setting characterised by open countryside, with scattered residential and agricultural buildings nearby. The wider landscape comprises farmland and hedgerows, consistent with the surrounding countryside character. The site itself contains a group of single-storey stable buildings of traditional form, set within the residential curtilage of the farmhouse. Access is taken directly from Henfield Road via an established entrance and driveway serving both the farmhouse and associated buildings. Mature boundary vegetation provides a degree of natural screening from the road and adjacent land, helping the site remain relatively contained within its setting.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION

The application seeks full planning permission for the conversion of the existing stable buildings into office units (Class E). The proposed development would utilise the footprint of the existing stables, with minimal external alterations, creation of 8 parking bays to facilitate the new use.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Horsham District Planning Framework (2015):

Policy 1 - Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development

Policy 10 - Rural Economic Development

Policy 11 - Tourism and Cultural Facilities

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 37 - Sustainable Construction
Policy 40 - Sustainable Transport
Policy 41 - Parking
Policy 42 - Strategic Policy: Inclusive Communities
Policy 43 - Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation

Neighbourhood Plan:

Woodmancote Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2016 – 2031
Policy 1 – A Spatial Plan for the Parish
Policy 3 – Design

Supplementary Planning Guidance:

Planning Obligations and Affordable Housing SPD (2017)
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule (2017)

Planning Advice Notes:

Facilitating Appropriate Development
Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

REPRESENTATIONS AND CONSULTATIONS RESPONSES

Where consultation responses have been summarised, it should be noted that Officers have had consideration of the full comments received, which are available to view on the public file at www.horsham.gov.uk

Consultations:

HDC Environmental Health: No Objection - No objection is raised to the application; however, consideration is given to nearby residential properties. It is recommended that appropriate controls are implemented to mitigate any potential environmental impacts.

Southern Water: Standard information provided for proposed soakaways and septic tanks.

WSCC Highways: No Objection - In summary, the LHA does not consider that this proposal would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety or result in 'severe' cumulative impacts on the operation of the highway network, therefore is not contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 116), and that there are no transport grounds to resist the proposal.

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS:

Representations:

None Received

Parish Comments:

Woodmancote Parish Council:

None received

Member Comments:

None received

HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUALITY:

The application has been considered having regard to Article 1 of the First Protocol of the Human Rights Act 1998, which sets out a person's rights to the peaceful enjoyment of property and Article 8 of the same Act, which sets out their rights in respect to private and family life and for the home. Officers consider that the proposal would not be contrary to the provisions of the above Articles.

The application has also been considered in accordance with Horsham District Council's public sector equality duty, which seeks to prevent unlawful discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between people in a diverse community, in accordance with Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. In this case, the proposal is not anticipated to have any potential impact from an equality perspective.

PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development:

Policy 10 of the HDPF supports proposals for rural economic development where they contribute to the wider rural economy and (1, a), wherever possible, are contained within suitably located existing buildings that are appropriate for conversion. Policies 25 and 26 seek to protect the intrinsic character of the countryside and resist inappropriate development that would erode its rural character.

The application proposes the conversion and modest extension of an existing stable building to provide two Class E(g)(i) office units. The proposal would re-use an existing rural building rather than introduce a new commercial building into the countryside. In this respect, the proposal aligns with Policy 10(a), which specifically supports the conversion of existing buildings for rural economic purposes where appropriate.

It is acknowledged that the site occupies a countryside location where commercial development would not ordinarily be directed. Consequently, there is a degree of conflict with the spatial strategy and countryside protection objectives of Policies 1 and 26. However, the proposal represents the reuse of an existing building, would provide small-scale employment opportunities, support the rural economy and avoid the need for new built development elsewhere. Furthermore, the proposal is of a scale that would remain closely related to the existing farmstead and would not materially alter the character of the surrounding countryside.

On balance, it is considered that the economic benefits of the proposal, together with the reuse of an existing building and the support provided by Policy 10(a), outweigh the limited policy conflict arising from its country-side location. The principle of the development is therefore considered acceptable, subject to the detailed assessment below.

Design and Appearance:

Policy 25 of the HDPF seeks to protect, conserve and enhance the natural environment and landscape character of the District, ensuring that development respects the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Policy 32 requires development to achieve a high standard of design that responds positively to local character, whilst Policy 33 requires development to be sympathetic to its surroundings.

The proposal involves the conversion of an existing stable building with only limited external alterations. These comprise a modest extension beneath the existing roof overhang, insertion of glazed openings and rooflights, together with the retention of the existing agricultural form, scale and proportions. The building would continue to be finished in timber featheredge boarding beneath a slate roof, ensuring the rural appearance of the structure is maintained.

The proposed parking area is modest in scale and positioned adjacent to the existing building, utilising permeable surfacing and existing access arrangements. Existing boundary vegetation and fencing would continue to provide screening, limiting views of the development from the surrounding

countryside. The proposal therefore represents a sympathetic conversion which pre-serves the rural character of the site. Accordingly, the proposal accords with Policies 25, 32 and 33 of the HDPF.

Residential Amenity:

Policy 33 of the HDPF requires that development should not result in unacceptable harm to the amenity of the occupiers of neighbouring properties.

The nearest residential properties comprise Blackstone Gate Farmhouse together with neighbouring dwellings in the vicinity. The proposal does not involve significant alterations to the scale or massing of the existing building and consequently would not result in any material loss of outlook, overbearing impact or overshadowing.

The proposed office use has the potential to generate activity associated with staff movements and vehicle trips. However, Environmental Health raises no objection subject to planning conditions controlling operating hours together with any future external plant and equipment. The proposed use is considered to be compatible with the surrounding rural environment and would not give rise to unacceptable levels of noise or disturbance.

Overall, subject to the recommended conditions, the proposal would not result in unacceptable harm to neighbouring residential amenity and complies with Policy 33 of the HDPF.

Highways Impacts:

Policies 40 and 41 of the Horsham District Planning Framework state that development should provide a safe and adequate access, suitable for all users.

The proposal would utilise the existing access onto Henfield Road, with no alterations proposed to the point of access. Eight off-street parking spaces, cycle parking and refuse storage are provided within the site, together with sufficient space for vehicle turning.

The Highway Authority raises no objection and advises that the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact upon highway safety nor result in severe cumulative impacts on the highway network. The proposal therefore accords with Policies 40 and 41 of the HDPF.

Water Neutrality:

A 2021 Position Statement from Natural England identified that it could not be concluded with the required degree of certainty that new development in the Sussex North Water Supply Zone would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Arun Valley SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites. As a consequence, and to comply with the legal duties set out in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (known as the Habitat Regulations), all new development since has been required to demonstrate water neutrality.

On 31st October 2025 Natural England formally withdrew the 2021 Position Statement, citing a package of measures that they were satisfied would safeguard the Arun Valley sites. Principal amongst these measures is a reduction in the Southern Water abstraction licence 'by March 2026'. However, given the licence change has not yet taken place Horsham District Council, as competent authority under the Habitats Regulations, cannot yet be certain that new development will not result in adverse impacts on the Arun Valley sites.

To ensure development can come forward as water neutral in the meantime, the Council has agreed with Natural England to use the significant water savings made by Southern Water in 2024/25 through their programme of leakage reduction (amongst other measures). This has generated some 3,240,000 litres per day of water savings that can now be attributed to new development without increasing water abstraction in the Arun Valley beyond baseline. These savings were previously to be used to launch the Sussex North Water Certification Scheme (SNWCS), however following the withdrawal statement SNWCS will no longer be launching. Natural England standing advice dated 10 November 2025 raises no objection to using these savings to enable development to come forward. The standing advice

clarifies that it functions as Natural England's formal response pursuant to Regulation 63(3) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 to all relevant planning applications which seek to achieve water neutrality using the above Southern Water savings.

Officers have undertaken an Appropriate Assessment which demonstrates that the anticipated increase in mains water consumption from this development, alongside all other development granted since the 31st October 2025, will not exceed 3,240,000 litres per day.

Accordingly, Officers consider that the proposed development will not have an Adverse Effect on the Integrity of the Arun Valley Site, either alone or in combination with other plan and projects, thereby complying with Regulations 63 and 70 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, HDPF Policy 31, and paragraph 193 of the NPPF.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG):

Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021) mandates that every development must achieve at least a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG (unless the development qualifies as exempt under the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024) and that every planning permission granted for the development of land in England shall be deemed to have been granted subject to the condition that development must not be begun unless a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority and the planning authority has approved the Plan.

The Biodiversity Gain Plan must show how the development will achieve the required minimum 10% BNG using the statutory biodiversity metric tool, and must demonstrate how the habitats will be managed and maintained for 30 years, starting from the date the development is completed. Off-site gains (on unregistered sites) and significant on-site enhancements will be secured over this period by way of a Legal Agreement.

- The development qualifies as 'de minimis' under Regulation 4 of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024

Conclusions:

The proposal would provide an appropriate reuse of an existing rural building to deliver small-scale employment floorspace, supporting the rural economy whilst preserving the character and appearance of the countryside. The development would not result in unacceptable impacts upon neighbouring residential amenity, highway safety, biodiversity or water neutrality, and is considered to accord with the relevant policies of the HDPF and the NPPF. Accordingly, the application is recommended for approval.

In the event that planning permission is granted, a CIL Liability Notice will be issued thereafter. CIL payments are payable on commencement of development.

Recommendation: Application Permitted

Conditions:

- 1 **Standard Time Condition:** The development hereby permitted shall begin before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 2 **Regulatory Condition:** If, during development, contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site then no further development shall be carried out until a remediation strategy has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority detailing how this unsuspected contamination shall be dealt with. The remediation strategy shall be implemented as approved.

Reason: To ensure that no unacceptable risks are caused to humans, controlled waters or the wider environment during and following the development works and to ensure that any pollution is dealt with in accordance with Policies 24 and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

- 3 **Regulatory Condition:** The materials and finishes of all new external walls, windows and roofs of the development hereby permitted shall match in type, colour and texture those of the existing building.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

- 4 **Regulatory Condition:** No externally located plant or equipment shall be installed or operated without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority by way of formal application.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of neighbouring properties and in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

- 5 **Regulatory Condition:** No external lighting or floodlighting shall be installed other than with the permission of the Local Planning Authority by way of formal application.

Reason: In the interests of the amenities of the locality and in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

- 7 **Regulatory Condition:** The offices hereby approved shall not be used outside of 08:00 hours to 18:00 hours Mondays to Fridays and 08:00 hours to 13:00 hours on Saturdays nor at any time on Sundays, Bank, or public Holidays.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of adjacent occupiers in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

- 8 **Regulatory Condition:** The use hereby permitted shall be for the purposes of office accommodation under Class E(g)(i) of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987(as amended by The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020) (or any order amending or revoking and/or re-enacting these Orders only, and for no other purpose whatsoever, without express planning consent from the Local Planning Authority first being obtained.

Reason: Changes of use as permitted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order or Use Classes Order 1987 are not considered appropriate in this case due to the countryside location under Policy 10 and 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

POSITIVE AND PROACTIVE STATEMENT

Statement pursuant to Article 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received, in order to be able to, where possible, grant permission.

Plans list for: DC/26/0581

Schedule of plans/documents **approved:**

Plan Type	Description	Drawing Number	Received Date
Elevation & Floor plan	EXISTING GROUND AND FIRST	DENRA/2037/1	08.04.2026

	FLOOR PLAN AND FRONT, REAR AND SIDE ELEVATIONS		
Elevation & Floor plan	PROPOSED GROUND AND FIRST FLOOR PLAN AND FRONT, REAR AND SIDE ELEVATIONS	DENRA/2037/2 REV A	08.04.2026
Site plan	SITE LAYOUT PLAN	DENRA/2037/3 REV A	08.04.2026
Design & Access Statement		NONE	08.04.2026
Location plan	LOCATION PLAN	NONE	08.04.2026

DELEGATED

Case Officer sign/initial Shazia Penne Date: 02.07.2026

Authorising Officer sign/initial RHERMITAGE Date: 03/07/2026