

Our Ref.: CEA

24th April 2026

NJA Town Planning Ltd
The Beehive,
City Place,
Crawley
West Sussex RH6 0PA

Dear Sirs,

St John's Farm, Trout Lane, Brooks Green, Horsham RH13 0JN

This letter relates to the planning application in respect to St John's Farm, Trout Lane ("the Property") for the planning application to *demolish the current commercial units and erect 4 new dwellings*.

I confirm I am a Chartered Surveyor, qualifying in 2019 as a Professional Member within the Rural Division of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, having completed a Masters in Rural Estate Management at the Royal Agricultural University and has since qualified at a Fellow of the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers. I am a Chartered Surveyor and Registered Valuer for H.J. Burt & Son, Chartered Surveyors & Estate Agents of Steyning and Henfield, West Sussex. I have a number of years' experience in valuing, letting and selling properties and land in West Sussex and the wider South-East.

H.J. Burt & Son is the longest standing independent estate agents in the area, having been established in 1887 and with a team of qualified property experts who are regularly involved in the valuing, marketing and subsequent transactions of agricultural and rural property.

In the last 18 months, planning policy with England has evolved following the changes in government and their desirer to increase housing supply and the addition of the term "grey belt" allowing for further land to be developed in areas where usually there is a strong presumption against it. Locally, Horsham District Council have previously been in the process of drafting and looking to adopt an updated Local Plan, however, in April 2025 the Planning Inspectorate recommended that the Local plan was withdrawn, with a new updated Local Plan to follow. At this stage and following some recent planning appeals, it is deemed that Horsham District Council ('HDC') has a housing land supply well below the 5 years required. With the updated national policies and the lack of housing in HDC, has meant that there is a significant requirement for sites capable of providing additional housing within the region.

The Property is currently a brownfield site housing several severely dilapidated storage units, located off Trout Lane and being some 3.5 miles from the centre of Horsham. The Property benefits from an established private access, directly off Trout Lane, which is shared with two residential properties.

The property is currently in a state of significant disrepair and, in its present condition, is not considered suitable for occupation as commercial units. Due to its deteriorated state, it is unlikely that the buildings would meet current Health and Safety standards or attract potential tenants without requiring them to invest significantly or needing substantial rent-free periods prior to occupation. The substantial investment required to bring the property up to a usable condition, combined with its poor overall state, would make it unfeasible for commercial leasing without extensive remediation and thus likely lead to further periods of being left redundant, which in turn invites potential risks of security or anti-social behaviour at the property, being that it is located alongside a public footpath.



Site Plan:

It is understood that the buildings may comprise asbestos-containing materials, although the precise condition and potential risk of these materials have not been fully assessed. The presence of hazardous materials, along with the extensive works required to address the property's condition, suggests that demolition and rebuilding would be the most practical, cost effective and risk adverse approach.



In line with current Health and Safety regulations, including the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012, it is believed having inspected the buildings on site, that the buildings are not suitable for commercial use in their current state. Several structures on-site, including the steel portal frame buildings with metal and timber cladding, appear to be in poor structural condition, with some showing signs of being structurally unsound. The majority of the buildings were constructed prior to 1999, when the use of asbestos in building materials was still common. While asbestos is most likely to be present in roof materials, there may be further risks from other components.

The absence of proper maintenance and the potential deterioration of these materials present significant health concerns. As the appended photographs show, some of the buildings are no fit for purpose outside of agricultural use, however, due to the nature of their construction and their age, they are now not fit for

modern agricultural practices. Therefore, in order to bring the property to an acceptable standard for commercial use, it is anticipated that demolition and rebuilding would be necessary

Please note this is not a building survey nor have we carried out a building or structural survey on the Property.



Evidence of current unsuitable condition of buildings

Current Need

As stated above, the buildings are in a dilapidated condition and have been vacant for a period of time, being that they are not suitable for commercial occupation and use. Demand for out of town small commercial spaces has fallen since the pandemic and subsequent economic downturn. The access to the Property, is down an unrestricted country road, meaning that the Property is not suited to all commercial uses or vehicles. Recently permission has been granted for similar sites located other planning permissions including Arun Feedmills. Arun Feedmills, has been granted permission for 8 residential units, however, the site has a fall back of consented commercial planning permission, At the time of the planning application, the Council felt that housing need overrode the employment need as per Policy 9. Therefore, the same consideration should be given to the subject Property, being that location and other factors are comparable.

Two further recent appeals for commercial development within the vicinity highlighted the fact that the need for employment space is limited in the region and that there is surplus employment space in Horsham.



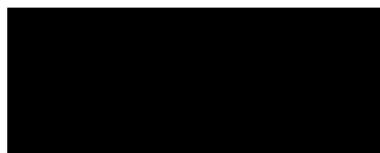
Commercial Market

The **RICS UK Commercial Property Market Survey for Q2 2025** published on 28th July 2025 “*indicates a stagnant market overall, with demand for both occupiers and investors in neutral territory*” and that that figure has now lowered. Additionally, the **Carter Jonas Commercial Market Outlook for January 2026** states that “*In the UK, the latest data from the Office for National Statistics show that GDP growth remained weak in Q3 2025, increasing by 0.1% following growth of 0.3% in Q2. Annual GDP growth stands at 1.3%, driven by services and construction, while production output declined. GDP per head showed no growth over the quarter but was 0.8% higher than a year earlier*” In terms of the labour market “*conditions have continued to soften, with employment edging lower and unemployment rising to its highest level since early 2021*”. In terms of the occupier market, Carter Jonas’ outlook reports that activity had been subdued in recent months, with demand being “*shaped by a variety of economic, political and technological drivers, including requirements for logistics and last-mile distribution hubs, with the gradual shift online likely to continue*”. It also comments that “*vacancy rates have been rising over recent quarters, due to a combination of slowing demand and rising supply, with a number of retailers and 3PLs closing distribution centres as they look to consolidate their operations*”. These results are echoed by other firms throughout the UK.

The above market trends, coupled with new national planning policy and increased targets, as well as Horsham District Council falling behind on their current 5 year housing land supply, means that there is a proven need for additional residential accommodation within the region, and the subject Property provides a previously developed (‘brownfield’) site which is currently un-used and no longer suitable for its current use of commercial.

It is therefore our opinion that permission for the demolition of the dilapidated buildings and erection of 4 dwellings to contribute towards the much needed housing supply of the locality is permitted.

Yours faithfully,

A large black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Claire E Adcroft.

Claire E Adcroft BSc (Hons) MSc MRICS FAAV