Horsham District Council

DELEGATED APPLICATIONS - ASSESSMENT SHEET

APPLICATION NO./ADDRESS:
DC/25/1957
Oaklands Stud, Forest Grange, Horsham, West Sussex, RH13 6HX

DESCRIPTION:
Demolition of pole barn. Conversion of existing stable building into 1no. detached dwelling with associated works.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

DC/25/0462	Conversion and extensions to existing stables and pole barn to form 1no. detached dwelling and associated works.	Application Refused on 23.07.2025 *Appeal Withdrawn*
DC/24/1499	Removal of Condition 4 of previously approved application CG/33/94 (Erection of stables and haybarn) relating to the tie to the existing dwelling at Tanglewood.	Application Permitted on 13.01.2025
DC/24/0974	Proposed change of use of land from equestrian to a mixed use including settled gypsy accommodation site comprising 2 pitches. Retention of existing hardstanding and proposed biodiversity enhancements (Retrospective)	Application Refused on 24.10.2024 *Appeal Dismissed (ref: APP/Z3825/W/24/3355610)*
DC/22/2126	Application to confirm the continuous mixed use of equestrian facility including the stationing and occupation of a caravan / mobile home providing independent accommodation for a period in excess of ten years prior to the date of this application (Lawful Development Certificate - Existing).	Application Refused on 06.03.2023
DC/22/2125	Erection of detached barn and laying of hardstanding (Retrospective).	Application Refused on 02.05.2023
DC/25/0462	Conversion and extensions to existing stables and pole barn to form 1no. detached dwelling and associated works.	Application Refused on 23.07.2025

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

The application site comprises a private equestrian facility located to the north of Forest Grange, approximately 1km from the built-up boundary of Horsham. It lies within the High Weald National Landscape (formerly AONB) and immediately adjacent to St Leonards Forest, which is designated as ancient woodland and priority habitat.

The site is rural in character, accessed via a private road, and forms part of the wider setting of Forest Grange, a Grade II listed Jacobean-style country house located opposite the site to the south. The site comprises a collection of equestrian-related buildings, including a stable block and adjacent open-sided pole barn, a sand school, paddocks, and associated infrastructure.

The land lies outside the defined built-up area boundary and is therefore designated countryside for the purposes of planning policy.

The application site is accessed via Forest Grange and is surrounded predominantly by agricultural and equestrian land uses, with sporadic residential properties located along the lane.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION

The application seeks full planning permission for the removal of an existing pole barn and the conversion of the existing stable building adjacent to form 1no detached self-build 2-bedroom dwelling

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Horsham District Planning Framework (2015):
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 24 - Strategic Policy: Environmental Protection
Policy 25 - Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
Policy 26 - Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection
Policy 29 - Equestrian Development
Policy 30 - Protected Landscapes
Policy 31 - Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
Policy 32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development
Policy 33 - Development Principles
Policy 34 - Cultural and Heritage Assets
Policy 35 - Strategic Policy: Climate Change
Policy 36 - Strategic Policy: Appropriate Energy Use
Policy 37 - Sustainable Construction
Policy 38 - Strategic Policy: Flooding
Policy 39 - Strategic Policy: Infrastructure Provision
Policy 40 - Sustainable Transport
Policy 41 - Parking

Neighbourhood Plan:
Colgate has not been designated as a Neighbourhood Plan area.

Horsham District Local Plan (2023-40) (Regulation 19):
Strategic Policy 1: Sustainable Development
Strategic Policy 2: Development Hierarchy
Strategic Policy 3: Settlement Expansion
Strategic Policy 6: Climate Change
Strategic Policy 7: Appropriate Energy Use
Strategic Policy 8: Sustainable Design and Construction
Strategic Policy 9: Water Neutrality
Strategic Policy 10: Flooding
Strategic Policy 11: Environmental Protection
Strategic Policy 13: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
Strategic Policy 14: Countryside Protection
Strategic Policy 16: Protected Landscapes
Strategic Policy 19: Development Quality
Strategic Policy 20: Development Principles
Policy 21: Heritage Assets and Managing Change within the Historic Environment
Strategic Policy 24: Sustainable Transport
Policy 25: Parking

Policy 32: Conversion of Agricultural and Rural Buildings to Commercial, Community and Residential Uses
Strategic Policy 37: Housing Provision
Strategic Policy 38: Meeting Local Housing Needs
Policy 39: Affordable Housing

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

Planning Advice Notes:
Shaping Development in Horsham (SDPAN)
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 Arboricultural Officer: Comment (23/12/2025) [Summary]
The site contains existing hardstanding, stable buildings and a pole barn located close to the southern boundary, beyond which lies a strip of remnant woodland comprising mature beech, sweet chestnut and pine trees with associated understorey vegetation. The Tree Officer advises that the trees can be adequately protected from direct construction impacts through the implementation of appropriate tree protection measures.

The Tree Officer raised concerns regarding the veteran beech tree (T2), which is subject to Tree Preservation Order TPO/1574 (November 2024). The tree is of high landscape and irreplaceable habitat value, and evidence of crown dieback may be associated with historic engineering works and service trenching undertaken during previous equestrian development.

The submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment categorises the tree as “U” grade and recommends extensive crown works, including crown cleaning and lifting. The Tree Officer disagrees with this classification and proposed arboricultural works, advising that:

- The tree should not be managed as part of the development proposals;
- Deadwood and crossing branches should be retained where reasonably possible due to the tree’s veteran status and conservation value;
- The term “crown cleaning” is not supported by current arboricultural standards (BS3998:2010).

The Tree Officer highlights that the National Planning Policy Framework affords strong protection to veteran trees, including protection of their rooting environment. Based on the size of the veteran beech tree, a minimum buffer of approximately 21 metres from development is recommended, including areas of residential curtilage.

While the proposal does not introduce new structures or hardstanding within this buffer, the change of use to residential curtilage has the potential to place increased pressure on the tree’s root protection area and may give rise to future demands for pruning or removal.

The Tree Officer advises that the proposal is acceptable in principle, provided appropriate safeguards are secured. Any permission should include conditions to:

- Restrict further domestic development within the recommended buffer zone of the veteran beech tree;
- Potentially amend the defined residential curtilage to reflect the minimum buffer requirement;
- Require tree protection fencing to be installed and retained for the duration of construction;

- Secure a revised Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan, which fully accounts for the veteran tree buffer, either prior to commencement or as part of the approved submissions

HDC Environmental Health Officer: Comment [Summary]
The Council's EH Officer confirmed in their response that the comments made regarding DC/25/0462 still apply. These are noted below:

- Commercial or agricultural buildings can be subject to significant contamination risks arising from their use, construction and storage of machinery equipment fuels or other chemicals. Potentially hazardous materials may also be incorporated in made ground, yards and hard standings.
- In accordance with the recommendations of the Planning Practice Guidance, information is required on these matters and a preliminary risk assessment including a site walkover should be provided to ensure the site can be made safe and suitable for the development.
- Rainwater harvesting is proposed to provide potable water to the development, and this is will also be required to supply water for sanitary purposes such as washing machines and dishwashers

Ecology Consultant: No Objection [Summary]
The Council's Appointed Ecologist has reviewed the submitted Preliminary Ecological Assessment (Sylvatica Ecology Ltd., January 2025). The assessment confirms that the existing stable building (Building B1) has negligible bat roost potential and that no trees are located within the application site. While trees are present to the south of the red line boundary, further assessment would only be required should future amendments affect these trees. On this basis, no additional bat surveys are required at this time.

The Ecologist supports the submitted Precautionary Method Statement for mobile protected and Priority species, including hedgehog, and recommends that this be secured by condition and implemented in full. Subject to this, sufficient ecological information has been provided to enable determination of the application. Comments on Great Crested Newts are to be provided separately by the Nature Space Partnership.

The Ecologist advises that the mitigation measures identified within the Preliminary Ecological Assessment should be secured by condition to ensure the protection and enhancement of protected and Priority species. A Wildlife Friendly Lighting Strategy is also supported and should be required by condition, with details to be submitted prior to occupation to demonstrate measures to avoid light spill and disturbance to foraging and commuting bats.

The Ecologist further supports the proposed biodiversity enhancement measures set out within the Preliminary Ecological Assessment, which would contribute to biodiversity net gains in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and the Council's statutory biodiversity duty. Subject to the imposition of appropriate planning conditions, the proposal is considered ecologically acceptable.

Landscape Consultant: Objection [Summary]
We consider the LVIA underestimates both the susceptibility of the site and the magnitude of change arising from the proposals. Whilst the stable block is existing, the proposed change from equestrian to residential use would alter the baseline landscape condition and introduce a domestic character that is neither visually nor functionally neutral. Given the site's contribution to the High Weald National Character Area, the recognised qualities of tranquillity and remoteness, and its role within the relevant local landscape character areas, the landscape should be afforded a higher susceptibility rating than that applied.

Furthermore, the absence of clear information regarding the wider application site, including proposed land use, boundary treatments and ancillary domestic features, prevents a robust assessment of likely effects.

Final Comment Objection (21.09.2026)

The Council's appointed landscape consultants, Place Services, have reviewed the applicant's further landscape submissions and accompanying block plan. They maintain their previous objection and remain not supportive on landscape grounds.

Place Services acknowledge that the stable building already exists and that the proposal no longer includes conversion of the pole barn. However, they reiterate that their principal concern relates not to the existing building itself, but to the proposed change from a rural equestrian use to a residential use and the resulting impact on landscape character.

They advise that the removal of the pole barn and its replacement with a lawn enclosed by post-and-rail fencing would itself introduce a more domestic character into the site, resulting in urbanising influences and further subdivision of the landscape.

Place Services note that the revised plans identify a domestic curtilage boundary; however, insufficient information has been provided regarding the treatment of this boundary and the wider landscape proposals within the application site. They consider that the additional information does not adequately address their earlier concerns regarding the domestication of the site.

The consultant further advises that additional subdivision of the land would be harmful to the characteristic historic assart field pattern which is a recognised component of the High Weald National Landscape, National Character Area 122 High Weald, the West Sussex Landscape Strategy HW2 High Weald Forests and the Horsham Landscape Assessment L1 St Leonard's Forest Landscape Character Area.

Place Services conclude that the submitted revisions provide little assurance that the development would avoid detrimental domestication and subdivision of the landscape. They remain concerned that the proposed change from equestrian use to residential use would adversely affect the character and appearance of the High Weald National Landscape and conflict with the statutory duty to seek to conserve and enhance its natural beauty.

Southern Water: No Objection
Subject to conditions

WSCC Highways: No Objection [Summary]
Access to the maintained highway network is at the two junctions with Forest Road. The proposed development is not anticipated to give rise to a material intensification of use of these junctions.

An inspection of collision data provided to WSCC by Sussex Police from a period of the last five years reveals no recorded collisions attributed to road layout within the vicinity of the junctions with Forest Road/Forest Grange. Therefore, there is no evidence to suggest they have operated unsafely or that the proposals would exacerbate an existing safety concern.

The WSCC Car Parking Demand Calculator indicates that a dwelling of this size and location would require two car parking spaces. From inspection of the plans, there appears to be space within the site for this parking demand to be accommodated, with space for turning. The LPA may wish to secure cycle parking provision, to promote alternative sustainable travel in the local area.

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:
26 letters of Objection have been received from 13 addresses, including 3 anonymous objections. These object to the application on the following grounds:

- The proposal would result in the introduction of a residential use within the countryside and within the High Weald National Landscape.

- The proposal would harm the character, appearance, tranquillity, scenic beauty and special qualities of the High Weald National Landscape through domestication, urbanisation and residential activity.
- The proposal conflicts with previous planning decisions, appeal decisions and enforcement proceedings relating to residential development on the site.
- The development would be contrary to the spatial strategy of the Horsham District Planning Framework and represents an unsustainable form of development in a countryside location remote from services and facilities.
- The proposal would introduce a residential use north of the access lane, contrary to the established pattern of development within Forest Grange and findings of previous appeal decisions.
- Harm would arise from residential paraphernalia, lighting, vehicles, parking, fencing, amenity areas and other domestic features associated with residential occupation.
- The proposal would adversely affect the setting of Forest Grange Manor, a Grade II listed building.
- Concerns are raised regarding the adequacy of surface water and foul drainage arrangements.
- Concerns are raised regarding impacts on protected trees, veteran trees, ancient woodland, biodiversity, protected species, dark skies and the wider landscape setting.
- The proposal is considered visually intrusive and not in keeping with the character of the area or the Forest Grange Estate.
- Concerns are raised regarding highway safety, access arrangements, parking provision and the site's dependence upon private vehicles.
- The proposal could contribute to cumulative landscape harm, incremental urbanisation and set a precedent for further residential development within the High Weald National Landscape.
- Disputes regarding land ownership, title boundaries and adverse possession.
- Private legal rights of access and rights over the private road.
- Alleged trespass onto third-party land.
- Ongoing or proposed civil proceedings between the parties.
- Assertions that the application is made for financial or commercial gain.
- Requests that the Council prevent or restrict future planning applications from being submitted.
- General objections to the conduct of the applicant or previous development on the site.
- Matters relating to building regulations, private utility arrangements, electricity supply resilience and occupiers' living arrangements.
- Concerns regarding where horses may be accommodated should the conversion proceed.

No letters for Support have been received.

Parish Comments:
Colgate Parish Council: Objection
The proposed design and conversion of existing wooden stables is not in keeping with the other properties on the Forest Grange Estate. The proposed site is within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The development is not essential, and it is not in a sustainable location. Although a report is provided by the Structural and Calculations Inspection, this is only a visual report and not a structural report.

No information is provided in the application regarding utilities at the site. No information is given as to water supply and sewage. If there is an electricity outage, there will be no potable water in the property. The current Klargister at the site should have been removed. There is no mention of how electricity or gas will be provided to the site. The applicant has horses on site, which were previously housed in the stables that are going to be converted. Where are the horses going to be housed and what water will be available for them.

Member Comments:
Councillor Tony Hogben (Summary)
Cllr Hogben objects to the proposal on the grounds that it conflicts with the Development Plan spatial strategy and would introduce an unjustified residential use within the countryside and the High Weald National Landscape. Significant weight is placed on the extensive planning and enforcement history of the site, including previous refusals and dismissed appeals relating to residential development and

unauthorised residential occupation. The representation contends that previous Inspector decisions identified harm arising from residential domestication and urbanising effects, which remain relevant to the current proposal. Concerns are also raised regarding impacts on the National Landscape, the setting of Forest Grange Manor, sustainability of the location, trees, drainage, ownership and curtilage issues, access arrangements, and whether the proposal represents a genuine conversion rather than substantial rebuilding. The representation further argues that no material planning circumstances have arisen to justify a departure from previous decisions affecting the site.

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

Background:

This application follows the refusal of a similar application to convert the building and the adjacent pole barn to a single dwelling under DC/25/0462. This previous application was refused for the following reasons:

1. *The development would be located beyond a defined built-up area on a site not allocated within the Development Plan and would not be essential to this countryside location. The development would therefore be contrary to the overarching spatial strategy and hierarchy approach of concentrating development within defined settlements and advocating a planned approach to settlement expansion, contrary to policies 1, 2, 4 and 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015). Notwithstanding the absence of a five-year land housing supply, and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) at paragraph 11(d), it is not considered that there are any material considerations in this instance which would outweigh harm arising from conflict with Local and Neighbourhood Plan policies in these regards.*

2. *The design and scale of the development particularly the enclosure of the pole barn, introduction of large, glazed openings, and domestic-style materials results in a block-like and suburban appearance at odds with the site's rural character. Additionally, the proposal would introduce a formalised residential use and associated paraphernalia that would domesticate and degrade the natural, rural character of the site, in conflict with the purposes of the High Weald National Landscape. The proposal fails to respect the setting of the High Weald National Landscape, conserve or enhance the visual and spatial qualities of the protected landscape and is contrary to Policies 25, 30, 32, and 33 of the HDPF.*

3. *The application fails to provide a tree survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment, or adequate tree protection details despite the presence of ancient and TPO-protected trees. This omission prevents proper assessment of potential harm and risks indirect impacts such as future pressure for pruning or removal. The proposal is therefore contrary to HDPF Policy 30.*

This current revised scheme differs from the refused proposal in the following key respects:

- The pole barn is no longer proposed to be converted or extended
- Built form has been reduced

- Development is confined solely to the existing stable structure
- Overall residential floorspace has been reduced
- External alterations have been simplified
- Inclusion of tree surveys

These changes are set out in detail within the submitted plans and supporting Planning Statement.

These amendments are acknowledged. However, the fundamental nature of the proposal remains the creation of a new isolated dwelling in a countryside and sensitive landscape location. The acceptability of the scheme therefore remains to be assessed against the Development Plan, the site's location, and current national policy.

Principle of Development:

The site lies outside any defined built-up area boundary and within the countryside for the purposes of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015). It is also located within the High Weald National Landscape, a nationally designated Protected Landscape afforded a high level of policy protection.

The Development Plan establishes a clear spatial strategy through Policies 2, 3, 4 and 26, which seeks to focus new residential development within settlements where services, facilities and sustainable transport opportunities are available. Development within the countryside is more restricted, particularly where proposals would not support an essential rural need or would result in harm to countryside character.

At a national level, Policy S5 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026) identifies certain forms of development that may be acceptable outside settlements. These include the reuse, extension, alteration or replacement of existing buildings of permanent and substantial construction and the redevelopment of previously developed land, including through a material change of use to residential use.

The proposal relates to the conversion of an existing lawful stable building of permanent construction. Officers therefore acknowledge that the proposal potentially falls within the categories of development identified by Policy S5(1)(c) and S5(1)(d) of the Framework and that national policy affords support in principle to the reuse of existing buildings and previously developed land in appropriate circumstances.

However, this support is not unconditional. Policy S5 requires development proposals outside settlements to be assessed against the national decision-making policies of the Framework as a whole and only supported where the benefits are not substantially outweighed by adverse effects. Policy S5(2) specifically identifies circumstances where development should not be supported, including where proposals fail to comply with policies that indicate development should be refused.

In this regard, the site occupies a rural and relatively isolated location accessed via a private, unlit country lane with no footways and limited opportunities for travel other than by private motor vehicle. The site is not physically well-related to any settlement and is remote from day-to-day services and facilities. Future occupiers would therefore be heavily reliant on private car travel for most journeys. Officers consider that the proposal would not support sustainable patterns of movement and would conflict with the objectives of Policy TR3, which requires development to be located where it limits the need to travel, particularly by private car, and offers a genuine choice of transport modes. The proposal would similarly conflict with Policy CC2, which seeks to support climate change mitigation through sustainable patterns of development and by locating development where dependence on private vehicle use is minimised.

Furthermore, the site lies within the High Weald National Landscape. Policy N4 of the NPPF requires development within Protected Landscapes to be limited in scale and extent and sensitively located and designed so as to avoid harm to their statutory purposes and special qualities. Substantial weight must be given to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of these designated landscapes. The proposal's compliance with Policy N4 is therefore a significant consideration and is assessed in detail below.

Whilst Officers acknowledge that the proposal benefits from support under aspects of Policy S5 through the re-use of an existing building, such support is not unconditional and the proposal must be assessed against the Framework as a whole. Particular regard must be had to the site's accessibility, its relationship to services and facilities, the promotion of sustainable patterns of development, and the protection afforded to the High Weald National Landscape. These considerations are assessed in detail below and form part of the overall planning balance.

Landscape Character, Design and Visual Impact

Policy 25 of the Horsham District Planning Framework seeks to protect and enhance landscape character and the natural environment. Policy 30 requires development within the High Weald National Landscape to conserve and enhance its natural beauty, whilst Policies 32 and 33 require development to achieve a high standard of design that responds positively to local character and distinctiveness. These objectives are reflected in Policy N4 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026), which requires development within Protected Landscapes to be limited in scale and extent and sensitively located and designed so as to avoid harm to their statutory purposes and special qualities. Substantial weight must be given to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of such areas.

The application site occupies a rural position within the High Weald National Landscape and forms part of a wider landscape characterised by woodland, paddocks, equestrian uses and dispersed rural development. The site contributes to the character of National Character Area 122 High Weald and lies within the St Leonard's Forest Landscape Character Area, where qualities of tranquillity, remoteness and the historic pattern of assart fields are recognised as important components of landscape character.

The proposal has been supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and subsequent landscape submissions on behalf of the applicant. These conclude that the landscape effects arising from the development would be limited. However, the Council's appointed landscape consultants, Place Services, have reviewed the submitted information and maintain their objection to the proposal. They advise that, whilst the stable building itself is existing, the proposal would fundamentally alter the character and function of the site through the introduction of a permanent residential use in place of the existing equestrian use.

The amendments made since the refusal of application DC/25/0462 are acknowledged. In particular, the removal of the proposed conversion of the pole barn has reduced the overall extent of built development and simplified the physical form of the scheme. The physical alterations to the stable building itself are relatively modest and, in isolation, would not give rise to significant visual harm.

However, Place Services advise that the principal issue is not the appearance of the converted building itself, but the consequences arising from the change from a rural equestrian use to a residential use. They remain concerned that the proposal would result in the domestication and subdivision of the site through the introduction of residential curtilage, domestic activity, lawned areas, fencing, lighting, vehicles and other residential paraphernalia. In particular, they consider that the replacement of the pole barn with a formal lawn area would itself introduce a domestic landscape treatment that is not characteristic of the site's existing rural equestrian setting.

The revised block plan introduces an internal domestic curtilage boundary. However, Place Services advise that this does not adequately address their concerns regarding the wider landscape effects of the proposal. They note that insufficient information has been provided regarding the treatment of the curtilage boundary and wider landscape management within the application site. Furthermore, they consider that additional subdivision of the land would be harmful to the historic assart field pattern which forms a recognised characteristic of the High Weald landscape.

Whilst the removal of the pole barn reduces built form, the development would nevertheless introduce a permanent residential planning unit into a location currently characterised by rural equestrian use. The resulting residential occupation, associated curtilage, domestic activity and landscape alterations would materially alter the character and appearance of the site and would erode the rural qualities, tranquillity

and openness that contribute positively to the character of this part of the High Weald National Landscape.

Accordingly, Officers conclude that the proposal would fail to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, landscape character and special qualities of the High Weald National Landscape. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies 25, 30, 32 and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) and Policy N4 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026).

Trees

Policy 32 of the Horsham District Planning Framework requires development to conserve and enhance landscape features, including trees of amenity value, and to ensure that appropriate protection measures are incorporated where necessary.

In this instance, the proposal would not introduce any new built development or hardstanding within the root protection area of the veteran beech tree subject to Tree Preservation Order TPO/1574. The development is confined to the footprint of the existing stable building and includes the removal of the pole barn, resulting in no intensification of built form adjacent to the woodland boundary.

The Tree Officer confirms that direct construction impacts to retained trees could largely be mitigated through conditions and protective measures. However, concern remains regarding the long-term implications of introducing a permanent residential use within close proximity to the veteran beech tree and its rooting environment, including future pressure for pruning, management and domestication within the recommended buffer area. These concerns materially overlap with the wider landscape and domestication impacts identified elsewhere in this report.

Whilst the Tree Officer raises no objection in principle subject to conditions, the introduction of residential curtilage in proximity to the veteran beech tree reinforces concerns regarding domestication and future management pressures. This matter is therefore more appropriately considered within the wider landscape and National Landscape assessment.

Residential Amenity

Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework seeks to ensure that development does not result in unacceptable harm to the amenity of existing or future occupiers through impacts such as overlooking, loss of privacy, overbearing development or noise disturbance.

The application site is located within a dispersed rural setting, with neighbouring dwellings situated at a considerable distance from the proposed development. The nearest residential properties are well separated from the host building and are screened by intervening vegetation, boundary treatments and changes in land levels.

The proposal involves the conversion of an existing building without extensions or increases in height, and no additional built form is proposed that would materially alter relationships with neighbouring properties. Given the separation distances involved, the limited scale of the development, and the absence of new openings that would give rise to direct overlooking, the proposal would not result in any loss of privacy, overbearing impact or unacceptable disturbance. No objections have been raised by Environmental Health in respect of residential amenity

Accordingly, the development is considered acceptable in residential amenity terms and compliant with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework.

Highways Impacts:

Policy 40 of the Horsham District Planning Framework requires development to ensure safe and suitable access for all users and to avoid unacceptable impacts on the local highway network.

The application site is accessed via an existing private driveway serving Forest Grange. The proposal would utilise this established access arrangement and would not introduce any alterations to the point of access onto the public highway.

The development would result in a single additional dwelling and would therefore generate a very limited level of vehicular movements. Given the modest scale of the proposal, the reuse of an existing access, and the low baseline traffic levels associated with the former equestrian use, the development would not give rise to a material increase in traffic or highway safety concerns.

Adequate on-site parking and turning provision is available within the site, ensuring vehicles can enter and leave in a forward gear, in accordance with adopted parking standards.

In these circumstances, the proposal is not considered to result in severe residual cumulative impacts on the highway network, as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework. The development is therefore considered acceptable in highway safety terms and compliant with Policy 40 of the Horsham District Planning Framework. However, whilst the proposal is acceptable in highway safety terms, this does not equate to the site being a sustainable location for residential development.

Ecology

Policy 31 of the Horsham District Planning Framework seeks to conserve and enhance biodiversity, protect designated sites and protected species, and ensure that development proposals deliver biodiversity net gains where possible. This is consistent with the biodiversity and natural environment objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026), which require planning decisions to contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, support nature recovery, minimise impacts on ecological assets, secure appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures, and provide strong protection for irreplaceable habitats.

The application is supported by a Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) prepared by Sylvatica Ecology Ltd (January 2025). The survey was undertaken in accordance with BS42020:2013 and relevant Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) guidance and included a site walkover, habitat assessment and desk-based review of ecological records.

The PEA confirms that the site is not subject to any statutory ecological designations. The nearest Sites of Special Scientific Interest are located approximately 600 metres and 1.4 kilometres from the site respectively and given the small scale of the proposal and the nature of the development, no adverse impacts on designated sites are anticipated.

The site itself comprises developed land in the form of existing buildings, hardstanding and areas of modified grassland of low ecological value. No trees are located within the application boundary, and no habitat loss is proposed as part of the development.

The existing stable building (Building B1) was subject to a Preliminary Roost Assessment and was assessed as having negligible potential for roosting bats, with no evidence of bat activity recorded. As such, no further bat surveys are required. While mature trees and hedgerows located to the south of the red line boundary provide some potential for foraging and commuting bats, these habitats will be retained and not directly affected by the proposal.

With regard to other protected species, the assessment concludes that the habitats present on site have limited potential to support reptiles, amphibians, dormice or badgers. Although great crested newts have been recorded within the wider area, the nearest waterbody within 250 metres is a managed carp fishing lake and is considered highly unlikely to support breeding populations. Given the absence of suitable habitat and the limited scale of works, the risk of impact to great crested newts is considered negligible.

The PEA recommends the implementation of precautionary working methods for mobile protected and Priority species, including hedgehog, and confirms that these measures can be secured through condition. The report also recommends the submission of a sensitive Wildlife Friendly Lighting Strategy

to avoid light spill affecting commuting and foraging bats, in accordance with current Bat Conservation Trust and Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance.

In addition, the PEA identifies appropriate biodiversity enhancement measures, including native hedgerow planting, installation of bird and bat boxes and landscape improvements, which would contribute positively to biodiversity value and assist in meeting the objectives of the NPPF and the Council's statutory biodiversity duty under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Subject to mitigation and enhancement measures, no significant ecological impacts have been identified.

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 may 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 application form indicates that the proposal is intended to comprise self-build or custom housing and therefore may qualify for exemption under Regulation 8 of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024.

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 the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

Other Matters

The Ward Member and a number of third parties have drawn attention to the extensive planning and enforcement history of the site, including previous refused applications and dismissed appeals. These decisions are material considerations and have been afforded appropriate weight in the assessment. However, each application must be determined on its own merits having regard to the specific proposal before the Local Planning Authority and the current Development Plan and national policy context.

Concerns have also been raised regarding land ownership, access rights, restrictive covenants and the accuracy of the application boundary. These are primarily private legal matters and do not, in themselves, determine whether planning permission should be granted. The applicant is responsible for ensuring that the appropriate ownership certificates have been completed and that any necessary legal rights are secured prior to implementing any permission that may be granted.

Planning Balance and Conclusions:

In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The proposal seeks the conversion of an existing equestrian building to form a single dwelling within the High Weald National Landscape. Whilst Officers acknowledge the benefits arising from the re-use of an existing building and the provision of an additional dwelling, concerns remain regarding the site's sustainability credentials and the impact of the proposal on the character, appearance and special qualities of the High Weald National Landscape. These matters form the basis of the recommendation for refusal.

The Council is currently unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. Consequently, significant weight must be given to the delivery of additional housing. However, the application must still be assessed against the Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (2026) as a whole.

The proposal has also been assessed against the Council's Shaping Development in Horsham District Planning Advice Note (SDPAN). Officers consider that the proposal would not accord with the objectives of the SDPAN due to its isolated countryside location, poor accessibility to services and facilities and reliance on private vehicle travel. As such, the proposal is not considered to represent a sustainable form of development in accordance with that guidance.

The proposal would deliver a number of benefits which weigh in favour of the development.

Firstly, the proposal would provide one additional dwelling within the District at a time when the Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. In this regard, Policy HO7 of the National Planning Policy Framework recognises the importance of boosting housing supply and delivering additional homes. Whilst the contribution of a single dwelling would not materially address the District's housing shortfall in isolation, it would nevertheless make a positive contribution towards housing delivery. This benefit is afforded moderate weight.

Secondly, the proposal would facilitate the re-use of an existing rural building. The re-use of existing buildings and previously developed land is supported in principle by Policy S5 of the National Planning

Policy Framework and would result in the continued productive use of an existing structure. This benefit is afforded moderate weight.

Thirdly, the proposal would result in some economic benefits through construction activity, expenditure associated with the conversion works and future occupier spending within the local economy. Whilst these benefits are acknowledged, they would be limited in scale given the proposal relates to a single dwelling and are therefore afforded limited weight.

Finally, the amendments made since the refusal of application DC/25/0462 are acknowledged. In particular, the proposal is now confined to the existing stable building, the conversion of the pole barn has been removed from the scheme, the overall extent of built development has been reduced and supporting technical information has been submitted. Collectively, these changes attract limited weight in favour of the proposal.

Balanced against these benefits are a number of significant harms.

Whilst the proposal benefits from support in principle under aspects of Policy S5, that support is not unconditional. Policy S5 requires proposals outside settlements to be considered against the National Planning Policy Framework as a whole and does not override other policy requirements.

The site occupies a rural and relatively isolated location outside any defined settlement boundary. Access is achieved via a private and unlit country lane with no pedestrian footways and very limited opportunities to access day-to-day services and facilities other than by private car. Future occupiers would therefore be heavily reliant upon private vehicle travel for most journeys. Officers consider that the proposal would fail to promote sustainable patterns of development and movement and would conflict with the objectives of Policies CC2 and TR3. This harm is afforded moderate weight.

The proposal also conflicts with the Council's spatial strategy, which seeks to direct residential development to sustainable settlements and allocated locations where services, facilities and infrastructure are available. Whilst the scheme comprises the conversion of an existing building, it would nevertheless create a new independent residential planning unit in the countryside. This conflict with the Development Plan is afforded moderate weight.

Most significantly, the site lies within the High Weald National Landscape where substantial weight must be given to conserving and enhancing natural beauty. The Council's appointed landscape advisers, Place Services, maintain their objection and advise that the principal concern is not the conversion of the building itself, but the resulting change from a rural equestrian use to a domestic residential use. They conclude that the proposal would result in the domestication and subdivision of the site, introduce urbanising influences and fail to conserve the character, appearance and special qualities of the National Landscape. Officers agree with this assessment. This harm attracts substantial weight.

Having carefully weighed the identified benefits against the harms, Officers conclude that the provision of one additional dwelling, the re-use of an existing building and the associated economic benefits are insufficient to outweigh the conflict with the development plan, the unsustainable location of the site and, most significantly, the substantial harm arising to the character, appearance and special qualities of the High Weald National Landscape.

Accordingly, the adverse impacts of the proposal outweigh its benefits and there are no material considerations that indicate planning permission should be granted other than in accordance with the Development Plan. The application is therefore recommended for refusal.

Recommendation: Application Refused

Reasons for Refusal:

1. The development would be located beyond a defined built-up area on a site not allocated within the Development Plan and would not be essential to this countryside location. The development is therefore contrary to the overarching spatial strategy and hierarchy approach of concentrating development within defined settlements and advocating a planned approach to settlement expansion, contrary to policies 1, 2, 4 and 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015). Notwithstanding the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026), it is not considered that there are any material considerations in this instance which would outweigh harm arising from conflict with Local Plan policies in these regards.

2. The proposed development, by reason of the introduction of a permanent residential use within a rural equestrian site, together with the creation of domestic curtilage, lawned areas, domestic activity, lighting, parking, fencing, boundary treatments and other associated urbanising influences, would result in the domestication and subdivision of the site and a material erosion of its rural character. The proposal would introduce a residential character that is neither visually nor functionally neutral and would fail to maintain the open grazing and equestrian character of the site. Furthermore, the subdivision of the land would undermine the historic assart field pattern which forms an important component of the landscape character and special qualities of this part of the High Weald National Landscape. The development would therefore fail to conserve and enhance the character, scenic beauty, tranquillity and natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape, to which substantial weight must begiven, contrary to Policies 25, 30, 32 and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) and the relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026).

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/25/1957

Plan Type	Description	Drawing Number	Received Date
Floor plan	Existing ground floor	2405TA_R2_100	28.12.2025
Floor plan	Proposed ground floor	2405TA_R2_200	28.12.2025
Elevation plan	Existing and proposed north	2405TA_R2_101	28.12.2025
Elevation plan	Existing and proposed south	2405TA_R2_102	28.12.2025
Elevation plan	Existing and proposed east and west	2405TA_R2_103	28.12.2025
Location plan		2405TA_000 rev001	05.09.2026
Block plan		2405TA_001 rev001	05.09.2026

DELEGATED

Case Officer sign/initial Daniel Holmes Date: 22.09.2026

Authorising Officer sign/initial RHERMITAGE Date: 09.10.2026