Planning Inspectorate

# Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 July 2025

**by E Catcheside BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 11 July 2025**

**Appeal Ref: APP/Z3825/W/25/3358288**
**Springfield, Spring Gardens, Washington, West Sussex RH20 3BS**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Mr Allan against the decision of Horsham District Council.
- The application reference is DC/24/1100.
- The development proposed is use of building as agricultural barn.

## Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the use of building as agricultural barn at Springfield, Spring Gardens, Washington, West Sussex RH20 3BS in accordance with the terms of the application, reference DC/24/1100, subject to the following conditions:

   1) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with drawing nos. 2024.422a.01, 2024.422a.03, and 2024.422a.05 Rev A.

   2) The building shown on the approved drawings shall be used solely for the purposes of agriculture, as it is defined in Section 336(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and for no other purpose whatsoever.

## Preliminary Matters

2. The building that is the subject of this appeal was erected without planning permission and has previously been used as a gymnasium. An Enforcement Notice, which was amended but upheld at appeal[1] required the gymnasium use to cease and for the building to be demolished.

3. The appeal scheme seeks to retain the existing building solely for the storage of agricultural equipment and machinery. The submitted plans also show some alterations to the building are proposed, which would include the removal of the mezzanine floor and internal rooms, as well as alterations to the entrances to the building. On my site visit, I observed that the physical alterations had not yet been carried out. The appeal is therefore submitted part-retrospectively.

4. The Council refused the planning application because it did not consider that there was a need for the development nor did its design meet the needs of an agricultural use. However, following its review of the appeal evidence, the Council is now satisfied that the proposal would meet an agricultural need and it has stated that it does not wish to defend its sole reason for refusing the development.

[1] Appeal decision reference APP/Z3825/C/22/3306691, dated 31 May 2024

5. No third parties have objected to the proposal. Therefore, there is no evidence to suggest the development conflicts with the development plan or that there are any other considerations that would indicate that the appeal should be dismissed. As such, there are no main issues for me to consider. Indeed, given that the building would be used for agricultural purposes only, it would accord with Policy 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (excluding South Downs National Park) (November 2015) which limits development in the countryside other than in certain circumstances, including where it would support the needs of agriculture.

**Other Matters**

6. The site lies within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone, which draws its water from groundwater abstraction which could cause adverse effects on the integrity of the Arun Valley Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area, and Ramsar Site (the European Sites). The European sites include important wetland features supporting rare plants, birds and invertebrates.

7. Natural England's Position Statement for Applications within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone (September 2021 – Interim Approach) advises that development within the zone must not add to the impact. It further states that one way of demonstrating no impacts would occur would be through water neutrality, which is where the use of water in the supply area before the development is the same or lower after the development is in place.

8. The use of the building for agricultural storage, as is proposed, would not necessitate water use. Moreover, the existing toilets, changing rooms, and kitchenette are proposed for removal. Consequently, I am satisfied that the proposal would be water neutral and that it would not contribute to any harm caused to the European Sites through groundwater abstraction, On this basis, it is not necessary for me to carry out an Appropriate Assessment as would otherwise be required by The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

**Conditions**

9. I have imposed the Council's suggested condition to limit the use of the building to agriculture as this is the basis on which it is deemed acceptable in this countryside location. I have also included a condition to define the permitted plans to provide certainty over the elements of the development that have not yet been carried out, including the external alterations to the building.

10. Although not included within its list of suggested conditions, the Council has invited me to consider whether it would be reasonable to include a condition requiring the internal alteration works to be carried out. I do not find such a condition would meet the test of necessity, particularly given that condition 2 limits the use of the building to agriculture. Therefore, I have not imposed such a condition.

**Conclusion**

11. For the reasons given above the appeal should be allowed.

*E Catcheside*

INSPECTOR