



DELEGATED APPLICATIONS - ASSESSMENT SHEET

APPLICATION NO./ADDRESS:

DC/26/0471

Winterfields Farm, Golf Club Lane, Wiggonholt, Pulborough, West Sussex, RH20 2EN

DESCRIPTION:

Change of Use for the stationing of a mobile home on the site for a temporary period of 5 years in which to accommodate a rural worker.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

DC/10/2552	Retrospective change of use of bays 1 and 2 of building A from farm shop and animal/pet food sales to offices and storage in association with crane hire business and use of two rooms as osteopath's treatment rooms	Application Permitted on 22.06 2011
DC/10/2547	Use of part of the site in association with the storage and maintenance of equipment used in association with a crane hire and platform hire business (Certificate of Lawful Development - Existing)	Application Permitted on 08.03.2011
DC/04/1026	2-storey extension to form building to provide additional office accommodation	Application Permitted on 02.08.2004

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

Winterfields Farm is located within the open countryside at Wiggonholt, near Pulborough, outside any defined built-up area boundary. The site lies within the countryside and forms part of a wider rural landscape characterised by agricultural land; equestrian uses and dispersed rural development.

The holding extends to approximately 18.2 hectares (45 acres) and comprises predominantly pastureland used for grazing horses and sheep. The farm contains a large steel-framed agricultural building incorporating 14 stables and areas of hardstanding. The site operates a part-livery business and is also used for the temporary accommodation and care of racehorses associated with Ashleigh House Stud, including horses recovering from illness, injury or periods of racing activity.

Winterfields Farm forms part of a wider landholding operated by the applicant which includes Ashington Farm, comprising approximately 52.6 hectares (130 acres) of pasture used for hay and haylage production, and Ashleigh House Stud, a steeplechase racing yard extending to approximately 12.1 hectares (30 acres) containing 42 stables and associated equestrian facilities. The three holdings are described as operating as a single rural enterprise.

The proposed mobile home would be located on an existing area of hardstanding adjacent to the stable building within the farmstead.

A Grade II listed building known as Winterfield is situated to the north-west of the application site. The Heritage Statement identifies that the proposed mobile home would be located to the south-east of the listed building and separated from it by the farm access and areas of hardstanding.

The site partially lies within the South Downs National Park, where an application for the proposed development has been approved under reference SDNP/25/04977/FUL.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION

This application seeks planning permission for the change of use of land for the stationing of a mobile home to provide temporary residential accommodation for a rural worker for a period of five years. The accommodation is proposed to support the operation of Winterfields Farm and associated equestrian activities and would be occupied by a worker responsible for the day-to-day management, supervision and welfare of horses kept on the holding. The proposed mobile home would be sited on an existing area of hardstanding adjacent to the stable complex.

The supporting Planning Statement explains that the farm comprises approximately 18.2 hectares (45 acres) of pasture together with a stable building containing 14 boxes. The site accommodates a mixed rural enterprise including part-livery horses, the temporary resting and recuperation of racehorses associated with Ashleigh House Stud, and a small flock of sheep. The applicant states that, due to advancing age, assistance is required with the physical demands associated with the management of the enterprise.

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 7 - Strategic Policy: Economic Growth
Policy 9 - Employment Development
Policy 10 - Rural Economic Development
Policy 20 - Rural Workers Accommodation
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 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 39 - Strategic Policy: Infrastructure Provision
Policy 40 - Sustainable Transport
Policy 41 – Parking

Sullington and Washington Neighbourhood Plan (2019)

Policy 1 A Spatial Plan for the Parishes
Policy 8 Countryside Protection
Policy 15 Green Infrastructure & Biodiversity

Horsham District Local Plan (2023-40) (Regulation 19):

Strategic Policy 1: Sustainable Development
Strategic Policy 2: Development Hierarchy
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 17: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
Strategic Policy 19: Development Quality
Strategic Policy 20: Development Principles
Policy 31: Rural Economic Development
Policy 32: Conversion of Agricultural and Rural Buildings to Commercial, Community and Residential Uses
Policy 33: Equestrian Development
Strategic Policy 34: Tourism Facilities and Visitor Accommodation
Strategic Policy 35: Town Centre Hierarchy and Sequential Approach
Strategic Policy 36: Town Centre Uses
Strategic Policy 37: Housing Provision
Strategic Policy 38: Meeting Local Housing Needs
Policy 39: Affordable Housing
Policy 40: Improving Housing Standards in the District
Policy 44: Rural Workers Accommodation

Supplementary Planning Guidance:

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

Storrington & Sullington Parish Design Statement

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:

INTERNAL CONSULTATIONS

HDC Conservation: Comment (17.04.2026)

The proposed mobile home does not reinforce or respect the setting of the listed building. There will be a low level of less than substantial harm due to the increased dilution of the historic context of the former farmstead. However, raise no objection to a temporary permission if you are satisfied the public benefit is sufficient to warrant the accommodation to support the current business.

OUTSIDE AGENCIES

Southern Water: No response received

WSCC Highways: No Objection (23.04.2026)

The proposed introduction of a single residential dwelling to the farm site is unlikely to result in a significant increase in vehicular traffic on the local highway network. The proposal could reduce the number of peak time staff vehicle trips due to a permanent presence on site.

Reading Agricultural Consultants No objection (28.07.2026)

The applicant proposes the temporary siting of a mobile home for a period of five years. The proposed dwelling would be occupied by a full-time rural worker, being the applicant's appointed deputy, who will provide the daily management, supervision and care for all horses on site. The mobile home is

proposed to be sited opposite the existing stable building. RAC considers there is a justified essential need for a full-time worker to reside on site to meet the needs of the horses kept on site.

The applicant has provided a copy of the financial accounts for Winterfields Farm Ltd which demonstrate that the net profit can meet the financial test and the costs of employing a rural worker to assist Mr Sadler in the day-to-day care and management of the horses on site. RAC is not aware of any other residential dwellings in the immediate locality that are suitable and available and would meet the identified essential need.

RAC considers that the proposal for the temporary siting of a rural worker's dwelling for a five year period at the application site is compliant with national and local planning policy.

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS:

Representations:

None received

Parish Comments:

Storrington and Sullington Parish Council Parish Council: No Objection (14.05.2026)

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 20 of the HDPF states that outside the defined built-up area, new housing for rural workers will be supported provided that: there is a functional need for the dwelling, and the occupation of the dwelling is to support the established business use; and evidence is submitted to demonstrate the viability of the rural business for which the housing is required.

Policy 26 of the HDPF states that outside built-up area boundaries, the rural character and undeveloped nature of the countryside will be protected against inappropriate development. Any proposal must be essential to its countryside location and meet one of the identified criteria, including supporting the needs of agriculture or enabling the sustainable development of rural areas. Development must also be of a scale appropriate to its countryside setting and should not result in a significant increase in activity or harm to landscape character.

Policy 10 of the HDPF supports sustainable rural economic development where it contributes to local employment and maintains the character of the countryside. Policy 29 supports equestrian development where it is appropriate in scale, well-related to existing buildings, and compatible with its surroundings.

At a national level, Policy S5 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026) states that only certain forms of development should be approved outside settlements. This includes development for rural businesses and services where a countryside location is necessary, with proposals to be assessed against the national decision-making policies of the Framework as a whole. Policy HO11 further provides that proposals for isolated homes in the countryside should only be supported where, amongst other circumstances, there is an essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside.

The primary test, as set out in Policy HO11 of the NPPF and Policy 20 of the HDPF, is whether there is a clearly established essential need for a rural worker to reside on the site. This requires consideration of the nature and scale of the enterprise, the functional demands arising from livestock and equine management and whether those demands necessitate a continuous on-site presence

The application seeks permission for the stationing of a mobile home for a temporary period of five years to accommodate a rural worker at Winterfields Farm. The mobile home would provide accommodation for a worker who would assist in the day-to-day management of the equestrian enterprise operating from the site and would provide support to the applicant, who currently undertakes the majority of the management and welfare responsibilities associated with the horses kept on the holding.

The primary consideration is whether there is a clearly demonstrated functional need for a rural worker to reside on the site. In assessing this matter, regard has been had to the nature and scale of the enterprise, the welfare requirements of the horses kept at the holding, the frequency and nature of potential emergencies, and whether these factors necessitate a continuous on-site presence.

Winterfields Farm extends to approximately 18.2 hectares (45 acres) and contains 14 stables. The holding accommodates part-livery horses together with racehorses from Ashleigh House Stud which are rested, rehabilitated or recovering from illness or injury. The racehorses are stated to require regular monitoring, veterinary treatment and welfare checks. The wider enterprise also includes Ashington Farm and Ashleigh House Stud, which are operated as a single rural business.

The Council's independently appointed Agricultural Consultant has reviewed the submitted information, including additional details provided by the applicant's agent and financial information submitted to the Local Planning Authority. The consultant concludes that the scale and nature of the equestrian enterprise give rise to an essential need for a rural worker to be present on the site. Particular weight is attributed to the welfare requirements of horses kept within the stables and paddocks, including the need for regular supervision, late evening checks, prompt response to emergencies such as colic or a horse becoming cast, and the security of valuable livestock. The consultant also undertook a labour assessment and concluded that the enterprise generates the equivalent of approximately 1.76 full-time workers. On this basis, it is accepted that there is a justified functional need for a rural worker to reside on the holding.

In respect of financial sustainability, the Agricultural Consultant notes that the financial accounts submitted relate to Winterfields Farm Ltd as a whole and do not isolate the profitability of the agricultural and equestrian operations. Consequently, the consultant was unable to reach a definitive conclusion regarding the financial viability of the rural enterprise itself. However, it was accepted that the accounts demonstrate sufficient profitability to meet the costs associated with employing a rural worker and accommodating that worker within the proposed mobile home. Given that the proposal seeks temporary accommodation rather than a permanent dwelling, the consultant considers the information provided sufficient to demonstrate that the financial costs associated with the proposal can be met.

The Agricultural Consultant further advises that there are no available dwellings within the immediate locality which would reasonably meet the identified essential need whilst allowing a worker to remain within sight and sound of the horses kept on the holding.

Whilst the proposal would result in a new residential unit within the countryside, the evidence submitted demonstrates that the accommodation is required to support an established equestrian enterprise and

that there is an operational need for a worker to be resident on the site. The proposal is therefore considered to satisfy the essential and functional need test required by Policy 20 of the HDPF and Policy HO11(a) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026). Furthermore, given the temporary nature of the accommodation, its association with an established rural enterprise and the identified operational need, the proposal is considered to represent a form of development that is necessary to support a rural business in a countryside location. As such, it is considered acceptable in principle having regard to Policies 20 and 26 of the HDPF together with the provisions of Policies S5, E4 and HO11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026).

Design and Appearance and Impact on the Countryside and the South Downs National Park

Policies 32 and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) seek to secure high quality design that responds positively to local character and distinctiveness. Development should be of an appropriate scale, appearance and layout, integrate successfully with its surroundings, and relate sympathetically to existing development. Policy 26 further seeks to protect the rural character and undeveloped nature of the countryside from inappropriate development.

The proposal comprises the siting of a mobile home on an existing area of hardstanding adjacent to the principal stable building within Winterfields Farm. The mobile home would be positioned within the established farmstead complex and closely associated with existing equestrian and agricultural development on the site.

In purely design terms, a mobile home cannot be regarded as a high-quality permanent building and does not reflect the traditional agricultural vernacular typically associated with the rural locality. The structure is domestic in appearance and introduces a residential feature into an agricultural setting. However, significant weight must be given to the fact that the accommodation is proposed as a temporary form of development associated with an identified operational requirement and is capable of removal at the end of the permitted period.

The mobile home would be viewed in the context of the existing stable building, hardstanding areas and associated farm infrastructure. It would not appear as an isolated feature within the open countryside, nor would it project into undeveloped areas of the holding. Rather, it would form part of the existing cluster of built development associated with the equestrian use of the site. Furthermore, the proposal utilises an existing area of hardstanding and does not require the creation of additional access arrangements, engineered works or significant areas of domestic curtilage which could otherwise contribute to the urbanisation of the countryside.

The site is located within the countryside. Whilst the stationing of a mobile home inevitably introduces a domestic element into the landscape, the visual effects are considered to be limited by its modest scale, low profile and relationship with the existing farm buildings. Views of the development would largely be experienced in association with the established equestrian complex rather than as a standalone residential intrusion.

The site lies partially within the South Downs National Park, where great weight must be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty. For the reasons set out above, it is considered that the temporary and limited nature of the proposal, together with its siting adjacent to existing farm buildings, would result in only limited landscape effects which do not outweigh the identified operational need. It is of note that the South Downs National Park Authority have approved the development under reference SDNP/25/04977/FUL.

Having regard to the siting of the mobile home adjacent to existing farm buildings, its limited scale, use of an existing area of hardstanding and temporary nature, it is considered that the proposal would result in only limited and localised visual impacts. Whilst the mobile home would not positively enhance the character of the countryside, the degree of harm identified is not considered sufficient to outweigh the operational needs of the rural enterprise or justify refusal of the application. Subject to an appropriate temporary permission and occupancy restriction, the proposal is therefore considered acceptable in design and landscape terms and accords with Policies 26, 32 and 33 of the HDPF.

Heritage

Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the Local Planning Authority, when considering whether to grant planning permission for development affecting a listed building or its setting, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building, its setting and any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Policy 34 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) seeks to ensure that development conserves and, where appropriate, enhances the historic environment, having regard to the significance of heritage assets and the contribution made by their settings.

The application site lies within the setting of the Grade II listed building known as Winterfield, an eighteenth-century former farmhouse whose significance is derived from its historic fabric, architectural interest and relationship with the surrounding rural landscape. The proposed mobile home would be sited to the south-east of the listed building, within the existing farmstead area adjacent to the stable complex and associated hardstanding.

The submitted Heritage Statement concludes that the proposal would preserve the setting of the listed building and would result in no harm, or at most very minor less than substantial harm, to its significance. It identifies that the site is physically separated from the listed building by the access track and existing hardstanding and that the proposal would be viewed within the context of an established agricultural holding.

The Council's Conservation Officer has reviewed the proposal and concludes that the mobile home would not reinforce or respect the setting of the listed building and would result in a low level of less than substantial harm through the further dilution of the historic agricultural setting of the former farmstead. However, the Conservation Officer raises no objection to a temporary permission where the Local Planning Authority is satisfied that sufficient public benefit exists to justify the accommodation in support of the current rural business.

The proposal would introduce a modern domestic structure into part of the setting of the listed building. Whilst modest in scale and temporary in nature, the mobile home would nevertheless erode, to a limited degree, the historic relationship between the listed building and its agricultural surroundings. The proposal is therefore considered to result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the Grade II listed building through its impact on setting.

The NPPF requires that where a development proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, that harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In this instance, the identified harm is assessed as being at the lower end of the less than substantial harm spectrum. Against this, significant weight is attached to the public benefits arising from the proposal, including supporting an established rural and equestrian enterprise, facilitating the welfare and management of horses requiring regular supervision and care, assisting in the continued operation of the business, and providing accommodation for a worker where an essential functional need has been demonstrated.

Furthermore, the proposal is temporary in nature and any impact upon the setting of the listed building would not be permanent. At the expiry of the permission period, the mobile home could be removed and the site restored to its existing condition. This materially limits the magnitude and duration of the harm identified.

Having undertaken the balancing exercise required by the heritage provisions of the NPPF, and having attached considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving the setting of the listed building in accordance with Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, it is considered that the public benefits associated with supporting the operational requirements of the established rural enterprise outweigh the low level of less than substantial harm identified. Subject to the recommended temporary permission and occupancy restriction, the proposal is therefore considered acceptable in heritage terms and complies with Policy 34 of the HDPF, the statutory duty under Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and the heritage provisions of the NPPF.

Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

Policy 33 of the HDPF provides that development will be required to ensure a design that avoids unacceptable harm to the occupiers/users of nearby property and land with sufficient regard to the sensitivity of surrounding development.

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

The nearest residential property to the application site is Winterfield, a Grade II listed dwelling located approximately 100 metres to the north-west of the proposed mobile home. The proposed accommodation would be positioned within the existing farmstead area adjacent to the stable complex and would remain well separated from neighbouring residential receptors.

Given the separation distance between the proposed mobile home and Winterfield, together with the intervening farm access, hardstanding and existing farm buildings, it is not considered that the proposal would result in any material overlooking, loss of privacy or loss of light to neighbouring occupiers. The mobile home is modest in scale and height and would not give rise to any overbearing impacts or unacceptable loss of outlook.

The proposal would accommodate a single rural worker and is not anticipated to generate activity beyond that already associated with the established agricultural and equestrian use of the site. As such, there would be no significant increase in noise, disturbance, vehicle movements or general activity that would adversely affect the living conditions of nearby residents. The accommodation is intended to support the existing operation of the holding rather than intensify its use.

Accordingly, it is considered that the proposal would not result in any unacceptable adverse impacts upon the amenities of neighbouring occupiers and is therefore compliant with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework.

Highways Impacts

Policies 40 and 41 of the HDPF seek to ensure that development provides safe and suitable access for all users, promotes sustainable transport, and delivers adequate parking provision to meet the needs of development.

The proposal would utilise the existing vehicular access serving the farm and does not involve any alterations to the established access arrangements, visibility splays or internal access tracks.

The accommodation is intended to serve the operational needs of the existing enterprise and would be occupied by a worker employed in connection with activities already taking place at the site. As such, the proposal is not expected to generate a significant increase in vehicle movements over and above those already associated with the established agricultural and equestrian use. Indeed, the provision of on-site accommodation for a rural worker would reduce the need for regular commuting to and from the site and would allow the worker to respond promptly to operational requirements and emergency welfare situations involving livestock and horses.

The mobile home would be sited within an existing farmstead area containing ample hardstanding suitable for parking and manoeuvring vehicles associated with the proposed residential use. No objection has been raised in respect of parking provision or highway safety.

Having regard to the scale of the proposal, the use of the existing access arrangements and the limited level of additional traffic likely to be generated, it is considered that the development would not result in any material harm to highway safety or the free flow of traffic on the surrounding road network. The proposal therefore accords with Policy 40 of the Horsham District Planning Framework.

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 Policy N6(1) 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 Applicant has demonstrated that the development is exempt from the requirement to achieve a minimum 10% BNG by reason of:

- The development qualifies as 'de minimis' under Regulation 4 of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024. The application is in relation to the change of use of an area of concrete with nil Biodiversity / habitat value

Following a query raised by the Local Planning Authority regarding the applicability of the de minimis exemption, the applicant submitted a Biodiversity Net Gain Exemption Statement prepared by Leith Ecology Consulting Ltd. The statement specifically assesses the development against Regulation 4 of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024.

The statement confirms that the proposed mobile home would be sited entirely upon an existing area of compacted road planings/permeable hardstanding within the established farmyard. The affected surface is classified for Biodiversity Metric purposes as 'Urban - Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface', which has a biodiversity value of zero and is assigned a distinctiveness score of zero within the statutory metric.

The submitted assessment further confirms that:

- No priority habitat would be affected by the development;
- No hedgerows or watercourses would be lost or impacted;
- The proposal would not result in the loss or degradation of 25m² or more of habitat with a biodiversity value greater than zero; and
- The proposal would not impact 5 metres or more of onsite linear habitat.

The ecology statement concludes that the development satisfies both limbs of the de minimis exemption under Regulation 4 and that the statutory biodiversity gain condition does not apply. Consequently, neither a statutory biodiversity metric calculation nor a Biodiversity Gain Plan is required for the development as proposed.

Having reviewed the submitted evidence, officers are satisfied that the development qualifies for the de minimis exemption under Regulation 4 of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024. The proposal is therefore exempt from the requirement to secure a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain and no further assessment is considered necessary in this regard.

Planning Balance and Conclusions:

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The proposed development comprises the stationing of a mobile home for a temporary period of five years to accommodate a rural worker at Winterfields Farm. The application site is located within the countryside, where residential development is ordinarily restricted unless it can be demonstrated that there is a genuine operational need for the accommodation and that the proposal accords with the relevant provisions of the Horsham District Planning Framework and the National Planning Policy Framework.

In terms of principle, significant weight is given to the findings of the Council's independently appointed Agricultural Consultant. Following review of the submitted information and additional supporting evidence, the consultant concludes that there is a justified functional need for a rural worker to be resident on the holding. This conclusion is based upon the scale and nature of the equestrian enterprise, the welfare requirements of the horses kept on site, the need for regular supervision and emergency response, and the labour demands generated by the operation. The consultant also concludes that the proposal complies with both national and local planning policy relating to rural workers' accommodation.

The proposal would support the continued operation of an established rural and equestrian enterprise and would assist in ensuring the welfare and management requirements of horses kept at the holding are met. These considerations attract substantial weight in favour of the proposal.

In landscape and visual terms, the proposal would introduce a domestic structure within the countryside. However, the mobile home would be located adjacent to existing stable buildings and associated hardstanding within the established farmstead complex. The development would not appear isolated within the wider landscape, nor would it result in a significant extension of built form into

undeveloped countryside. Furthermore, the proposal is temporary in nature and capable of removal at the end of the permission period. As such, the visual harm arising from the development is considered limited and localised and attracts only limited weight against the proposal.

The site lies within the South Downs National Park, where great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty. Having regard to the siting of the mobile home within an existing developed part of the holding, adjacent to established farm buildings and hardstanding, it is considered that the proposal would result in only limited landscape effects which do not outweigh the identified operational need for the accommodation.

The proposal would also result in a low level of harm to the setting of the nearby Grade II listed building, Winterfield. The Council's Conservation Officer advises that the mobile home would not reinforce or respect the setting of the listed building and would contribute to a degree of dilution of its former farmstead context. Considerable importance and weight has been given to the desirability of preserving the setting of the listed building in accordance with Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. However, the identified harm falls at the lower end of the substantial harm spectrum. In accordance with the heritage provisions of the NPPF, this harm must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In this case, those public benefits include supporting an established rural enterprise, facilitating the welfare and management of horses requiring ongoing supervision, and meeting a demonstrated functional need for a rural worker to reside on site. The temporary nature of the proposal further limits the extent and duration of the heritage impact. On balance, the public benefits are considered sufficient to outweigh the identified heritage harm.

No unacceptable impacts have been identified in respect of neighbouring amenity or highway safety. The nearest dwelling is located approximately 100 metres from the application site, and the proposal is not expected to generate any significant increase in activity beyond that associated with the existing use of the holding. The development would utilise the existing access arrangements and adequate parking is available within the site.

Taking all matters into account, it is considered that the proposal satisfies the requirements of Policies 10, 20, 26, 32, 33, 34 and 40 of the Horsham District Planning Framework and is consistent with the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework in supporting sustainable rural enterprises whilst restricting unjustified residential development in the countryside. Whilst some limited visual harm and a low level of less than substantial heritage harm have been identified, these impacts are outweighed by the operational and public benefits arising from the provision of temporary accommodation to support an established rural enterprise.

Accordingly, the proposal is considered acceptable and is recommended for approval subject to a temporary five-year permission and an appropriate rural worker occupancy condition.

Recommendation: Application Permitted

Conditions:

- 2 **Temporay (Time) Condition** The temporary workers dwelling hereby permitted, together with any associated domestic paraphernalia, services, utility connections and ancillary structures, shall be removed from the site on or before five years from the date of this permission, and the land restored to its former condition within three months of such removal.

Reason: The Local Planning Authority would not normally permit an additional dwelling in this countryside location. A temporary permission is justified having regard to the operational needs of the rural enterprise and in accordance with Policies 20 and 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015)

- 3 **Regulatory Condition:** The temporary dwelling hereby permitted shall meet the optional requirement of building regulation G2 to limit the water usage of the dwelling to no more than

110 litres per person per day. The subsequently installed water limiting measures shall thereafter be retained.

Reason: As this matter is fundamental to limit water use in order to improve the sustainability of the development in accordance with Policy 37 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015), and to avoid an adverse impact on the Arun Valley SACSPA and Ramsar sites in accordance with Policy 31 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015), Policy N6 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026), and to allow the Local Planning Authority to discharge its duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), and s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (Priority habitats & species).

- 4 **Regulatory Condition:** Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (and/or any Order revoking and/or reenacting that Order, the temporary dwelling shall not be extended or altered in any way, including the addition of outbuildings, enclosures or hardstanding without express planning consent from the Local Planning Authority first being obtained.

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

- 5 **Regulatory Condition:** The occupation of the dwelling shall be limited to a person solely or mainly employed, or last employed, in agriculture, forestry, or the equestrian enterprise operated from Winterfields Farm, Ashington Farm and Ashleigh House Stud, together with any resident dependants

Reason: The site lies in an area where, in accordance with Policy 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) development which cannot be justified as essential to the needs of agriculture or forestry would not normally be permitted

NOTE TO APPLICANT

Biodiversity Net Gain Condition

Paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 states that planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to the "biodiversity gain condition" which means development granted by this notice must not begin unless:

- (a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and
- (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

Under Regulations 4, 5, 7 & 8 of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024 the statutory biodiversity gain condition required by Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) does not apply in relation to planning permission for development which:

- 1. does not impact an onsite priority habitat (a habitat specified in a list published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006); and impacts less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat that has biodiversity value greater than zero and less than 5 metres in length of onsite linear habitat (a hedgerow habitat or watercourse habitat identified for the purposes of the biodiversity metric);
- 2. is the subject of a householder application within the meaning of article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015;
- 3. is undertaken solely or mainly for the purpose of fulfilling, in whole or in part, the biodiversity gain planning condition which applies in relation to another development (In determining whether a development is undertaken solely or mainly for this purpose, no account is to be taken of any facility for the public to access or to use the site for educational or recreational purposes, if that access or use is permitted without the payment of a fee);

4. consists of no more than 9 dwellings, is carried out on a site which has an area no larger than 0.5 hectares, and consists exclusively of dwellings which are self-build or custom housebuilding ("Self-build or custom housebuilding" has the same meaning as in section 1(A1) of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended)).

In addition, the Biodiversity Gain Plan Condition does not apply to applications for major development made before 12 February 2024, or non-major development made before 2 April 2024.

Based on the information submitted in the planning application documents, the Planning Authority considers that this permission is exempt from biodiversity net gain, and as such does not require approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun.

Statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements

There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply. These can be found at Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 74-003-20240214 of the Planning Practice Guidance, which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain>.

Irreplaceable habitat

If the onsite habitat includes irreplaceable habitat (within the meaning of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024) there are additional requirements for the content and approval of Biodiversity Gain Plans.

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/26/0471

(The approved plans will form Condition 1 on the Decision Notice of all Permitted applications)

Schedule of plans/documents **approved:**

Plan Type	Description	Drawing Number	Received Date
Location plan	Location Plan	3.01	10.03.2026
Block plan	Block Plan	3.02	10.03.2026
Site plan	Site Plan	3.03	10.03.2026
Elevation & Floor plan	Proposed Plans and Elevations	3.05	10.03.2026

DELEGATED

Case Officer sign/initial Daniel Holmes Date: 23/09/2026

Authorising Officer sign/initial Tamara Dale Date: 28.09.2026

