Horsham District Council

DELEGATED APPLICATIONS - ASSESSMENT SHEET

APPLICATION NO./ADDRESS:
DC/25/0834
Wallhurst Manor, Garden Cottage, Picts Lane, Cowfold, West Sussex, RH13 8AW

DESCRIPTION:
Variation of Conditions 1 and 2 of previously approved application DC/23/2230 (Retrospective change of use of building from office to AirBNB) to amend water neutrality measures.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

DC/20/0487	Raising of roof of existing detached outbuilding and erection of a two storey side extension to provide garage, workshop and office (B1(a)) use	Application Permitted on 26.06.2020
DC/23/1372	Variation of Condition 1 and removal of Condition 4 of previously approved application DC/19/2123 (Erection of a two storey side extension to provide garage, workshop and office studio with roof of existing detached outbuilding to be raised) to allow for the provision of a 1-bed annexe.	Withdrawn Application on 05.12.2023
DC/23/2230	Retrospective change of use of building from office to AirBNB	Application Permitted on 25.04.2024

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

Garden Cottage is a two-storey dwellinghouse situated on the south side of a private driveway and originally part of the Wallhurst Manor estate. The application property is accessed from Picts Lane near Cowfold. The property is the north-eastern half of a semi-detached building which has a separate outbuilding on its north-eastern side.

The area is located outside a defined built-up area and is therefore identified as countryside. The site is located within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION

The application seeks to vary conditions 1 and 2 of previously approved application DC/23/2230 (Retrospective change of use of building from office to AirBNB) to amend water neutrality measures.

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 10 - Rural Economic Development
Policy 11 - Tourism and Cultural Facilities
Policy 24 - Strategic Policy: Environmental Protection
Policy 25 - Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character

Policy 26 - Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection
Policy 30 - Protected Landscapes
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
Policy 42 - Strategic Policy: Inclusive Communities
Policy 43 - Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation

Neighbourhood Plan:
Cowfold Parish have produced a neighbourhood plan which have been subject to successful Examination but cannot proceed to Referendum because of the legal requirements in relation to Water Neutrality and the Habitat Regulations.

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

Planning Advice Notes:
Facilitating Appropriate Development
Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

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

Consultations:

Natural England: No Objection - We concur with the conclusion of your authority's HRA appropriate assessment insofar that adverse effects on the integrity of the Arun Valley Designated sites can be ruled out, as such: We have no objections subject to the: delivery, management and maintenance of measures identified in the water neutrality statement to achieve water neutrality.

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS:

Representations:
None Received

Parish Comments:
None Received

Member Comments:
None received

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

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

PLANNING ASSESSMENT

The proposal seeks to vary Conditions 1 and 2 of planning permission DC/23/2230 to substitute the previously submitted water neutrality statement with a corrected version. The development, a retrospective change of use of a former office outbuilding to a holiday let (Airbnb), lies at Garden Cottage, Wallhurst Manor, Cowfold, within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone.

Policy 31 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF, 2015) requires developments to protect and enhance biodiversity and ensure no adverse effects on ecological networks, particularly in relation to water abstraction. Policy 24 and Policy 37 also apply, seeking to reduce resource consumption and protect water environments through sustainable design. In addition, the development is assessed against Policy 33, which safeguards the amenity of existing and future residents, and Policies 10 and 11 which support sustainable tourism and small-scale rural economic development in the countryside.

The original application DC/23/2230 was approved on the basis of a water neutrality strategy which has since been found to be incorrect. The current application replaces that strategy with an updated Water Neutrality Report (Rev P6, dated 13 May 2025), which provides a more accurate assessment. The report outlines a three-stage approach to achieving water neutrality, beginning with the reduction of water demand at the site, followed by re-use, and finally offsetting through improvements elsewhere within the region.

The annexe, now used as a one-bedroom short-term holiday let, has been retrofitted with a full suite of water-efficient fittings including low-flow taps, dual flush WCs, and a 7L/min shower. In addition, a 3,000-litre rainwater harvesting tank has been installed for external use. These measures reduce the annexe's total water demand to approximately 89.11 litres per day based on an average occupancy of 1.32 people. Importantly, the annexe is not equipped with a washing machine, consistent with its use as short-term accommodation, and rainwater is not relied upon for internal use.

Offsetting is achieved by upgrading the fittings within the main dwelling at Garden Cottage. The Installed Fittings Report and accompanying invoices confirm that the toilets, taps, showers and other fixtures have been replaced with high-efficiency alternatives. As a result, the main house's daily water consumption has been reduced from 505.24 litres to 399.44 litres – a saving of 105.80 litres per day. This reduction not only offsets the entire demand of the annexe but results in a net regional water saving of 16.69 litres per day. This betterment complies with Policy 31 and the requirements of the Habitats Regulations 2017. Natural England has confirmed no objection to the revised submission, concurring with the findings of the Council's Habitats Regulations Assessment that adverse effects on designated sites can be ruled out.

Residential Amenity:

The use of the outbuilding as a holiday let has also been reviewed in light of amenity considerations. The annexe has operated without complaint, and no objections have been received from neighbours, the parish council, or ward members. The property is situated in a rural location with good separation from surrounding residential properties, and ample on-site parking is available. There is no external lighting proposed as part of the development, and a condition will be imposed to prevent its installation without prior consent. The operation of the holiday let is controlled via condition to ensure it is not used as a primary residence and limits individual occupation to no more than 28 days in any calendar year. These controls, combined with the site's location and design, ensure that the use does not cause harm to residential amenity, in accordance with Policy 33.

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 and significant on-site enhancements will be secured over this period by way of a Legal Agreement.

The application is retrospective made under Section 73(A) of the Town and Country Planning Act.

Conclusions:

In conclusion, the updated water neutrality strategy now accurately reflects site conditions and achieves a demonstrable water saving over and above the annexe's demand. The development complies with Policy 31 and all relevant local and national policies, including those relating to biodiversity, amenity, and sustainable tourism. As such, it is recommended that the application be approved, subject to conditions securing the retention and maintenance of the water-saving measures and ongoing use of the annexe as a holiday let only.

Recommendation: Application Permitted

Conditions:

2 **Regulatory Condition**: The development hereby approved shall be carried out in full accordance with the submitted water neutrality strategy (Water Neutrality Statement by CGS Civils, received 19.05.2025). All installed measures shall be retained and maintained thereafter.

Reason: To ensure the development achieves water neutrality and avoids adverse impacts on the Arun Valley SAC, SPA, and Ramsar sites, in accordance with Policy 31 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015), Paragraphs 193 and 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), and Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (Priority Habitats and Species).

3 **Regulatory Condition**: The accommodation hereby permitted shall be occupied and managed in accordance with the following:-

i) The accommodation shall be occupied for holiday and short-term let purposes only;
ii) The accommodation shall not be occupied as a person's sole, or main place of residence;
iii) The accommodation shall not be occupied by any one person for a period exceeding 28 days in any calendar year;
iv) The owners / operators shall maintain an up-to-date register of the names of all owners / occupiers of the accommodation on the site, and of their main home addresses, and shall make this information available to the Local Planning Authority upon request.

Reason: To maintain the availability of the site as short term holiday tourist accommodation in accordance with Policies 10, 11, 26 and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

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

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

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/25/0834

Schedule of plans/documents **approved**:

Plan Type	Description	Drawing Number	Received Date
Supporting Statement	Planning	NONE	03.06.2025
Supporting Statement	Water Neutrality Report	C2825 REV P6	19.05.2025
Supporting Docs	Installed fittings	C2825 REV P3	19.05.2025
Supporting Docs	Existing fittings survey	C2825 REV P1	19.05.2025
Location & Site plan	Site Location Plan	DE882/01A REV P1	12.12.2023
Block plan	Site Block Plan	DE882/01B REV P1	05.12.2023
Section plan	Proposed and Existing Sections	DE882/08 REV P1	05.12.2023
Floor plan	Floor Plan	DE882/05 REV P2	05.12.2023
Elevation plan	Proposed Elevations - Sheet 1 of 2	DE882/06 REV P1	05.12.2023
Elevation plan	Proposed Elevations - Sheet 2 of 2	DE882/07 REV P1	12.12.2023

DELEGATED

Case Officer sign/initial Shazia Penne Date: 29.07.2025

Authorising Officer sign/initial RHERMITAGE Date: 29.07.2025