Horsham District Council

DELEGATED APPLICATIONS - ASSESSMENT SHEET

APPLICATION NO./ADDRESS:
DC/25/1059
Oak River, Guildford Road, Rudgwick, West Sussex, RH12 3HZ

DESCRIPTION:
Proposed demolition of three existing agricultural buildings and replacement with two new buildings.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

DC/20/0096	Variation of condition 1 of previously approved application DC/18/1381 (Erection of an agricultural workshop and storage shed) amendment sought; to install a toilet within the workshop, an external sewage waste plant and to erect a polytunnel	Pending Consideration		
DC/20/0504	Erection of a 6.7m wide by 20.1m long by 2.9m high clear plastic poly tunnel on agricultural land	Application 12.06.2020	Permitted	on
DC/21/1252	Variation of Condition 1 of previously approved application DC/20/0504 (Erection of a 6.7m wide by 20.1m long by 2.9m high clear plastic poly tunnel on agricultural land) Relating to size alterations to the poly tunnel approved.	Application 16.11.2021	Permitted	on
DC/23/1462	Installation of a ground mounted 18 panel solar panel array and fence	Application 13.10.2023	Permitted	on

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

Oak River is a small agricultural holding of approximately 11.5 acres located on the southern side of Guildford Road (A281), to the west of Rudgwick village. The site is accessed via a private driveway positioned in the northwest corner of the plot, leading to a small cluster of buildings situated beneath a canopy of mature trees near the entrance.

The land is predominantly in agricultural use, supporting the growing of fruits, vegetables, and trees for replanting, as well as areas of managed woodland and ecological enhancement. Existing structures on the site include a workshop building, two garages used for agricultural storage, a timber worker's rest room, a polytunnel, and a geodesic dome.

The site lies within the countryside, outside of any defined Built-Up Area Boundary, as identified in the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF). The lower part of the site slopes southward toward the River Arun and falls within Flood Zones 2 and 3; however, the existing and proposed buildings are located within the higher, northwestern section of the site, outside of flood risk areas. The surrounding area is rural in character, comprising open agricultural land and woodland. The site is not within a conservation area, nor does it contain any listed buildings or lie within the setting of any designated heritage assets.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION

The application seeks planning permission for the demolition of three existing agricultural buildings namely, a timber worker's rest room and two storage garages — and the erection of two replacement buildings to continue supporting the agricultural operations of the site.

The proposed development comprises:

- A replacement worker's rest building, positioned on the footprint of the existing timber structure. This building will provide welfare facilities for site staff, including a small rest area and tea point. It will be constructed using timber cladding under a felt roof, with a design sympathetic to the rural setting.
- A replacement two-bay garage, located on the site of the existing metal garage. The building is of traditional barn-style form, with green oak framing, timber boarding, and a reclaimed clay tile roof. It will be used for the storage of agricultural machinery and vehicles.

Both structures will occupy the positions of the existing buildings, resulting in a net reduction in overall building footprint on the site. The proposed works will not involve the felling of trees or encroachment into flood risk areas.

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 25 - Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
Policy 26 - Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection
Policy 31 - Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
Policy 32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development
Policy 33 - Development Principles
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:
The Rudgwick Neighbourhood Plan was formally made on 23 June 2021.
RNP6 – Materials
RNP7 – Architectural Style
RNP8 – Development Height

Horsham District Local Plan (2023-40) (Regulation 19):
Strategic Policy 1: Sustainable Development
Strategic Policy 2: Development Hierarchy
Strategic Policy 8: Sustainable Design and Construction
Strategic Policy 9: Water Neutrality
Strategic Policy 10: Flooding
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
Strategic Policy 24: Sustainable Transport
Policy 25: Parking

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

Parish Design Statement:

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:

HDC Arboricultural Officer: More Information Required - The proposed demolition and construction works are situated close to a belt of mature trees along the western boundary of the site, which contribute significantly to the local landscape character and amenity. Although existing structures are already present within the key rooting areas of these trees, any new or replacement development must fully consider the constraints posed by tree roots, in line with the guidance set out in BS5837:2012 – Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations.

The submitted arboricultural report and planning statement refer to the reuse of an existing concrete slab for one of the new buildings, with a local extension to accommodate the new structure. For the larger replacement garage building, the proposal involves a new foundation using screw piles to support ground beams, with the floor constructed using a cellular confinement system (CCS).
To properly assess the potential impact of these engineering solutions on the trees' root systems, further technical details are required. Specifically, information should be provided on the number and location of screw piles, the materials used for sheathing, the positioning of load-spreading mats, and a cross-sectional drawing showing the size, depth, and material specifications of the CCS floor/foundation. This should also illustrate how the proposed foundation relates to existing ground levels to ensure minimal impact on the trees.

Re-consultation (received 15.10.2025): The proposed development involves demolition and construction activities within or near the key rooting zones of several mature trees that hold recognised landscape value. Revised building positions and construction methods have been adopted to reduce potential impacts on the health of the remaining trees, although a small group of understorey trees will need to be removed to accommodate the new garage. The proximity of the works to the trees along the western boundary, which significantly contribute to the area's character and amenity, necessitates careful consideration. While existing structures are already within the root protection areas (RPAs), the new design reflects an understanding of the constraints posed by tree roots and aims to minimise harm from excavation and ground disturbance. Notably, the new garage footprint is positioned entirely outside the minimum RPAs, and the existing concrete slab will be reused. The arboricultural report has been updated to include a tree protection scheme aligned with the revised development layout. To ensure the safeguarding of soft ground rooting areas and tree health, strict control over construction activities and service installations is recommended. A bespoke condition has been suggested.

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS:

Representations:
None Received

Parish Comments:
Rudgwick Parish Council: No Objection - In principle the Parish Council have no objection to the application, however, RPC request that there are conditions prohibiting any overnight accommodation of the units, in addition to them being restricted to agricultural use.

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:

The application site lies outside of any defined Built-Up Area Boundary and is therefore considered to be within the countryside in planning policy terms. In such locations, development is subject to strict control under 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 in addition meet one of the following criteria: support the needs of agriculture or forestry; enable the extraction of minerals or the disposal of waste; provide for quiet informal recreational use; or enable the sustainable development of rural areas.

Policy 10 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) states that sustainable rural economic development and enterprise within the District will be encouraged in order to generate local employment opportunities and economic, social, and environmental benefits for local communities. In the countryside, development which maintains the quality and character of the area, whilst sustaining its varied and productive social and economic activity will be supported in principle. Any development should be appropriate to the countryside location and must:

1. Contribute to the diverse and sustainable farming enterprises within the District or, in the case of other countryside-based enterprises and activities, contribute to the wider rural economy and/or promote recreation in, and the enjoyment of, the countryside; and either:
    a) Be contained wherever possible within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion or, in the case of an established rural industrial estate, within the existing boundaries of the estate; or
    b) Result in substantial environmental improvement and reduce the impact on the countryside, particularly if there are exceptional cases where new or replacement buildings are involved. New buildings or development in the rural area will be acceptable provided that it supports sustainable economic growth towards balanced living and working communities and criteria a) has been considered first.
2. Demonstrate that car parking requirements can be accommodated satisfactorily within the immediate surrounds of the buildings, or an alternative, logical solution is proposed. Similarly, Policy 25 seeks to ensure that development maintains and enhances the landscape and countryside setting of the District.

The proposal seeks permission for the demolition of three existing agricultural buildings and erection of two replacement buildings to support the on-going agricultural operations at Oak River. The submitted Design and Planning Statement confirms that the existing buildings - a worker’s rest room and two garages - are in a poor and deteriorating condition, no longer weather tight, and unfit for purpose. The proposed replacement buildings are of an equivalent scale and function and are required to maintain the efficient operation of the landholding.

The replacement worker's rest will continue to provide essential welfare facilities for agricultural workers, including a rest area and tea point. The replacement garage will provide storage for agricultural machinery and vehicles. The proposals therefore directly support the agricultural use of the land and do not introduce any new or unrelated use to the site.

The development does not result in any intensification of use or expansion beyond the established cluster of buildings, and there would be an overall reduction in total building footprint. The buildings are appropriately sited within the north-western corner of the site, screened by existing vegetation, and outside areas of flood risk.

Accordingly, the proposal represents an acceptable form of rural development that accords with the objectives of Policies 1, 3, 9, 10, 25, 26, 32 and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015). The development is considered acceptable in principle.

Design and Appearance:

Policies 25, 32, and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF, 2015) require that development is of a high standard of design which is sympathetic to the character and distinctiveness of the surrounding area. Proposals should protect and enhance landscape character, integrate successfully into the site, and use materials appropriate to the rural context.

The proposed replacement buildings are rural in character and appropriate in scale and design for their agricultural function. The replacement worker's rest will occupy the footprint of the existing timber structure and will be finished in horizontal timber boarding under a felt roof, with modest openings to provide natural light and ventilation. The replacement garage adopts a traditional barn-style appearance, incorporating green oak framing, vertical timber cladding, and reclaimed clay roof tiles, consistent with local vernacular detailing.

Both buildings are modest in size and positioned within the existing developed cluster near the site entrance. Their siting and design ensure that the development remains discreet in the wider landscape, screened by existing trees and boundary planting. The proposed materials and construction methods are sympathetic to the rural setting, and the proposal would not appear visually intrusive when viewed from Guildford Road or the surrounding open countryside.

The proposal therefore accords with the design principles set out in Policies 25, 32, and 33 of the HDPF, as well as with Policies RNP6 (Materials) and RNP7 (Architectural Style) of the Rudgwick Neighbourhood Plan.

Trees and Landscaping:

In compliance with Policy 31, which mandates the protection and enhancement of green infrastructure, the proposal retains the dense vegetation surrounding the site.

The site is bounded and partially enclosed by a mature belt of trees along the western edge, which make a significant contribution to the local landscape character and visual screening of the site. The applicant submitted an Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement (Absolute Arboriculture, ref: AIA/OR/06/25, Sept 2025) and Tree Protection Plan, prepared in accordance with BS5837:2012 – Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction.

The Council's Arboricultural Officer initially requested further technical in-formation regarding the proposed foundation design and proximity to key rooting areas. Following submission of revised details, it was confirmed that the updated layout positions the new garage building entirely outside the root protection areas (RPAs) of the significant western boundary trees, with the existing concrete slab to be retained and extended locally for the worker's rest. The revised scheme introduces screw pile and ground beam foundations with a cellular confinement system to reduce soil compaction and disturbance.

The Tree Officer concluded that, subject to the implementation of the updated tree protection measures and careful site management during construction, the proposals would not result in unacceptable harm to retained trees. A bespoke pre-commencement condition is recommended to secure these measures.

The proposal is therefore considered to comply with Policies 25, 31, and 33 of the HDPF and Policy 17 of the emerging Local Plan, which require protection and enhancement of green infrastructure and the landscape character of the District.

Residential Amenity:

Policy 33 of the HDPF states that development should be designed to avoid unacceptable harm to the amenity of occupiers/users of nearby property and land, whilst having regard to the sensitivities of surrounding development.

The site is isolated from nearby residential dwellings, being located within open countryside and screened by substantial vegetation. The replacement buildings are small-scale, positioned on the footprint of existing structures, and intended solely for agricultural purposes incidental to the existing use of the land. There will be no change to the nature or intensity of site activity as a result of the proposals.

Given the separation distance from neighbouring properties and the screening provided by existing trees, it is not considered that the development would give rise to any adverse impacts in respect of overlooking, overbearing presence, or noise and disturbance.

Accordingly, the proposal would not result in harm to the amenities of surrounding occupiers and is compliant with Policy 33 of the HDPF.

Water Neutrality:

The application site falls within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone as defined by Natural England which draws its water supply from groundwater abstraction at Hardham. Natural England has issued a Position Statement for applications within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone which states that it cannot be concluded with the required degree of certainty that new development in this zone would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Arun Valley SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites.

Natural England advises that plans and projects affecting sites where an existing adverse effect is known will be required to demonstrate, with sufficient certainty, that they will not contribute further to an existing adverse effect. The received advice note advises that the matter of water neutrality should be addressed in assessments to agree and ensure that water use is offset for all new developments within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone.

The applicant has submitted a Water Neutrality Statement (Elemental Architecture, July 2025), confirming that the development will not result in any increase in site occupancy or potable water consumption. The only addition-al feature is a small tea point within the replacement worker's rest building, supplied from the existing mains connection that currently serves the on-site workshop. The new tap will be fitted with a low-flow water blade fitting to limit usage to approximately 3 litres per minute.

As the proposal replaces existing facilities with no increase in staff numbers, site use, or water consumption, the development is considered water neutral. The Council is satisfied that sufficient evidence has been provided to demonstrate compliance with Policy 37 of the HDPF.

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 development qualifies as 'de minimis' under Regulation 4 of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024

Conclusions:

The proposal seeks permission for the demolition of three existing, dilapidated agricultural buildings and their replacement with two well-designed, functional buildings that directly support the established agricultural use of the site. The replacement structures are modest, sustainably designed, and well-integrated into the existing site layout, resulting in an overall reduction in building footprint and no material increase in activity, visual impact, or flood risk.

The design and siting are sympathetic to the rural character of the area, tree protection measures have been appropriately addressed, and the development achieves water neutrality within the Sussex North Supply Zone. No objections have been received from consultees or neighbouring occupiers, and the Parish Council has raised no objection subject to appropriate occupancy conditions.

Overall, the proposal is considered acceptable in accordance with above mentioned policies.

Recommendation: Application Permitted

Conditions:

2 **Standard Time Condition**: The development hereby permitted shall begin before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

3 **Pre-commencement Condition**: Prior to commencement of works before any equipment, materials or machinery are brought onto the site for the purposes of development, the barrier fencing and ground protection measures shall be positioned as shown on the Tree Protection Plan by Absolute Arboriculture entitled Revision A, dated September 2025.

A pre-commencement site meeting between the Tree Officer, Arboricultural Consultant and Site Manager shall take place to confirm the protection of trees on and adjacent to the site in accordance with the revised Arboricultural Impact Appraisal and Method Statement prepared by Absolute Arboriculture - Ref: AIA/OR/06/25 dated September 2025. Site Manager to notify Tree Officer of three site meeting date options with a minimum three-week notice period.

Once the tree protection measures and proposed methods of working have been approved by the Tree Officer, they shall be retained and adhered to until the development is completed. Nothing shall be placed within the fencing, nor shall any ground levels be altered or excavations made without the written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: As this matter is fundamental to ensure the successful and satisfactory protection of important trees on the site in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

4 **Regulatory Condition**: The materials to be used in the development hereby permitted shall strictly accord with those indicated on the application form and approved plans.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to control the development in detail in the interests of visual amenity and in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

5 **Regulatory Condition**: No additional 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).

6 **Regulatory Condition**: The replacement outbuildings (to be used as a garden room and 2 bay detached garage) hereby permitted shall solely be used for agricultural purposes, and shall not be used for residential or commercial purposes.

Reason: The establishment of residential or commercial uses in this location may give rise to an over-intensive use of the site contrary to Policies 26 and 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/25/1059

Schedule of plans/documents **approved**:

Plan Type	Description	Drawing Number	Received Date
Location & Block plan		A00 REV B	16.07.2025
Location plan		NONE	27.06.2025
Photos	Existing Site	A05	27.06.2025
Elevation & Floor plan	Existing Site Layout and Elevations	A10 REV A	19.09.2025
Supporting Statement	Tree Survey	AIA/OR/06/25 REV 1	19.09.2025
Elevation plan	Proposed Garage	2022-04-01	16.07.2025
Floor plan	Proposed Garage	2022-04-02	16.07.2025
Elevation & Floor plan	Proposed Site Layout and Elevations	P100 REV A	19.09.2025
Supporting Statement	Water Neutrality	NONE	16.07.2025
Supporting Statement	Planning	2506	16.07.2025
Plans	Proposed Garden Room Foundation	NONE	16.07.2025
Elevation plan	Proposed Garden Room Plan A	NONE	16.07.2025
Elevation plan	Proposed Garden Room Plan B	NONE	16.07.2025
Elevation plan	Proposed Garden Room End Plan 1	NONE	16.07.2025
Elevation plan	Proposed Garden Room End Plan	NONE	16.07.2025

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Elevation plan	Proposed Garden Room End Plan 3	NONE	16.07.2025
Elevation plan	Proposed Garden Room End Plan 4	NONE	16.07.2025
Plans	Proposed Garden Room 3D	NONE	16.07.2025
Floor plan	Proposed Garden Room	NONE	16.07.2025
Details plan	Tree Protection Plan	NONE	19.09.2025

DELEGATED

Case Officer sign/initial Shazia Penne Date: 16.10.2025

Authorising Officer sign/initial RHERMITAGE Date: 22.10.2025