



DELEGATED APPLICATIONS - ASSESSMENT SHEET

APPLICATION NO./ADDRESS:

DC/26/0383

Priory Fields, Monastery Lane, Storrington, West Sussex

DESCRIPTION:

Erection of a gardeners cottage and garage.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

DC/14/2139	The erection of 4 dwelling houses	Application Refused on 04.12.2014 Appeal Dismissed on 18.12.2015
DC/14/0675	Erection of 4 dwellinghouses	Application Refused on 19.08.2014
DC/17/1990	Erection of a four-bedroom detached chalet bungalow featuring 3x dormers to southern elevation, 1x dormer to northern elevation, open-sided integral double garage and log stores with associated hardstanding and parking.	Application Refused on 21.02.2018 Appeal Dismissed on 18.12.2018
DC/18/1695	Construction of storage barn and retention of access.	Application Permitted on 23.11.2018
DISC/19/0059	Approval of details reserved by conditions 3 and 4 to approved application DC/18/1695	Application Permitted on 15.05.2019
DC/19/1638	Variation of Condition 1 of previously approved application DC/18/1695 (Construction of storage barn and retention of access). Part-retrospective alterations to amend the roof form and include two gable end windows and three rooflights. Proposed addition of barn doors and a temporary log store.	Application Refused on 04.10.2019 Appeal Dismissed on 11.08.2020
DC/19/2119	Variation of Condition 5 of previously approved application DC/18/1695 (Construction of storage barn and retention of access) Relating to use of existing barn for volunteers	Application Permitted on 10.08.2020
DC/20/2250	Retrospective application for the erection of a barn for storage of agricultural equipment and shelter by volunteers.	Application Refused on 14.01.2021 Appeal Dismissed on 05.07.2021

DC/21/1446	Prior notification for the construction of open plan lean to for a tractor.	Prior Approval Required and REFUSED on 16.07.2021
DC/24/0414	Conversion of existing barn into 1No dwelling	Application Refused on 14.05.2024 Appeal Dismissed on 14.02.2025
DC/24/1330	Prior notification for the erection of a lean-to to the North elevation of barn.	Prior Approval Not Required on 11.09.2024
DC/25/1329	Change of use of volunteers agricultural storage barn to 1 no. residential unit.	Application Permitted on 06.02.2026
DC/19/1113	Prior notification for resurface of an existing access track	Non-determination on 06.02.2020 Appeal Allowed on 23.05.2019
DC/20/1710	Construction of a cottage and garage.	Application Refused on 31.12.2020 Appeal Dismissed on 05.07.2021
DC/20/2377	Prior notification for the re-surfacing of an existing track for delivery of trees and associated goods to create new woodland.	Prior Approval Required and REFUSED on 05.02.2021 Appeal Allowed on 05.07.2021
DC/21/0177	Construction of a single storey dwelling and garage.	Application Refused on 18.03.2021 Appeal Dismissed on 10.08.2022
DC/22/0676	Outline Application for the construction of a single dwellinghouse and garage with all matters reserved.	Application Refused on 19.10.2023
DC/23/1097	Outline Application for redevelopment of the site to provide up to 8 dwellings, ancillary parking and landscaping with all matters reserved	Application Refused on 30.08.2023 Appeal Dismissed on 10.12.2024
DC/23/1720	Outline Application for redevelopment of the site to provide up to 6no. affordable dwellings, ancillary parking and landscaping, with all matters reserved.	Application Refused on 13.11.2023 Appeal Dismissed on 10.12.2024

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

Priory Fields is located adjoining the settlement edge of Storrington but outside the defined Built-Up Area Boundary (BUAB). The land is characterised by an enclosed, green landscape containing tree belts, boundary planting and areas of grassland. The site lies adjacent to residential properties, the cemetery, and Matt's Meadow open space, with the South Downs National Park to the south. Matt's Meadow is designated within the Storrington, Sullington and Washington Neighbourhood Plan as a Local Green Space.

The site has a gated access with hardstanding which leads to a timber barn which was permitted for the storage of associated tools/equipment and the temporary shelter of volunteers in conjunction with the maintenance of the adjacent land. The storage barn has recently obtained permission for the change of use to 1 no. residential unit under DC/25/1329.

The topography of the land rises up towards the cemetery and then falls towards the South Downs. A hedgerow forms the boundary line to Kithurst Lane to the north.

The site is located close to the Storrington Conservation Area to the East and Our Lady of England Priory, a locally listed building to the North-East. To the rear of the site is a row of Leylandii trees which form the boundary to the cemetery. To the west of the site is Furzedown a detached single storey bungalow, whilst to the north of the site are detached two storey properties

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION

Planning permission is sought for the erection of a gardeners cottage and garage. The dwelling would be a single storey two-bedroom dwellinghouse with an attached single garage, with a mono-pitched sloped roof on the northern elevation. The dwelling would comprise two bedrooms (1 bedroom with ensuite bathroom and 1 bedroom/office) and with a living room, dining, kitchen and bathroom to the ground floor.

RELEVANCE TO PLANNING HISTORY

This is an identical application to that previously refused under DC/20/1710 on 31.12.2020 and dismissed at appeal under PINS ref: APP/Z3825/W/21/3267327 on 05.07.2021.

The applicant has submitted a Design and Access Statement which contends that limited weight should now be afforded to the previous appeal decision on the basis that the Inspector's conclusions relied upon planning policy and housing land supply circumstances that have since changed. The applicant also disputes a number of factual matters and conclusions reached within the appeal decision.

Officers note these comments; however, it is important to distinguish between factual matters and matters of planning judgement. The Inspector's conclusions regarding the character of the site, its relationship with the countryside, and the effects of development on landscape character and settlement form represent planning judgments reached following consideration of the evidence available at the time.

The appeal decision remains a significant material consideration in the determination of the current application, particularly given that the proposal before the Council is materially unchanged from that previously considered by the Planning Inspectorate.

Whilst changes in national policy, housing land supply position, and updated technical evidence may amount to material considerations that require assessment as part of the current application, they do not automatically negate the conclusions of the previous appeal decision. Rather, the key consideration is whether any new evidence or material change in circumstances is sufficient to justify a different planning balance being reached.

In this regard, the Council considers that the applicant's disagreement with elements of the Inspector's reasoning does not in itself diminish the weight to be afforded to the appeal decision. Assessment must

therefore focus on whether any substantive new evidence or material change in circumstances exists which would justify departing from the conclusions previously reached by the Inspector.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2024)

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 17 - Exceptions Housing Schemes
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 30 - Protected Landscapes
Policy 31 - Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
Policy 32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development
Policy 33 - Development Principles
Policy 34 - Cultural and Heritage Assets
Policy 35 - Strategic Policy: Climate Change
Policy 36 - Strategic Policy: Appropriate Energy Use
Policy 37 - Sustainable Construction
Policy 38 - Strategic Policy: Flooding
Policy 39 - Strategic Policy: Infrastructure Provision
Policy 40 - Sustainable Transport
Policy 41 - Parking
Policy 42 - Strategic Policy: Inclusive Communities
Policy 43 - Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation

Storrington, Sullington & Washington Neighbourhood Plan:

Policy 1 – A Spatial Plan for the Parishes
Policy 8 – Countryside Protection
Policy 14 – Design
Policy 15 – Green Infrastructure & Biodiversity
Policy 17 – Traffic & Transport
Policy 18 – Car Parking

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF requires that all development plans complete their reviews no later than 5 years from their adoption. Horsham District Council is currently in the process of reviewing its development plan however at this stage the emerging policies carry only limited weight in decision making. As the HDPF is now over 5 years old, the most important policies for the determination of this application must be considered as to whether they are 'out of date' (NPPF paragraph 11d). This includes, for applications involving the provision of housing, whether the Council can demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites (NPPF footnote 8).

The Council is currently unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, with the supply currently calculated as being 1.7-years. The presumption in favour of development within Paragraph 11d) of the NPPF therefore applies in the consideration of all applications for housing development within the District (unless footnote 7 or Paragraph 14 applies to relevant applications), with Policies 2, 4, 15 and 26 now carrying only moderate weight in decision making.

All other policies within the HDPF as itemised above have been assessed against the NPPF and are considered to be consistent such that they continue to attract significant weight in decision making.

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

Strategic Policy 1: Sustainable Development

Strategic Policy 2: Development Hierarchy
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 24: Sustainable Transport
Policy 25: Parking
Strategic Policy 37: Housing Provision
Strategic Policy 38: Meeting Local Housing Needs
Policy 41: Rural Exception Homes
Policy 44: Rural Workers Accommodation
Policy 45: Replacement Dwellings and House Extensions in the Countryside

Supplementary Planning Guidance:

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

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:

HDC Conservation: No Objection [Summary]

On 17.04.2026, the HDC Conservation Officer stated the following in their Conservation Response:
I note that the applicant has stated the application details are the same as DC/20/1710. If so the heritage comments for the current application would remain the same as DC/20/1710.

The comments from DC/20/1710 were provided on 18.09.2020 and state the following:

I am satisfied the proposed dwelling will not harm the setting of the conservation area. The only point I wish to raise, and I'm sure you have anticipated this yourself; the solar panels could be highly reflective and might draw undue attention when viewed from the Downs.

HDC Landscape Architect: Comment (23.04.2026) [Summary]

The Council's Landscape Officer has reviewed the proposal and raises no in-principal objection from a landscape perspective, concluding that the proposed development could potentially be accommodated without substantial adverse landscape effects. However, a number of concerns and clarification points have been identified.

The submitted Landscape and Visual Technical Note (LVTN) dates from March 2020 and is based on site visits undertaken in 2019–2020. The Landscape Officer notes that this assessment has not been updated to reflect the current submission and therefore its findings should be treated with caution.

The Landscape Officer also identified inconsistencies between the submitted plans, specifically regarding the extent of the red line boundary. The Location Plan identifies a more limited development area, whereas the LVTN refers to a wider area comprising the grassland paddocks. Clarification is required to ensure consistency across the submitted documents and to confirm that any proposed mitigation measures can be secured within the application site.

The Landscape Officer welcomes the proposed landscape mitigation measures outlined within the LVTN, including the proposed setback from the southern woodland edge, the creation of a woodland buffer, and additional tree, hedgerow and scrub planting. However, further clarification is required to confirm that such measures can be delivered within the application boundary and adequately secured through any planning permission.

Further details would also be required regarding the relationship of development to retained trees, including confirmation that development falls outside Root Protection Areas, together with details of retaining structures and a comprehensive hard and soft landscaping scheme.

Overall, whilst the Landscape Officer does not raise a fundamental landscape objection to the proposal, clarification and further information would be required in relation to the application boundary, landscape mitigation proposals and tree protection measures.

Ecology Consultant: No Objection [Summary]

The Council's appointed ecologist has reviewed the submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) (Arbtech Consulting Ltd., October 2024) and raises no fundamental ecological objection to the proposal, subject to mitigation measures and conditions.

The Ecologist is satisfied that sufficient ecological information has been provided to support determination of the application and notes that no trees, hedgerows or buildings will be removed as part of the proposals. Consequently, no further bat surveys are considered necessary.

The site lies within the 12km Wider Conservation Area associated with The Mens SAC and therefore consideration has been given to potential impacts on Barbastelle bats and associated habitat connectivity. Whilst there are records of bat activity within the local area, the Ecologist notes that all hedgerows and trees are to be retained and habitat connectivity would therefore remain intact. No severance of foraging or commuting routes is anticipated.

The Ecologist considers that the principal ecological issue relates to potential impacts arising from increased lighting and habitat fragmentation. It is therefore recommended that a Wildlife Friendly Lighting Strategy be secured by condition to ensure that any external lighting avoids adverse impacts upon bats and associated habitat use.

The submitted PEA also includes precautionary mitigation measures for reptiles and other mobile protected and Priority species, including Hedgehog, which are supported by the Ecologist and should be secured through appropriately worded planning conditions.

The Ecologist advises that, subject to the implementation of the recommended mitigation measures, the proposal would not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of designated ecological sites. However, a project-level Habitats Regulations Assessment (Appropriate Assessment) should be undertaken by the Local Planning Authority and Natural England consulted accordingly.

The Ecologist also recommends that a separate Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy be submitted and secured by condition to ensure that appropriate biodiversity enhancements are delivered in accordance with national policy requirements and mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain objectives.

Overall, subject to conditions securing mitigation measures, lighting controls, ecological protection measures and biodiversity enhancements, no overriding ecological objection is raised.

Southern Water: No Objection (14.04.2026) [Summary]

Subject to conditions and informatives

WSCC Highways: No Objection (23.04.2026) [Summary]

The proposal for a 2 bedroom dwelling and garage is unlikely to generate a significant level of additional traffic using the access onto Kithurst Lane/School Lane. The access appears to join the public highway at the School Lane/Monastery Lane/Kithurst Lane junction. Traffic speeds and volumes are likely to be very low in this location and visibility from the existing walled access is acceptable. No highway objection.

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS:

Representations:

Two letters of objection have been received. The key issues raised are summarised below.

- The proposal is materially the same as application DC/20/1710 which was previously refused and dismissed at appeal.
- The site lies outside the Built-Up Area Boundary (BUAB) and would represent development within the countryside.
- Concern that the proposal would contribute to the spread of built development into the countryside and result in an urbanising effect.
- Concern that the proposal represents an overdevelopment of the site.
- Potential impact on the character and appearance of the area, including visual impact from public viewpoints.
- Potential impact on neighbouring residential amenity, including overlooking, privacy, light disturbance and general noise impacts.
- Uncertainty regarding access arrangements and concern that these have not been adequately defined.
- Concerns regarding impacts on the wooded boundary and the need for adequate protection of existing landscape features.
- Concern regarding drainage and servicing arrangements, including foul and surface water disposal.
- Concern that the level of parking provision may be excessive relative to the scale of development.

Non-material Considerations / Matters Afforded Limited Weight

- Objections to the applicant disputing the findings of the previous Inspector's decision.
- Suggestions that the Inspector's decision should have been challenged by Judicial Review.
- General criticism of the applicant's approach to the planning process.
- Number of previous applications submitted on the site in itself.
- Suggested amendments to the Built-Up Area Boundary.
- Requests that future occupancy be restricted to a locally employed family unless supported by an evidenced planning need and appropriate policy basis.

These matters have been considered where relevant and addressed within the appropriate sections of this report.

Following circulation of the officer's draft recommendation, the applicant submitted a further representation. The applicant reiterated their view that the proposal represents sustainable development and accords with the NPPF and relevant development plan policies, particularly in light of the Council's current housing land supply position. The applicant also advised that, if the current application were approved, the extant permission for conversion of the existing barn under reference DC/25/1329 would not be implemented, with the barn instead remaining in storage / volunteer use to support ongoing rewilding activities. Officers have considered these further representations in the assessment above. No new material planning considerations have been raised which alter the overall planning balance or officer recommendation.

Storrington and Sullington Parish Council: Comment (14.05.2026)

The Planning Committee requests clarification on access arrangements in accordance with the Highway Report, specifically whether the proposed tarmac is permeable due to flood risk, subject to the Planning Officer's satisfaction.

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

Planning Background

The site (and adjacent land within the applicant's ownership) has a long and extensive planning history, with numerous applications having been submitted over time seeking residential development of varying scales, in addition to proposals associated with the existing volunteers' storage barn. A number of applications for residential development have been refused by the Council and, where appealed, subsequently dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate. A consistent theme arising through those decisions has been concern regarding the site's relationship with the countryside, the erosion of settlement edge character and the impact of residential development beyond the defined BUAB. This is a matter which remains unchanged as part of the current application.

Two applications for four dwellings on the application site were refused in 2014 (DC/14/0675 and DC/14/2139). In dismissing the subsequent appeal against DC/14/2139, following the adoption of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF), the Inspector concluded that the proposal conflicted with the development plan and would result in harm to the character and appearance of this rural edge of Storrington. The Inspector found that the proposal would undermine the aims of policies relating to landscape character, protection of the countryside, and ensuring development responds sympathetically to its surroundings.

A subsequent appeal relating to a single dwelling on the application site (DC/17/1990) was dismissed in 2018, with similar conclusions reached regarding the harmful effects of development on the character and appearance of the countryside. Further appeals dismissed in 2021 (DC/20/1710) and 2022 (DC/21/0177) related to single dwellings on adjacent parcels of land rather than the current application site itself but similarly identified concerns regarding countryside encroachment and impacts upon landscape character. More recent refusals for housing development on adjacent land (DC/23/1097, DC/22/0676 and DC/23/1720) were also based on comparable concerns, alongside ecological and water neutrality matters.

Officers note the appeal decision relating to application DC/24/0414, which proposed the conversion of the existing storage barn to a single dwelling. Although the appeal was ultimately dismissed due to ecological impacts, including harm to the Arun Valley Protected Sites, the Inspector reached a more favourable conclusion regarding the site's relationship with the settlement edge and accepted that, in that specific instance, the proposal attracted some support in principle. Subsequently, further consent was sought and granted to convert the barn to a dwelling under DC/25/1329. As this site relates directly to the existing barn structure and the same broad area now under consideration, it remains a material consideration in the assessment of the current application.

However, a more recent appeal decision (APP/Z3825/W/25/3375892), relating to adjacent land within the applicant's wider ownership, again identified substantial concerns regarding residential encroachment beyond the settlement boundary. In that case the Inspector concluded that the site formed part of a tranquil landscaped area distinct from the built-up area and that development would erode the quality and character of the countryside. The Inspector also concluded that existing vegetation and boundary planting would not fundamentally alter the site's relationship with the countryside.

Taken collectively, the appeal history demonstrates a longstanding concern regarding the impact of residential development in this location upon countryside character and the settlement edge. Whilst recent appeal decisions indicate some variation in conclusions reached regarding the site's relationship with the built form of Storrington, significant concerns remain regarding the acceptability of extending development into this part of the countryside.

Principle of Development:

The application seeks planning permission for the erection of a single-storey gardener's cottage with an attached garage. The application site lies outside the defined Built-Up Area Boundary (BUAB) for Storrington and does not form part of an allocation within the adopted Development Plan, comprising the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) and the Storrington, Sullington and Washington Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP).

Policy 1 of the HDPF seeks to ensure that development takes place in sustainable locations and contributes towards maintaining and enhancing the quality of life in the District. Policy 2 establishes a hierarchy of settlements for accommodating development and directs growth to appropriate locations. Policy 4 (Settlement Expansion) supports development adjoining settlements where sites are allocated through the development plan process, whilst Policy 26 seeks to protect the countryside from inappropriate development outside defined built-up area boundaries.

The application site lies outside the BUAB and does not comprise an allocated site. The proposed dwelling also does not fall within any of the exceptions under Policy 26 for development within the countryside, such as essential countryside-based uses or other forms of development requiring a countryside location. Accordingly, the proposal conflicts with Policies 1, 2, 4 and 26 of the HDPF and is not considered to accord with the development plan when read as a whole.

Policy 1 of the Storrington, Sullington and Washington Neighbourhood Development Plan similarly supports development within defined built-up area boundaries or other specifically identified locations.

Policy 8 of the Storrington, Sullington and Washington Neighbourhood Plan seeks to protect important views and ensure that development responds positively to the wider landscape setting.

Development outside these areas is required to accord with Development Plan policies relating to the management of development in the countryside. As the site lies outside the defined settlement boundary and conflicts with the relevant HDPF policies, the proposal also conflicts with Policy 1 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

However, the Council is currently unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, with the latest Authority Monitoring information identifying a supply of approximately 1.7 years. Paragraph 11(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) therefore applies, meaning that the policies most important for determining the application are considered out of date and planning permission should be granted unless either:

- the application of policies within the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provide a strong reason for refusal; or
- any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the Framework as a whole.

Officers note the appeal decision relating to application DC/24/0414, which concerned the conversion of the existing storage barn on the site to a dwelling. Whilst the Inspector identified conflict with HDPF Policy 4, weight was also given to the Council's Future Development Strategy document (now updated as *Shaping Development in Horsham District (2025)*) and the site's proximity to the existing settlement. The Inspector accepted that material considerations, including the Council's emerging strategy work and the site's relationship to the settlement edge, weighed in favour of the proposal notwithstanding the identified policy conflict.

However, officers also note the more recent appeal decision APP/Z3825/W/25/3375892 (DC/25/0533), relating to adjacent land within the applicant's wider ownership, where the Inspector concluded that residential development would result in harmful encroachment into the countryside and erosion of the

character of this landscaped settlement edge. The Inspector further concluded that existing planting and screening would not fundamentally alter the relationship between the site and the countryside.

Officers also note the more recent approval under application DC/25/1329 for the conversion of the existing storage barn to a dwelling on land within the same wider landholding. Whilst this decision is a material consideration, limited weight is afforded to it in the assessment of the principle of development in this case. The approved scheme related to the conversion and re-use of an existing building and therefore did not involve the introduction of additional built form within the countryside to the same extent as the current proposal. The Inspector, at paragraph 23 of their report, comments on this matter specifically:

23. *I have given consideration to the recent planning permission to convert a barn to a dwelling at Priory Field Barn, close to the appeal site. Whilst that site is also outside the Built-Up Area Boundary, the proposal was a conversion rather than a new build, which distinguishes it from the current appeal in terms of its impact on the countryside and the relevant development plan policies. I therefore attached limited positive weight to the granting of this permission.*

The present application instead seeks the erection of an entirely new dwelling and associated domestic curtilage, which raises materially different considerations relating to countryside encroachment, landscape character and the extension of built development beyond the defined settlement boundary.

Officers also note that the application is described as the erection of a 'gardener's cottage', which follows a similar statement indicated by the applicant in the DC/25/1329 appeal. It is presumed that this description and statement follows some logic to attempt to indicate that the dwelling would be essential to the rural location as a rural workers dwelling. Policy 20 of the HDPF (Rural Workers Accommodation) states that: *Outside the defined built-up area new housing for rural workers will be supported provided that;*

1. *There is a functional need for the dwelling and the occupation of the dwelling is to support the established business use.*
2. *Evidence is submitted to demonstrate the viability of the rural business for which the housing is required.*

The applicant has not advanced any compelling evidence to demonstrate that the criterion of this policy has been met. A similar conclusion was reached by the Inspector at paragraph 10 of their report:

10. *Although the appellant has indicated that they would live in the dwelling and work on the land, an essential need to live in the countryside has not been demonstrated.*

Accordingly, whilst the current housing land supply position and recent appeal decisions are material considerations which attract weight in favour of development, the proposal nevertheless remains in conflict with the adopted development plan. The extent to which this conflict is outweighed by other material considerations, including housing delivery benefits and the specific impacts of the proposal on landscape character, visual amenity and the wider countryside setting, is considered within the planning balance below.

Design and Character

Policy 32 of the HDPF identifies good design as a key component of sustainable development and seeks to ensure that development promotes a high standard of urban design, architecture and landscape. Policy 33 requires development to integrate effectively with the character of the surrounding area, make efficient use of land, utilise appropriate materials, retain landscape features where feasible, and avoid conflict with the character of the surrounding townscape or landscape.

Policy 14 of the Storrington, Sullington and Washington Neighbourhood Plan requires the scale, density, massing, height, landscape design, layout and materials of development proposals to reflect the architectural and historic character and scale of surrounding buildings and landscapes.

The proposed development comprises a relatively modest single-storey dwelling with an attached garage. Officers acknowledge that, in terms of scale and height alone, the proposed building is modest

and would not appear as visually dominant as some surrounding two-storey properties along Kithurst Lane. Officers also note the comments of the Council's Landscape Officer, who raises no in-principle objection and considers that the proposal could potentially be accommodated without substantial adverse landscape effects.

However, the assessment of design extends beyond the physical dimensions of the proposed building itself. The proposal would introduce a new residential unit into what is currently an open grassed field that retains a largely undeveloped character. In addition to the dwelling itself, the proposal would introduce associated residential features including domestic curtilage, vehicle parking, lighting, boundary treatments and general domestic activity, all of which would materially alter the character of the site.

This is particularly relevant given the site's position at the edge of the settlement, where the transition between the built form of Storrington and the surrounding countryside remains an important characteristic of the area. While existing vegetation provides a degree of enclosure and limits certain public views, screening does not in itself alter the planning character of the land or remove its functional relationship with the countryside. Harm may arise not only from visual exposure but also from the encroachment of domestic built form and activity into land that presently retains an open and transitional character.

Officers also note the extant permission under application DC/25/1329 relating to the conversion of the existing storage barn to a dwelling within the wider site. Whilst this permission relates to the re-use of an existing building and therefore attracts different considerations to the erection of a new dwelling, it nevertheless forms part of the baseline context for assessment. Regard must therefore also be had to the cumulative effects arising from both developments operating together. The combined effect of two residential units and associated domestic features would intensify the residential character of the site and further reduce the distinction between the settlement edge and surrounding countryside.

The Planning Inspector in recent appeal decisions relating to land within the applicant's wider ownership similarly identified concerns that additional built form and associated domestic activity would erode the character of this settlement edge and its relationship with the countryside.

Accordingly, whilst the proposal is limited in scale, officers consider that the introduction of a new dwelling and associated domestic activity would result in an increased suburbanisation of the site which would fail to respond appropriately to its countryside setting and would therefore conflict with Policies 26, 32 and 33 of the HDPF, Policy 14 of the Neighbourhood Plan, and the wider design objectives of the NPPF.

Heritage

Policy 34 of the HDPF states that the Council will sustain and enhance its historic environment through positive management of development affecting heritage assets, stating that development within a Conservation Area will only be permitted if the proposal would preserve or enhance the Conservation Area. Development affecting the setting of a listed will not be permitted which would have an adverse impact on the setting or special architectural character or appearance of a listed building.

The site is located close to the Storrington Conservation Area to the east. The site lies within the area identified as Landscape Fringe 1 in the Storrington conservation area appraisal and is identified as being of high sensitivity to change. Given the setting of the site in relation to the Conservation Area, and the established nature of the building, the proposal is not considered to result in adverse harm to its character or setting.

Residential Amenity:

Policy 33(2) of the Horsham District Planning Framework states that permission will be granted for development that does not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of the occupiers/users of nearby properties and land.

The proposed dwelling would be single storey bungalow, which does not incorporate first-floor windows. Given the separation distance to nearby residential dwellings it is considered that there would be no harmful impact in terms of overlooking or loss of light.

It is recognised that the addition of a new dwelling would result in a change in the way in which the site is used, with frequent domestic comings and goings, in addition to associated residential paraphernalia that comes with such a use. However, the site appears to remain in regular use as existing, with regular trips being made by users of the site.

Whilst the proposal would introduce additional residential activity and associated domestic features, officers do not consider that the level of activity generated would result in unacceptable harm to the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers. This does not alter the separate assessment of the proposal's effect upon the character of the site and wider settlement edge.

Highways Impacts:

Policy 40 of the HDPF supports proposals which provide safe and suitable access for all vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, public transport and the delivery of goods, whilst Policy 41 requires adequate parking facilities within developments. Chapter 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework sets out that 'development should only be refused on transport grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety grounds, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe'.

Policy 17 of the NPD states development proposals will be supported provided they can demonstrate that their residual traffic impacts on the local road network are not severe. Policy 18 states Development proposals that will result in the net loss of public car parking facilities in Storrington village centre will be resisted. Proposals that will result in additional public car parking facilities to support the village centre will be supported.

The proposal would utilise an existing access into the site via a privately maintained track off of the public highway. No alterations are proposed to the means of access onto the track or the site itself. WSCC noted that the proposal is not anticipated to give rise to a material intensification of use of this existing access point. Furthermore, the site exhibits suitable space for car parking provision in line with WSCC Parking Standards and on-site turning appears achievable, allowing cars to exit in a forward gear. Officers also note that the site is nearby existing PROW networks and is within reasonable walking distance to nearby facilities and the central settlement of Storrington.

For the reasons above, it is not considered that the proposal would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety or result in 'severe' cumulative impacts on the operation of the highway network, therefore is not contrary to the Transport objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraphs 115 and 116), and that there are no transport grounds to resist the proposal.

Ecology

Policy 31 of the HDPF states that Development proposals will be required to contribute to the enhancement of existing biodiversity and should create and manage new habitats where appropriate. The Council will support new development which retains and /or enhances significant features of nature conservation on development sites. The Council will also support development which makes a positive contribution to biodiversity through the creation of green spaces, and linkages between habitats to create local and regional ecological networks.

The site lies within the wider ecological consultation area associated with The Mens SAC and therefore potential impacts on bat movement and habitat connectivity require consideration.

The application is supported by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) prepared by Arbtech Consulting Ltd. (October 2024), which has been reviewed by the Council's appointed ecologist (Place Services) who raise no overriding ecological objection and are satisfied that sufficient ecological information has been provided to enable the application to be determined.

The submitted ecological information identifies that the proposal would not require the removal of trees, hedgerows or buildings on the site and therefore the proposal is not considered likely to result in significant direct impacts upon habitat connectivity or ecological features of value. The Council's appointed ecologist has also advised that no additional bat surveys are necessary in this instance.

Whilst the site lies within the wider consultation area associated with The Mens Special Area of Conservation (SAC), the Council's ecologist advises that habitat connectivity would be maintained, and no severance of known commuting or foraging routes is anticipated. However, it has been identified that increased lighting associated with residential development could potentially affect bat activity within the local area and therefore the implementation of a Wildlife Friendly Lighting Strategy would be necessary to ensure that ecological impacts are appropriately mitigated.

The submitted PEA also identifies mitigation measures for reptiles and other mobile protected and Priority species which may be present within the site and surrounding area. Subject to these measures being secured and implemented, the Council's ecologist advises that the proposal would not give rise to unacceptable impacts upon protected species.

The Council's ecologist has further advised that a project-level Habitats Regulations Assessment (Appropriate Assessment) should be undertaken by the Local Planning Authority to consider potential impacts upon designated ecological sites. Following the ecologist comments an Appropriate Assessment has since been undertaken by the LPA.

Subject to conditions securing mitigation measures, biodiversity enhancements and ecological management, Officers are satisfied that the proposal would accord with Policy 31 of the HDPF and the ecological objectives of the NPPF.

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 paragraph 193 of the NPPF.

Other Matters:

Climate Change:

Policies 35, 36 and 37 require that development mitigates to the impacts of climate change through measures including improved energy efficiency, reducing flood risk, reducing water consumption, improving biodiversity and promoting sustainable transport modes. These policies reflect the requirements of Chapter 14 of the NPPF that local plans and decisions seek to reduce the impact of development on climate change. The proposed development includes the following measures to build resilience to climate change and reduce carbon emissions:

- Water consumption limited to 110litres per person per day
- Requirement to provide full fibre broadband site connectivity
- Refuse and recycling storage
- Cycle parking facilities
- Electric vehicle charging points

If minded approving, these measures will be controlled by conditions the application will suitably reduce the impact of the development on climate change in accordance with local and national policy.

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 'self-build or custom housing' under Regulation 8 of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024

Conclusions and Planning Balance

As set out above, the proposal conflicts with Policies 1, 2, 4, 25, 26, 32 and 33 of the HDPF, together with Policies 1, 8 and 14 of the Storrington, Sullington and Washington Neighbourhood Plan. The proposal would introduce a new dwelling beyond the defined Built-Up Area Boundary and within the countryside, resulting in additional built form, residential curtilage and associated domestic activity at an important settlement edge location.

The Council is currently unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites and therefore the presumption in favour of sustainable development under paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF applies. In these circumstances, the policies most important for determining the application are considered out-of-date, and planning permission should be granted unless either policies within the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provide a clear reason for refusal, or

any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the Framework as a whole.

In favour of the proposal, the development would provide one additional dwelling and therefore make a small contribution towards the District's housing supply at a time of significant housing shortfall. Limited positive weight is also afforded to the short-term economic benefits associated with construction activity and future expenditure by occupants. Officers further acknowledge that the site lies adjacent to the settlement edge and within reasonable proximity of services and facilities within Storrington.

Officers have also considered the Council's Shaping Development in Horsham District (2025) guidance, which provides criteria for assessing unallocated settlement edge sites. These criteria require that development adjoins the settlement edge, represents an appropriate scale of expansion, meets identified local needs or supports community facilities, does not prejudice comprehensive long-term development, and is contained within defensible boundaries whilst maintaining and enhancing landscape character features.

Whilst the site physically adjoins the settlement edge, officers do not consider that the proposal satisfactorily meets all of the relevant criteria. In particular, insufficient evidence has been provided to demonstrate that the development would maintain and enhance the landscape character of the site or that, when considered cumulatively with the approved barn conversion under application DC/25/1329, it would avoid harmful encroachment into the countryside. The guidance requires compliance with the criteria as a whole, rather than a selective or partial compliance.

Limited weight is afforded to the extant permission under application DC/25/1329. That permission relates to the conversion and re-use of an existing building, which materially differs from the erection of a wholly new dwelling in open land. Whilst it forms part of the baseline context, it does not establish that further new-build residential development on the site would be acceptable in principle.

Against these benefits, officers identify harm arising from the introduction of additional built development and associated domestic activity into a site which presently retains the characteristics of an open field forming part of the rural transition at the settlement edge. The proposal would result in increased domestication and suburbanisation through the creation of residential curtilage, parking, lighting, boundary treatments and associated activity. This would erode the transitional relationship between the built form of the settlement and the surrounding countryside, harming the character and appearance of the area.

Taking all matters into account, officers conclude that, although the proposal would provide a modest housing benefit, the identified adverse impacts to the character of the settlement edge and countryside would significantly and demonstrably outweigh those benefits when assessed against the policies of the NPPF as a whole. The proposal is therefore not considered to constitute sustainable development, and the presumption in favour of sustainable development is outweighed in this instance.

Recommendation: Application is REFUSED

Reasons for Refusal:

- 1 The development is within a countryside location outside of the built-up area boundary of any settlement on a site which has not been allocated for development within the Horsham District Planning Framework or an adopted Neighbourhood Plan. The development would be contrary to the overarching strategy and hierarchical approach of concentrating development within the main settlements and is not essential to its countryside location. There are no material considerations which outweigh this harm, and the proposal represents unsustainable development contrary to Policies 1, 2, 3, 4, and 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015), Policies 1 and 8 of the made the Storrington, Sullington & Washington Neighbourhood Plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 2 The proposal would facilitate development extending beyond the defined settlement boundary into the countryside and would cause localised visual harm to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies 25, 32 and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015), and Policies 8 and 14 of the Storrington Sullington and Washington Neighbourhood Plan (2019).

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/26/0383

Schedule of plans/documents **not approved**:

Plan Type	Description	Drawing Number	Received Date
Location plan		NONE	03.03.2026
Plans	Land Owned	NONE	03.03.2026
Roof plan	Proposed and Site	2936/1 REV A	31.03.2026
Elevation & Floor plan	Proposed	2936/2 REV A	31.03.2026
Block plan	Proposed and Sections	2936/3 REV A	31.03.2026
Site plan	Proposed and Roof	2931/1	18.03.2026

DELEGATED

Case Officer sign/initial Daniel Holmes Date: 19/06/2026

Authorising Officer sign/initial RHERMITAGE Date: 26.06.2026