



**READING
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Your Ref: DC/25/1686
Our Ref: 11140-hc

18 June 2026

For the attention of Halima Chowdhury

Horsham District Council
Albery House
Springfield Road
Horsham
West Sussex
RH12 2GB

Dear Ms Chowdhury,

Site: Johnsons Farm, Juggs Lane, West Chiltington, West Sussex, RH20 2JS.

Application: DC/25/1686

Proposal: Erection of storage building (retrospective)

Thank you for your instruction dated 11 June 2026 requesting Reading Agricultural Consultants Ltd (RAC) comments on the above planning application.

In preparing this desk-top response I have had regard to:

- the application form and associated plans;
- a Planning Statement (PS) dated January 2025 prepared by Scott Planning; and
- a letter dated 9 January 2026 from Scott Planning to the Council providing additional information to specific questions regarding what agriculture is taking place and what storage is required.

I have not visited the site or discussed the application with the applicant or the agent.

Background

1. The PS notes that the land holding at Johnsons Farm measures roughly 0.6 hectare (1.48 acres) and was historically part of a larger agricultural holding farmed by multiple generations of the same family. The current owner and applicant is Mr Simon Green.
2. The PS further notes that the farm has diminished in size to its current smallholding size and historically had been used for keeping pigs and poultry and the dumping of various waste.



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3. The PS details that the applicant on inheriting the land from his grandfather has cleaned the site of waste, restored the land, maintained hedges and trees, reseeded the area with grass, removed dilapidated buildings and has erected a new building on the land holding which is the subject of this application. The PS indicates that some small existing buildings remain on site, but little detail is provided.
4. The PS details that this new storage building is required for secure storage of various machinery and materials considered necessary to maintain the land holding. Whilst it has detailed various machinery items such as mini-tractor and trailer, tractor mounted mower, mini-baler, strimmer, hedge trimmers, chain saw, various hand tools and ladder it is unclear whether the applicant currently owns all these items or has them on site. No photographs have been provided of the machinery to be stored in the building. No internal floor plans of the proposed storage of various machinery have been provided.
5. The agent's letter to the Council dated 9 January 2026 makes comment on the definition of agriculture, but then comments that the land at Johnsons farm is unlikely to support a viable farming enterprise. It further notes that having inherited the land, the applicant simply wishes to maintain the land for biodiversity and local amenity by maintaining it as a grass meadow, including the production of hay. No details on what quantity of hay the applicant can produce from the smallholding and if it is to be sold. RAC understands the applicant has no livestock.
6. The agent's letter also notes that the building will provide welfare and rest space for the applicant or other persons working on the land. No details of this space have been provided in any floor plan.
7. RAC would comment that on review of the agent's letter to the Council, it appears that the current storage building (the subject of this application) is associated with the applicant's car repair business which has nothing to do with any agricultural activities on the smallholding.

Proposal

8. The applicant's proposal is for the erection of a storage barn (retrospective). The barn measures 10m x 10m (floor area -100m²) and a ridge height of 4m. The storage building is clad in dark green metal sheeting and has polycarbonate sheet rooflights.
9. The storage building has access through a roller shutter door and a personnel door on the southern elevation.

Relevant Planning Policies

10. National planning policy guidance for development in the countryside is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) updated in December 2024.
11. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF sets out the core land-use planning principles that should be adopted and these expressly include:
 - A presumption in favour of sustainable development;
 - Positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of the area and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change;
 - Provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses;
 - Approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; and,

- Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission.

12. Section 4 requires that decision makers:

- should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way; work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic; social and environmental conditions of the area;
- seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

13. Section 6 of the NPPF is concerned with 'Building a strong, competitive economy' and at paragraph 85 it notes:

"planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt..."

14. At paragraph 88 'Supporting a prosperous rural economy' it notes:

"Planning policies and decisions should enable:

- a) The sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;*
- b) The development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based businesses;..."*

15. Policy 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (excluding South Downs National Park) deals with countryside protection and enhancement and states:

"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:

- 1. support the needs of agriculture or forestry;*
- 2. enable the extraction of minerals or the disposal of waste;*
- 3. provide for quiet informal recreational use; or,*
- 4. enable the sustainable development of rural areas.*

In addition, proposals must be of a scale appropriate to its countryside character and location. Development will be considered acceptable where it does not lead, either individually or cumulatively, to a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside, and protects, and/or conserves, and/or enhances, the key features and characteristics of the landscape character area in which it is located, including:

- 1. the development pattern of the area, its historical and ecological qualities, tranquillity and sensitivity to change;*
- 2. the pattern of woodlands, fields, hedgerows, trees, waterbodies and other features; and*
- 3. the landform of the area."*

Appraisal

16. The applicant has inherited the smallholding at Johnsons Farm and has cleared the land area of various waste items, restoring it and reseeded the area with grass.

17. The applicant accepts that the smallholding is unlikely to support a viable farming enterprise. On reviewing the documents provided with this application RAC would agree that the small land holding at the application site with very limited grassland area with trees spread about would not support a viable farming enterprise.

18. The PS details the applicant will be producing hay from the small area of grassland but has provided no details on quantity. RAC questions whether such a small area is indeed economical and whether the applicant has the necessary agricultural machinery to carry out the production of hay.
19. RAC accepts that regular maintenance of the applicant's small grassland meadow area at Johnsons Farm such as topping during the growing season and hedge cutting during the permitted season (legislation notes you cannot trim a hedgerow from 1st March to 31st August on agricultural land) would be acceptable.
20. The applicant has detailed the type of machinery to be stored in the building but has provided no details of sizes or proposed floor plan of the storage building to justify the size and 100m² of floor area in the storage barn.
21. It is generally accepted that the provision of an agricultural building for the secure and storage of agricultural machinery protects it from the elements of the weather compared to being stored outside in the open. Agricultural machinery when left outside in the open and subject to the elements of the weather can lead to rusting and deterioration of moving parts which can increase maintenance costs and downtime. Left out in the open machinery is also liable to theft. RAC is aware that nationally there has been an increase in rural crime and in particular the theft of agricultural machinery which is of concern to the police and insurers.
22. RAC would question the suitability of the storage building (the subject of this application), if the applicant proposes to store hay in the storage building. RAC accepts that storage of hay undercover does protect it from the elements of the weather and maintains its nutritional value, but such a storage building requires adequate ventilation of the stored hay to prevent the hay from overheating, which this storage building does not have. It is also not recommended to store hay in the same area, air space as agricultural machinery or fertilisers or chemicals in order to minimise any fire risk.
23. In summary RAC would conclude the storage building (the subject of this application) has not been justified in size or design to meet the needs of any limited agricultural activity on the applicant's small holding.
24. The storage building (the subject of this application) is not compliant with national or local planning policy.

I trust these comments are helpful in your deliberations.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Bloor'.

Alan Bloor