



TO: Planning Committee

BY: Head of Development

DATE: 10 April 2018

DEVELOPMENT: Retrospective application for the erection of an agricultural storage building

SITE: Windacres Farm Church Street Rudgwick West Sussex

WARD: Rudgwick

APPLICATION: DC/17/2410

APPLICANT: **Name:** Mr John Bailey **Address:** Windacres Farm, Church Street
Rudgwick RH12 3EG

REASON FOR INCLUSION ON THE AGENDA: Applicant is a Councillor

RECOMMENDATION: To refuse the application

1. THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

To consider the planning application.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION

- 1.1 The application is made in retrospect, and is for the erection of an agricultural storage building measuring 31.1m x 28.3m (880.1m²), comprising a lean-to building with 5no. bays to the south elevation (2no. secure, fully clad bays, and 3no. open fronted bays). The building reaches a maximum height of 7.9m to ridge and 5.9m to eaves. The building is of typical design and construction for its proposed agricultural location and use, comprising a shallow pitched roof, steel framing, concrete internal flooring (split level), and clad in olive green corrugated steel sheeting. Sliding doors on the western elevation access the main part of the building and a further pair of sliding doors access the enclosed part of the lean-to section. There are 20no. roof lights serving the main section of the barn, and 4no. roof lights serving the enclosed two bays of the lean-to.
- 1.2 A mains electricity and water supply has already been connected. A single WC units is proposed in the enclosed lean-to section, but has not been implemented yet. No details of access or areas of hardstanding are proposed as part of this application.
- 1.3 The applicant states that the building will be used for agricultural storage associated with the arable agricultural activities on site. Grain crop harvested from the land, farm machinery and agricultural commodities (fertilizers etc) would be stored within the building, as well as space within the open bays for the storage of hay/straw bales and equipment. It is proposed that the building would accommodate a farm office and workshop area with staff toilet facilities and rest room.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

- 1.4 Windacres Farm comprises a total of 33ha of land, and is located to the north east of Rudgwick village. The application site is located approximately 400m to the east of Church Street and the Rudgwick Conservation Area. The land between the site and Church Street comprises open fields, beyond which are the commercial premises of Rudgwick Metals (a metal cutting and storage business) located approximately 170m to the west of the application site, as well as several residential dwellings set in large plots along Church Street and Highcroft Drive. The site is accessed from Church Street via an existing access to the south of Windacres Lodge and Windacres Barn.
- 1.5 The application site is located 100m to the east of the defined Built-Up Area Boundary of Rudgwick and therefore, is located in the countryside. The site is located to the northern end of an open field which is sited south of an existing vehicular access track linking the Rudgwick Metals site to Godleys Lane to the east. The site is located within a quiet area of undulating open field which slopes gently in a southerly direction towards Godleys (a residential property approximately 400m to the south of the application site). The field boundary to the west of the site contains a line of semi-mature oak trees and hedging which partially screens the proposed building from views to/from the West. The surrounding vegetation on the North, East and South does not afford much screening, leaving the barn quite visible, to varying degrees, from the surrounding PROWs and dwellings. At the time of the Officer site visits, there was no evidence of livestock on the holding, and it has been confirmed by the applicant that the holding is arable only.
- 1.6 The building subject to this retrospective planning application is already erected on site. In terms of location, scale and materials, the building largely reflects the plans accompanying the application submission, albeit the openings on the western elevation of the lean-to part of the building are not reflective of the plans (i.e. the plans propose sliding double doors, but the building on site has 3x additional window openings and a pedestrian access door which are not shown on the proposed plans). At the time of the first site visit (14/11/17) the building appeared to be recently completed, and was empty. At the second site visit (11/01/2018) access into the main storage building was not possible, therefore it was unclear as to what was being stored inside. At the third site visit (20/02/2018) access into the barn showed that the building contained a tractor, a classic car, building materials (bricks etc), and a variety of household goods. It was noted that around 100 wrapped bales of hay were being stored in the open bays of the lean-to section, as well as an old combine harvester and a tractor/trailer parked on the adjacent hardstanding. On the surrounding land was non-agricultural detritus such as building materials and unused household goods.
- 1.7 An area of concrete hardstanding has been laid around the western and southern elevations which is not proposed as part of this planning application. A large oil tank was also present on site, but at the time of the site visits appeared to be unconnected. To the west of the storage building is a shipping container unit which appears to be in residential use. A separate planning application for this unit is currently pending consideration by the Council (DC/17/2605).
- 1.8 Preliminary works (including ecology mitigation measures) have started on the Rudgwick Metals site, which has the benefit of planning permission for 55no. residential units and B1 commercial units (DC/16/2917). This redevelopment includes the demolition of Windacres Lodge and Windacres Barn in order to construct a new vehicular access from Church Street to the wider site, as well as to properties adjacent including; Windacres House, Windacres Cottage and Windacres Bungalow.

APPLICATION BACKGROUND

- 1.9 In September 2009, Prior Approval was granted (with conditions) for the demolition of an existing 458m² agricultural storage building on the Rudgwick Metals site (as part of plans to

redevelop the site), and the erection of a replacement 457.5m² agricultural storage building further to the east on the current application site. The storage building approved was a very similar size and scale to the existing building but was to be located approximately 170m to the east. Conditions attached to this Prior Approval included approval of details relating to materials and finished floor levels; and a requirement to demolish the existing agricultural storage building on site within 6 months of the completion of the new building. The replacement storage building approved under this application was not constructed, nor were the details reserved by condition approved.

- 1.10 In September 2012, another Prior Approval application was granted for the erection of a 463.6m² agricultural storage building on the same site as the 2009 Prior Approval, albeit the building was proposed to be re-orientated and repositioned slightly further to the north. Again, this building was proposed as a replacement of the existing 458m² agricultural storage building which was earmarked for demolition as part of site redevelopment of the Rudgwick Metals site. The same conditions were attached to this permission as for the 2009 permission (materials, levels, and requirement to demolish existing building). As per the conditions of agricultural Prior Approval in Part 6 (class A) of the General Permitted Development Order, the development was required to be completed within 5 years of the Local Planning Authority granting permission (on 19 September 2012). In the summer of 2017, construction of the agricultural storage building began, and in September 2017 the building was largely complete (as verified by an Officer Site visit on 18 September 2017). However, at 880m², the building was not built in accordance with the approved plans, and the details reserved by condition were not approved. The Prior Approval is therefore considered to have expired and the building on site is currently unlawful (hence the current planning application to regularise the development).
- 1.11 In August 2013, permission was granted for the redevelopment of the Rudgwick Metals site including demolition of 2 existing dwellings, derelict farm buildings and workshops; and the erection of 36 dwellings, B1 office space and a community building (DC/09/1623). This scheme was not constructed and permission has now expired.
- 1.12 In April 2017 a revised scheme was permitted on the same site which permitted the erection of 55 dwellings and B1/B2 commercial floorspace (DC/16/2917). In order to accommodate this development, the demolition of 2x existing dwellinghouses and various industrial/agricultural outbuildings was also permitted. Construction of this scheme has very recently commenced.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 STATUTORY BACKGROUND

The Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2.2 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

The following Policies are considered to be relevant to the assessment of this application:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012)

Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF, 2015)

Policy 1 - Strategic Policy: Sustainable 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

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule April 2017 (Adopted 1st October 2017).

2.3 RELEVANT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Rudgwick Parish Council is designated as a Neighbourhood Development Plan area (June 2016). The Parish Council are at the early stages of preparing a plan (pre-Reg 14 evidence gathering stage). The Parish Council are assessing sites but a draft plan has not yet been prepared. Very limited weight can therefore be given to the Plan.

2.4 PLANNING HISTORY AND RELEVANT APPLICATIONS

DC/16/2917	Demolition of 2 x existing dwellings, industrial and agricultural outbuildings and erection of 55 dwellings, 3 x offices (B1 Use Class) and industrial building extension (B2 Use Class) with associated access, drainage and landscape works	Application Permitted on 05.04.2017
DC/12/1339	Demolition of existing building and erection of replacement agricultural building	Prior Approval Permitted With Conditions on 19.09.2012
DC/09/1623	Redevelopment of site with mixed use scheme including demolition of existing 2 dwellings, derelict farm buildings and workshops and erection of 36 dwellings, parking barns, 3 x B1 office units and 3 x B1 shed units, a community facility (meeting rooms, coffee shop) and extension to existing industrial unit	Application Permitted on 08.08.2013
DC/09/1231	Relocation of Agricultural Building and demolition of existing building - Prior Notification	Prior Approval Permitted With Conditions on 22.09.2009

3. OUTCOME OF CONSULTATIONS

3.1 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

3.2 INTERNAL CONSULTATIONS

HDC Strategic Planning: No objection

HDC Landscape Architect: Holding Objection

'The barn, by virtue of its size and location, has introduced a large obtrusive feature in a sensitive location which has resulted in some harm to both the character and the visual amenity of the landscape'

3.3 OUTSIDE AGENCIES

Rudgwick Parish Council: No Objection
No objection, with the following conditions:

- evidence to be provided that there is an agricultural need for a building of this size
- building to be used for agricultural storage only.

Reading Agricultural Consultants: Objection

Initial Comments Received 17 January 2018 (summarised)

'No agricultural justification for the building, or details of the agricultural trade or business have been submitted as part of the application. There was no evidence of livestock on the holding. 33ha will be able to produce approximately 165 tonnes of hay. Therefore requiring 990m³ of storage. Assuming storage to the eaves at 3.5m, the hay storage area will require a floor area of approximately 283m². If the applicant was storing 165 tonnes of hay, approximately 3.5 bays of the lean-to would be required for hay produced on the holding. If the remaining bays of the lean-to were not enclosed, they could provide storage for the combine harvester and tractor which appeared to be the only agricultural machinery on the site.

This would leave one side of the building redundant and as a result the building is too large for its intended use as an agricultural building for the storage of hay and agricultural machinery as stated in the application. As such, the size of the barn has not been justified for the stated needs and cannot therefore be reasonably required as supporting the needs of agriculture on the holding'.

Subsequent Comments Received 09 March 2018 (summarised)

'It is RAC's understanding that the applicant intends to bring the land back in to arable rotation and would have to meet the three crop rule to continue being eligible for the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS). RAC note that in order to convert permanent pasture back into arable production, a Screening Decision by Natural England is required, as part of the EIA Regulations before any conversion can take place.

Whilst RAC would accept that the barn is a like for like replacement of the existing grain store in the main yard area which has to be demolished, it was confirmed that the barn had not been used to store grain for over 15 years, and it is RAC's view that there is no guarantee that any limited agricultural activities currently taking place on the site will change and that grain storage will indeed be required.

RAC would consider the existing farm office building as excessive for farm of this size. The enclosed area of the lean-to in the new building would provide an area for a farm office and workshop. RAC considers through better planning this area (workshop and farm office) could have been contained within the remaining area of the grain store.

RAC considers it feasible that the owned and operable machinery that would be necessary for the small agricultural enterprise could be stored within the grain store.

The three open bays of the lean-to section are proposed to store straw bales which will be sold to the local equestrian market. However, the land at Windacres is not currently in arable production and therefore not producing any straw bales. Whilst it is accepted this may do in the future, this is not the current situation and there is no definite time line or evidence of any date when this will happen.

RAC would consider that the building as a whole, grain store and lean-to, is not reasonably justified in terms of the current agricultural activities at Windacres Farm, or any proposed increase in activities. RAC accepts the like for like replacement of the grain store and considers that with better planning a workshop and office area could be incorporated within the building including any agricultural machinery'.

8x letters have been received, all objecting to the planning application. The main (summarised) reasons for objection include:

- the building has been constructed unlawfully
- conditions of previous approval have not been discharged
- lack of agricultural justification (no extensive farming occurs on site)
- it is out of scale with the character of the surrounding countryside
- alters the natural beauty of the countryside setting
- unsightly views form nearby footpaths / bridleways
- may lead to alternative undesirable uses
- may turn into a motor repair business
- the metallic finish causes reflection

4. HOW THE PROPOSED COURSE OF ACTION WILL PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS

4.1 Article 8 (Right to respect of a Private and Family Life) and Article 1 of the First Protocol (Protection of Property) of the Human Rights Act 1998 are relevant to this application, Consideration of Human rights forms part of the planning assessment below.

5. HOW THE PROPOSAL WILL HELP TO REDUCE CRIME AND DISORDER

5.1 It is not considered that the development would be likely to have any significant impact on crime and disorder.

6. PLANNING ASSESSMENTS

6.1 The key issues for consideration in relation to this proposal are:

- The principle of the development
- Justification for need and scale
- Landscape impact

The Principle of the Development

6.2 Paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, and paragraphs 2 and 12 state that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF states that proposed development that conflicts with an up-to-date Local Plan should be refused unless there are other relevant material considerations that would indicate that the development would otherwise be acceptable. The Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) was adopted by the Council in November 2015 and forms the up-to-date development plan for the District. Rudgwick Parish Council was designated as a Neighbourhood Plan Area in 2016, but there is no 'made' Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) for this area at present.

6.3 The application site is not within a defined Built up Area Boundary (BUAB) and is therefore considered to form part of the District's countryside. HDPF Policy 26 (Countryside Protection) is therefore of key importance when determining this application. This policy makes provision for development in the countryside where certain criteria are complied with. In addition, Policy 10 (Rural Economic Development) is also relevant when considering the acceptability of development in the countryside that is proposed to contribute to sustainable rural economic development and rural employment opportunities.

6.4 Policy 26 aims to protect the countryside from inappropriate development and states that development in these locations would only be considered acceptable if it is essential to the

countryside location and meets one of four criteria. In accordance with the first criteria of Policy 26, development in countryside locations is considered acceptable in principle if it supports the needs of agriculture or forestry. In addition to this, in order to be acceptable under Policy 26, any proposal in the countryside must be of a scale appropriate to its countryside character and location. Acceptable development would not lead to a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside, and would protect, conserve and enhance the key features of the landscape in which it is located.

- 6.5 Policy 10 aims to support rural economic development in order to generate economic, social and environmental benefits for local communities. The principle of rural economic development proposed in the countryside will be supported by the Council if it maintains the quality and character of the area, and contributes to the sustainable farming enterprises within the district.
- 6.6 The proposed development is for an agricultural storage building within a countryside location; therefore, provided that the use of the building is strictly to support the needs of agricultural activities on the associated holding, and that is of an appropriate location, scale and design to accommodate these needs, it would be considered an acceptable development.
- 6.7 It is acknowledged that on two separate occasions (2009 and 2012), the site has benefitted from approval of an agricultural storage building under Prior Approval (GDPO, Part 6). This is a material consideration in the determining the principle of this type of development on this site, but the weight afforded to it is relatively limited given the difference in quantum of development previously approved (around 460m²) compared to the structure proposed now (880m²). In addition, the timeframes imposed on the Prior Approvals from both 2009 and 2012 have now expired.

Justification for Need and Scale

- 6.8 Within the planning statement and additional supporting statements subsequently submitted with this planning application, it is stated that the proposed agricultural storage building is a replacement for an existing 465m² agricultural storage building on the Rudgwick Metals site ('the existing building'). The existing building (as well as several other agricultural buildings on site) are located within the Built-Up Area Boundary and are earmarked for demolition as part of the consented mixed-use redevelopment of the Rudgwick Metals site which will provide for 55 dwellings and commercial floorspace. The existing building forms part of the redevelopment site which has been sold, and is not now under the ownership of the applicant as shown on the submitted location plan (JL07/2012/01/Rev A). The agent states that the demolition of the existing agricultural buildings will leave the remainder of the 33ha agricultural holding bereft of any buildings suitable for agricultural uses.
- 6.9 In a confidential letter submitted to the Council on 5th March 2018, an inventory of agricultural machinery owned by the applicant was provided, and it is stated that this equipment is to be stored in the building when the current storage buildings are demolished. Fertilizers, hay, straw and other cereal crops grown on the holding will also be stored within the proposed building. In addition, it is proposed that a replacement farm office and workshop is also located within the proposed agricultural building (the existing farm office and workshop is earmarked for demolition as part of the redevelopment). This will include staff rest rooms, and toilet facilities. The WC facility is indicated on the submitted floor plan (8242/1A), but the detailed arrangement of the proposed farm office and workshop space (including staff rest room) has not been provided. At present, the building has temporary services connected (electricity and water), with the view of making these permanent 'later this year'. The agent states that the proposed agricultural storage building, including office, and workshop is necessary for the continuation and longer-term use of the land for arable and pasture agricultural uses.

- 6.10 In order for the agricultural building to be considered acceptable in planning terms, it needs (firstly) to be established that its intended use will be for agricultural uses relating to the associated holding; and (secondly) that the proposed scale and design is considered to be acceptable. The Council's specialist agricultural advisors (Reading Agricultural Consultants - RAC) and Landscape Architect were consulted and have advised Officers of their views on the above matters. RAC undertook two site visits – the first on 11th January 2018 (the first site visit) and the second on 20th February 2018 (the second site visit). RAC have made their assessments based on the site visits as well as the information and supporting statements submitted with the planning application.

RAC Initial Assessment:

- 6.11 In their initial assessment (based on the first site visit), RAC note that specific and up-to-date details of the agricultural trade or business on site were not submitted as part of the application. Whilst the supporting statements suggest that hay and cereal crops have been harvested on the holding, the absence of detailed information has made the projected calculation of harvested crops difficult as it is unknown exactly what, and how much, is being harvested from the 33ha holding. It was noted from the site visit that around 100 large bales of wrapped hay were stored in the open lean-to section of the building, therefore RAC have based their calculations on standard figures for the storage of hay.
- 6.12 It was calculated that the 33ha holding would be able to produce around 165 tonnes of hay which would require a storage floor area of around 283m². The majority of this (in addition to the agricultural machinery seen on site) could therefore be stored within the lean-to section of the barn (416m²); leaving the remaining section of 464m² largely surplus to requirements. RAC concluded that the building is too large for its intended use as an agricultural building for the storage of hay and agricultural machinery as stated in the application. As such the size of the barn has not been justified for the stated needs and cannot therefore be reasonably required as supporting the needs of agriculture on the holding.

RAC Subsequent Assessment:

- 6.13 Following the first site visit and the submission of the initial assessment, a second site visit was arranged. The second site visit was more comprehensive, and was attended by the Planning Case Officer, RAC, the applicant and the applicant's agent and agricultural advisor. All relevant buildings and land at Windacres Farm were inspected at this site meeting; and the requirement for further supporting information from the applicant was discussed. Subsequent to the site meeting, additional supporting information (some commercially sensitive, and marked as confidential) was received by the Council, and consultation was undertaken with RAC.
- 6.14 The additional supporting information notes the applicant's intention to return the land back to arable production (after several decades of permanent pasture required for the annual Rudgwick Steam Rally, which has now ceased). RAC note that an EIA Screening Decision from Natural England would be required before conversion to arable can take place (which can take up to 3 months). This has not been applied for yet.
- 6.15 The applicant is in receipt of the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) from the Rural Payments Agency which requires the holding to grow and harvest at least 3 crops (no details of the 3 proposed crops have been provided). The applicant's intention is to use the main part of the proposed building for grain storage harvested from the 33ha holding. Given the existing grain store building on site (due for demolition) has not been used for over 15 years for the storage of grain, it is RAC's view that there is no certainty or guarantee that the holding will require grain storage in the near future.

- 6.16 Commercially sensitive and confidential information was submitted explaining the applicant's intention to expand the farm business in the near future thereby increasing the amount of crop grown and harvested on the holding. Whilst RAC note that the expansion of the holding could be feasible, no substantive evidence has been submitted to actively support this intention. Notwithstanding this, if the holding is expanded, a potential crop yield requiring 332m² of storage space within the grain store area of the building (71% of the grain store, based on a generous yield) could be achieved. In support of the application, the applicant details a crop yield requiring 270m² of storage space (58% of the grain store); and the existing 33ha holding is considered by RAC to be able to produce a yield requiring only 82m² of storage space (18% of the grain store). Therefore, even at the greatest yield (based on an expanded holding) the amount of crop harvested would not require the full extent of storage capacity that the building offers (i.e. a minimum of around 29% of the grain store area would be redundant).
- 6.17 However, it is appreciated that it would not just be crops that would require storage within the building, but associated agricultural machinery and an appropriately sized office space. A (confidential) list of machinery owned by the applicant was supplied, some seen and some not seen on site. The applicant states the intention to use contractors for the majority of the arable work, so RAC question why the amount of machinery owned by the applicant is reasonably required. RAC consider that machinery necessary for the small agricultural enterprise could also be stored within the proposed grain store.
- 6.18 An existing office building on site of 135m² is due for demolition as part of the redevelopment. At the site visit, this appeared redundant and not in use for a number of years. RAC consider this to be an excessive office space for a farm of this size. The proposed building includes an enclosed area of the lean-to (163m²) which is proposed as a farm office and workshop. The upper window suggest that a mezzanine level may be constructed, but this was not in-situ or detailed on the submitted plans. RAC appreciate the need for a farm office, and consider that through better planning and design, a suitably sized farm office and workshop area could be contained within the remaining area of the proposed grain store.
- 6.19 The 3 open bays of the lean-to section are proposed to store straw bales to be sold to the local equestrian market. RAC note that the land at Windacres is not currently in arable production and therefore not producing any straw bales. RAC accept that it may do in the future, but this is not the current situation and no evidence to suggest when this will happen.
- 6.20 RAC consider that the 880m² building as a whole, including the grain store and lean-to, is not reasonable justified in terms of the current agricultural activities at Windacres Farm, nor any proposed increase in activities. RAC accepts the like-for-like replacement of the old grain store (i.e. a 465m² building) in this location, and considers that with better planning, a workshop and farm office area could be incorporated within a building of this size, including any agricultural machinery necessary for the farming operations.

Landscape Impact

- 6.21 The Council's Landscape Architect visited the site in December 2017, and has expressed concern about the scale and location of the building, and its impact on the surrounding countryside. The Landscape Architect notes that the building has '*introduced a large, obtrusive feature in a sensitive location*', which is considered to result in some harm to the character and visual amenity of the landscape. It has been noted that no Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been submitted with the application which would have been useful in identifying the full impact of the development on the landscape from important viewpoints, which would help to inform mitigation options.

- 6.22 Due to the location of the building on an area of high ground in an open field, the sparse and distant surrounding vegetation on the north, east and south does not afford much screening, and leaves the barn visible from the surrounding public rights of way and dwellings. The Landscape Architect describes the landscape character condition as good, with only small areas of decline caused by the intrusion of some modern housing. The sensitivity to change in this landscape is high, with one of the key sensitivities being the impact of cumulative change.
- 6.23 The Landscape Architect acknowledges that the design and appearance of the building is generally in keeping with agricultural buildings in the area, and the sloping edge of the lean-to points downwards onto the undulating fields to the south. Despite this, it is considered that the building dominates the northern skyline as there are no trees or other screening to act as a backdrop, nor any effective screening to the other elevations to soften the visual impact. Without any proposed landscaping to screen the building, it is considered that the size and location of the structure has a negative effect on both the visual amenity and character of the landscape, and therefore does not accord with the requirements of Policies 25 and 26 of the HDPF.

Other Matters

- 6.24 Given the location and proposed use of the building (which would be for agricultural storage), it is not considered that it would have an adverse impact on the local highways network or highways safety, as limited vehicular movements would be required to and from the building.
- 6.25 Whilst the building is considered to be a visible and obtrusive feature in a countryside location; the impact it has on neighbouring amenity is considered to be minimal. The distance of well over 100m between the site and the nearest dwellings (Windacres to the south, and High Croft to the north-west) means that the building, whilst visible, would not cause any direct amenity harm.

Conclusion and Planning Balance

- 6.26 Whilst the general principle of development of an agricultural storage building in the countryside is supported by the Council; in order to be acceptable in planning terms, it must be satisfactorily demonstrated that the building is reasonably required to serve the agricultural activities on the associated holding, and that its size of the building is justified by the associated need.
- 6.27 It is stated that the proposed agricultural storage building is required as a replacement for an existing building on land that is to be redeveloped for a mixed-use housing scheme. Based on the information submitted in support of the planning application, and with the benefit of a comprehensive site visit where all relevant buildings and land were inspected; the advice from the Council's specialist agricultural advisors (RAC) outlines that the quantum of crops to be harvested on the holding (based on the existing 33ha site, or as a result of an expanded holding), in conjunction with the agricultural equipment and farm office reasonably required to operate the business, would not require a storage building of this size.
- 6.28 In addition, without an appropriate scheme of landscaping and planting to soften the impact of the building, it is considered that the location and size of the proposed building would be harmful to the character of the surrounding countryside by virtue of its scale (880m²) and relatively exposed location on high ground.
- 6.29 In summary, it is considered that the need for an agricultural storage building on this site and of the scale proposed has not been justified to the satisfaction of the local planning authority. This, in combination with the harmful impact upon the character of the

countryside caused by the building's size and location leads to the conclusion that the application should be refused.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)

Horsham District Council has adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule which took effect on 1st October 2017.

It is considered that this development constitutes CIL liable development, but given the nature of the proposal (an agricultural building) this is not a CIL chargeable development.

At the time of drafting this report the proposal involves the following:

Use Description	Proposed	Existing	Net Gain
District Wide Zone 1	158.39	0	158.39

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Reason(s) for Refusal:

1. The agricultural storage building, by reason of its overall scale, footprint and location, has introduced a large, obtrusive feature into a sensitive countryside location, to the detriment of the character and visual amenity of the surrounding landscape. The applicant has failed to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority that an agricultural storage building of this scale and impact is required to support the agricultural needs of the wider holding at Windacres Farm, therefore the development does not accord with the requirements of Policies 10, 25 and 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework.

Background Papers:
DC/17/2410