



**TO:** Planning Committee South  
**BY:** Head of Development  
**DATE:** 21<sup>st</sup> January 2020  
**DEVELOPMENT:** Erection of an agricultural workers dwelling.  
**SITE:** Ryecroft Nursery Fryern Road Storrington West Sussex  
**WARD:** Storrington and Washington  
**APPLICATION:** DC/18/2402  
**APPLICANT:** **Name:** Mr P Godsmark **Address:** c/o Agent Storrington RH20 4BJ

**REASON FOR INCLUSION ON THE AGENDA:** More than eight persons in different households have made written representations raising material planning considerations that are inconsistent with the recommendation of the Head of Development.

**RECOMMENDATION:** To refuse planning permission

## 1. THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

To consider the planning application.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION

- 1.1 The proposal seeks to erect a detached chalet-style dwelling on the south eastern corner of the site to provide a rural workers dwelling for the nursery owner and family.
- 1.2 The dwelling would have a broadly rectangular footprint, some 18m x 12m at its widest, with a ridge some 6.7m in height. Elevationally, the dwelling would be provided with generous windows and two dormers in the western roof-slope. Internally, the dwelling would provide for three bedrooms, two of which would be within the roof-space, living accommodation and a home office, amounting to some 170sq.m.
- 1.3 The proposed new dwelling would provide the applicants / owners with permanent on-site accommodation in order to support the nursery site, Ryecroft Nurseries, which are stated as being the largest growers of Dahlia's in the UK. In 2006, the applicant purchased an adjacent field at Fryern Road, as more space was required for increasing the collection.
- 1.4 The business has four income streams:
  1. Growing dahlias for sale and cultivation of new varieties
  2. Raising and looking after chickens for egg production (currently some 450 on site)

3. Production of fresh garden produce for sale through our farm shop
4. Raising turkeys for Christmas (some 100 pullets for next year)

- 1.5 New varieties of dahlias are produced at the nursery. The seeds are collected in the autumn and then dried and stored over the winter. In April, the seeds are sown in trays and then pricked out into individual pots. The aim is to plant 5000 seedlings out into the field. As the seedlings grow and flower they are assessed for their quality. Only the best are kept. Over the next 4-5 years they continue to be trialled with only a small number making the grade before release to the public. Over the years, Ryecroft Nursery has created between 100-150 new dahlia varieties, including the first scented variety.
- 1.6 The applicants currently reside some 1.5km away in Storrington, and state that the growing dahlias is hard, physical work. Every October, before the cold and damp set in, over 8000 tubers are dug up by hand, cleaned, and labelled before being stored in dry boxes under cover. For security over the winter, many of the tubers are transported to a storage area at their current home.
- 1.7 Living on site would provide security against theft of hens and turkeys, dahlia plants and equipment that contribute to the applicant's livelihood. The applicant is the last breeder of dahlia's in Britain, so living on site would enable the continuation of breeding and growing new varieties, whilst providing safety and well-being of the livestock in order to provide an on-going livelihood.
- 1.8 Recent night-time thefts have resulted in the loss of an entire new variety of dahlia, equipment, as well as livestock. Additionally, the applicant suffers from health issues, so having the potential for accommodation at one level and on site would sustain the growing business and assist with theft prevention, whilst also leading to health benefits.
- 1.9 The application is accompanied by 9 letters offering support, from nearby residents and customers, as well as from the Show Chairman, Vice Chair and General Secretary of the National Dahlia Society.
- 1.10 Additional information has been received regarding the financial viability of the business, following officer requests, and again to address comments in relation to the Council's Agricultural Advisor's initial assessment.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

- 1.11 The application site comprises a site in use for horticultural purposes, producing and breeding Dahlias, incorporating an element of a produce growing which is sold on the nursery site shop.
- 1.12 The site is located off the western side of Fryern Road and is not subject to any designations apart from being situated in a rural area, some 480m south of West Chiltington Built Up Area Boundary and some 550m north of the Storrington Built Up Area boundary. The nursery site lies some 80m south of a designated Flood Zone.
- 1.13 Aerial views show the site and its wider environs having been sub-divided from the larger agricultural field patterns over the last twenty years to form smaller fields, land holdings and paddocks. The adjacent land holding to the south of the application site was developed some 8 years ago to provide a stable building and tack room to support the horse paddocks on the land. The existing Dahlia nursery has been active on site for some 12 years.
- 1.14 The site of the proposed new dwelling itself is separated from the eastern growing field by an established hedgerow, and a hedgerow forming the southern boundary to the site. The

existing built development within the site, forming a timber barn and poly-tunnels, is clustered along the western side of the hedgerow, set some 97m back from Fryern Road.

## **2. INTRODUCTION**

### STATUTORY BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

### RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

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

#### **National Planning Policy Framework**

##### **Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF 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 7 - Strategic Policy: Economic Growth

Policy 9 - Employment Development

Policy 10 - Rural Economic Development

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 27 - Settlement Coalescence

Policy 32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development

Policy 33 - Development Principles

Policy 35 - Strategic Policy: Climate Change

Policy 36 - Strategic Policy: Appropriate Energy Use

Policy 37 - Sustainable Construction

Policy 38 - Strategic Policy: Flooding

Policy 39 - Strategic Policy: Infrastructure Provision

Policy 40 - Sustainable Transport

Policy 41 - Parking

##### Supplementary Planning Guidance:

- 2.3 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule (2017)

### RELEVANT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

- 2.4 The Storrington, Sullington and Washington Neighbourhood Plan has now been formally 'Made' (adopted Sept 2019)

Policy 1: Spatial Plan for the Parish

Policy 8: Countryside Protection

Policy 9: Green Gaps

Policy 14: Design

Policy 17: Traffic and Transport

## PLANNING HISTORY AND RELEVANT APPLICATIONS

DC/09/1281	Polythene Tunnel	Permitted 08.09.2009
DC/07/1210	Glasshouse	Permitted 13.07.2007
DC/06/0422	Erection of polytunnel and agricultural store	Permitted 13.04.2006
DC/05/1686	Erection of polytunnel and tractor shed	Withdrawn 05.09.2005

### 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](http://www.horsham.gov.uk)

#### OUTSIDE AGENCIES

- 3.2 **Agricultural Consultant:** (Initial) Objection

Initial comments February 2019 based on submission documents including Planning, Design and Access Statement and Business Plan dated Nov 2018.

Background (summarised in parts):

- The applicant operates Ryecroft Dahlias which has been operating from the land at Fryern Road since 2006 when it was purchased. The holding appears to extend to some 1.5 hectares (3.8 acres), and according to the business plan, the soil has been improved over the years with 3,500 tonnes of soil enrichment compost and manure, and by 2011 the crop yields have increased producing over 8,000 dahlia tubers a year as well as sweet peas, zinnias and gladioli.
- The applicant also grows vegetables (runner beans, French beans, spinach, carrots and leeks), fruit trees and has diversified in to chickens for egg production and turkeys for meat.
- The website does not appear to have been updated since 2015
- Note has been taken of the nature of propagation involved in producing new varieties of prize-winning Dahlias, with over 8000 tubers hug up each year and most moved to the applicant's home, some 1.5miles away. Ryecroft Nurseries aims to plant some 5000 seedlings per year. Over the years Ryecroft Nursey has created between 100-150 new dahlia varieties which are sold around the world.
- The Business Plan details that the applicant resides some 1.5miles from the site, and given the previous thefts and security issues at the site, resulting in the loss of entire new varieties of Dahlias, many of the tubers are stored at the applicant's home. The theft of the turkeys in late 2016 resulted in the loss of the gross income for the business. No Crime Reference Numbers have been provided for this, or other, incidents.
- The applicant detailed to the Council that his son is interested in taking over the business, however this has not been stated in any of the submitted documents.

#### Functional / Essential Need:

- There are no automatic failsafe systems at Ryecroft Nursery and therefore all emergencies must be dealt with by the applicant who currently lives away from site in Storrington, located 1.5miles from the application site.
- It is considered that the essential need for a worker to be on-site at a nursery arises from the sowing, growing and caring of the plants, which due to weather conditions require the manual heating and operation of any ventilation systems.
- The documents submitted do not detail whether the applicant has any manual or automatic irrigation, heating or ventilation systems.
- Whilst there are alarm systems that could warn of any sudden drops in temperature or boiler failures, but these would not rectify the problem. Given the time taken to react to such emergencies could lead to inevitable loss of susceptible plants
- The applicant stores Dahlia tubers in plastic crates in greenhouses at their property in Storrington, which has electricity and heating blankets. There is no electricity at Ryecroft Nursery which means limited ability to overwinter the tubers and propagate on site. The application does not detail that there is an intention to supply and connect electricity to the site which would be required.
- There are no standard labour requirements for intensive horticultural units, although results from Reading University's Horticultural Production in England suggest that the average nursery of a similar type would employ some 5 FT workers per hectare of protected cropping, in addition to casual labour. Given the application site has an area of protected cropping of some 0.07ha, this would yield a labour expectation of 1PT worker.
- The submitted Planning, Design and Access Statement and Business Plan state the primary need for the dwelling arises from the security of the site, with only a brief mention of animal welfare, although at the time, no details are provided with regard to the number of chickens or turkeys kept on the site.  
(Labour requirement: turkey = 24minutes per bird/year; chicken = 15 mins per bird/year)
- The guidance in the revoked PPS7 does not consider that site security in itself is not sufficient for the siting of a permanent rural workers dwelling.
- The Business Plan sets out that the applicant is not able to travel the 1.5 mile distance from home to the site quick enough to deter thieves, nor can they afford stronger or higher security barriers around the property, and sensors, alarms and lighting have been dismissed. There is reference to the use of dummy cameras

#### Alternative Dwellings:

- A search of Rightmove displays 52 dwellings available for sale within 1/2 mile of the application site ranging from £435,000 for a three-bed house to £1million for a five-bed house, which are generally considered to be beyond the means of an agricultural worker.
- The applicant currently lives 1.5miles from the site, within Storrington and has been able to meet the needs of the holding for the previous 10 years.

#### Conclusion:

- The application proposes the erection of a three-bed chalet bungalow to provide residential accommodation for a worker at Ryecroft Nursery. The applicant would reside in the proposed dwelling and as such the property would be occupied by persons employed in the horticultural business.
- From the additional supporting documentation provided, it is not considered that it has been demonstrated that there is a proven essential need for an on-site dwelling at Ryecroft Nursery in order to meet the general management and protect the growth of plants. The application documents details that the need for a dwelling relates to the security of the site, which in itself and alone, it not a suitable justification for a rural workers dwelling.

- Overall, the proposed erection of a rural workers dwelling is not in compliance with the NPPF or Policy 20 of the Horsham District Planning Framework.

**Agricultural Consultant: (2<sup>nd</sup>): Objection**

2<sup>nd</sup> comments September 2019 following submission of a Rural Workers Justification by the applicant:

- The submitted Rural Workers Justification (Sept 2019) details the site covering approx. 6 acres (2.4ha) – in contrast to the submitted site plan which amounts to a site of 3.8 acres (1.5ha)
- The updated document details that the applicant has purchased some 450 chickens and is awaiting the arrival of some 100 turkey pullets.
- In terms of the animal welfare labour requirements on the site, this would amount to some 13.5 SMDs for 2020 and 14.8 SDMs in 2021 (standard man days per year), which is not considered to equate to the essential need for a full-time worker to be resident on site.
- New Planning Practice Guidance titled ‘Housing Needs of Different Groups’ (July 2019) provides some guidance relevant to paragraph 79 of the NPPF in the section ‘How can the need for isolated homes in the countryside for essential rural workers be assessed’?

These include:

- *“Evidence of the necessity for a rural worker to live at or in close proximity to their place of work to ensure the effective operation of agricultural, forestry or similar land-based rural enterprise (for instance where farm animals or agricultural processes require onsite attendance 24 hours a day and where otherwise there would be a risk to human or animal health or from crime, or to deal quickly with emergencies that could cause serious loss of crops or products);*
- *The degree to which there is confidence that the enterprise will remain viable for the foreseeable future;*
- *Whether the provision of an additional dwelling on site is essential for the continued viability of a farming business through the farm succession process;*
- *Whether the need could be met through improvements to existing accommodation on the site; providing such improvements are appropriate taking into account their scale, appearance and the local context; and*
- *In the case of new enterprises whether it is appropriate to consider granting permission for a temporary dwelling for a trial period.”*

It further notes that: *“Employment on an assembly or food packing line, or the need to accommodate seasonal workers, will generally not be sufficient to justify building isolated rural dwellings”*

- It is noted that the applicant does not have detailed trading profit and loss accounts, or balance sheets either as a sole trader or as a limited company, with all book keeping done on paper and therefore not presentable for a full assessment of viability.
- Summary accounts for the years 2008 – 2012 and 2016 – 2017 have been provided. There are no labour costs attributed to the business and personal expenses have not been detailed. Whilst income and expenses are set out in the summary accounts, it has not been clarified what these can be attributed to.
- The financial accounts show a loss in the years 2008-2009 and 2010 – 2012 and a small profit in the years 2009 – 2010 and 2016-2017
- It is detailed that the net profit was lower in the 2010/11 year as the applicant purchased the neighbouring field, however there is limited information on this purchase and its cost and any bank charges or repayment costs. Whilst the Appendix

shows increased expenses in 2010/11, the income also increased and therefore it is not clear whether the expenses are linked to the land purchase or cost of sales

Conclusion:

- It is not considered that the additional document provided has demonstrated that there is a proven essential need for an on-site dwelling at Ryecroft Nursery in order to meet the general management and protect the growth of plants. The application documents detail that the need for a dwelling relates to security of the site, which in itself and alone is not a suitable justification for a rural workers dwelling. Furthermore, the additional information does not address the functional need for a dwelling on site.
- The summary of income and expenses for the years 2008-2012 and 2016-2017 provided in the Rural Workers Justification document together with the projected gross income in the Agricultural Workers' Business Plan do not adequately demonstrate that the business is financially viable and sustainable now and in the long term.

**Agricultural Consultant: (Final): Objection**

Final comments December 2019 following submission of an updated Agricultural Worker's Business Plan and 'Future Development / Financial Plan' dated November 2019:

- A Crime Reference has been provided for the theft of the turkeys. Although an additional recent theft is referred to in the recent information, relating to wood stolen from the site, no Crime Reference has been provided for this
- The Future Development/Financial Plan (2019-2021) notes that the very dry summer in 2018 meant that vegetable seeds did not germinate and as a result additional sowing was necessary and dahlia production was put back.
- The applicant's Future Development/Financial Plan notes that the applicant intends to increase to 125 turkeys in 2021.
- Mrs Godsmark does not drive and therefore is limited in the number of early morning orders which can be fulfilled. Although the on-site dwelling could lead to a potential increase in income from these additional orders, this does not result in a need to live on-site.
- There has been a reduction in gross income, owing to the applicant's poor health and the theft of turkeys in one year.
- Whilst it is noted that the applicant's son is interested in taking over the business, there are no details regarding his current experience, knowledge or involvement in the business and whether there is any succession
- More recently, it would appear that the applicant has been keeping accounting procedures and records in a more organised format (last 9 months). Although the submitted projections show an increased net income in 2020 and 2021, by way of the introduction of turkey, sale of chicken meat and dahlia cuttings, additional early morning orders, improved farm shop and rare breed chickens, the cost of sales, expenses and the applicant's labour have not been taken into account
- Without a full business plan that accounts for and details the sources of all business income and the costs associated with each income stream within the business, it is not possible to appraise the full projections.
- On the information available to date, it is not possible to determine whether the applicant's business is financially viable or sustainable, or has the potential to be financially viable

Conclusion:

- The additional information has not demonstrated that there is a proven established functional need for the dwelling in accordance with HDPF 20. Whilst it is accepted

that there is an established business use, the applicant has been able to operate successfully from the site for the past 10 years living 1.5 miles away.

- It is not considered that there is a proven and justified full-time labour requirement at the application site.
- The applicant would reside at the dwelling and therefore the property would be occupied by persons employed (part-time) in the horticultural business
- It is not considered that the additional supporting information and documentation has demonstrated that there is a proven essential need for an on-site dwelling at Ryecroft Nursery in order to meet the general management and protect the growth of plans. The details raise a need relating to site security, which in itself is not a suitable justification for a rural workers dwelling.
- The summary of income and expenses for the years 2008-2012 and 2016-2017 provided in the Rural Workers Justification document, together with the projected gross income in the Agricultural Workers' Business Plan and Future Development/ Financial Plan (2019-2021) do not in RAC's view demonstrate that the business is financially viable and sustainable now and in the long term

### 3.3 **WSCC Highways:** Comment

- No alterations to the existing access onto Fryern Road are proposed. Vehicular visibility in the leading direction appears sufficient for the anticipated road speeds. Visibility in the trailing direction appears restricted. However, the access has been operating for some time at this location and an inspection of data supplied to WSCC by Sussex Police over a period of the past five years reveals that there have been no recorded injury accidents within the vicinity of the site. Therefore there is no evidence to suggest that the existing access is operating unsafely or that the addition of an agricultural workers dwelling would exacerbate an existing safety concern. The addition of a single workers dwelling is not anticipated to generate a significant increase in vehicle movements to or from the site over the potential of the existing agricultural use.
- With applications such as this the provision of workers' accommodation can be seen as a benefit in highways terms as it limits the number of vehicular movements associated with commuting to the site. No highways concerns would be raised the provision of the workers' accommodation. It would be asked that its use is linked to the agricultural use by way of a suitably worded planning condition.
- The plans indicate that two parking spaces will be provided on site. This parking provision is anticipated to be sufficient for a dwelling of this size and location. The proposed spaces meet the minimum specifications of 2.4m x 4.8m as set out in Manual for Streets (MfS). There also appears to be sufficient space on site for vehicles to turn on site and exit onto the publically maintained highway in a forward gear.
- The LHA does not consider that the proposal for a single agricultural workers dwelling would have 'severe' impact on the operation of the Highway network, therefore is not contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 109), and that there are no transport grounds to resist the proposal.
- If the LPA are minded to approve the application, a condition securing car parking and a suitably worded planning condition securing the use of the dwelling in relation to the agricultural use of the site would be recommended.

### 3.5 **Southern Water:** No objection

### 3.6 **PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS**

To date, 17 letters of representation have been received in response to the application, all expressing SUPPORT for the proposal on the following grounds:

- good local business
- proven viability
- local produce being sold is good quality and should be supported
- theft over the last few years has had financial burden / impact on the applicant - one year losing all Christmas order turkeys a few days before Christmas - living on site would be able to prevent such instances
- dwelling on site would make a huge difference to running the business and allow expansion
- scale and design of the proposed new dwelling would not be visible and is some way off road
- popular place to buy prize winning dahlias at affordable prices (3<sup>rd</sup> top grower in the world)
- local source for fresh produce (eggs, cut flowers and veg)
- dwelling on site would reduce need to travel / mileage necessary for applicant to travel to / from home to run the business
- No concerns from nearest / adjacent neighbours and landholders

3.7 **Storrington and Sullington Parish Council:** No Objection

- Valued Local business that has been subject to theft
- No Objections to proposals providing there is an agricultural occupancy condition attached

#### 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**

##### **Principle of Development**

6.1 The key considerations in the determination of this application is the impact of the proposal on its countryside location, whether the proposal is suitable in the countryside location, and if there is a justifiable need for the proposed development.

6.2 In this instance, the application site lies within the countryside and so Policy 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) would be relevant. This requires development outside the built-up area boundaries to be essential to its countryside location in order to protect the rural character and undeveloped nature of the countryside against inappropriate development. In addition, it must 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 quite informal recreational uses, or
- 4) Enable the sustainable development of rural areas

6.3 Furthermore, Policy 26 requires that development does not lead, cumulatively or individually, 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 in which it is located.

- 6.4 HDPF Policy 20 provides support for new rural workers accommodation, outside the built-up area, provided there is a functional need for the dwelling and the occupation thereof would be in support of an established business, and provided that evidence is submitted which demonstrates the viability of the rural business for which the housing is required.
- 6.5 The application site is noted to be an established horticultural business, which falls under the definition of agriculture.

#### **Justification of Need**

- 6.6 Paragraph 79 of the NPPF as noted above, recognises the need for new dwellings in the countryside in special circumstances such as the essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside. This guidance is reflected in policy 20 of the HDPF which states; "Outside the defined built-up area new housing for rural workers will be supported provided that;
- a) There is a functional need for the dwelling and the occupation of the dwelling is to support the established business use, and
  - b) Evidence is submitted to demonstrate the viability of the rural business for which the housing is required."

Parts a and b of the policy are required to ensure that only development which can justify a countryside location may be permitted in order to protect the character and appearance of the countryside.

- 6.7 In order to demonstrate that there is an essential need for a worker to live on site, it is necessary to consider whether it is essential for the proper functioning of the enterprise for one or more workers to be readily available at most times. Such a requirement might arise, for example, if workers are needed to be on hand day and night to deal with emergencies that may occur out-of-hours and to potentially rectify a problem, or in relation to animal welfare requirements.
- 6.8 It is generally held that new permanent rural dwellings should only be allowed to support existing agricultural / rural activities on well-established agricultural / rural units, and where the unit and rural activity should have been established for at least three years and have been profitable for at least one of them, along with being financially sound and having a clear prospect of remaining so. Clearly, any new development should also be able to be adequately funded from the business and the ongoing costs associated with the dwelling should also be met as part of the business expenses.
- 6.9 Policy 20 states that evidence must also be submitted to demonstrate the viability of the rural business for which the housing is required. This report, as presented, includes additional information that has been prepared and submitted in support of the proposal, including summary accounts and future development / financial plans, all of which have been assessed by the Council's Agricultural Consultant.
- 6.10 In this instance, it is recognised that the nature of the Dahlia nursery requires intensive work to propagate new varieties, with tubers having to be dug up by hand each autumn, cleaned, labelled, stored and maintained at a gentle heated temperature until planting time. Seedlings need to be raised and planted and nurtured, with each new variety taking up to 5 years to develop. The applicants undertake this work themselves, and transport the majority of the tubers to their home, some 1.5miles away. The site does not have electricity to heat the polytunnels, and currently, there are gas-fired heaters which keep the tubers at a gentle heat over winter.

- 6.11 In addition to the Dahlia nursery, which has produced a number of prize-winning varieties over the years and Ryecroft Nurseries take part in most of the annual Horticultural shows in the UK, and even in the USA, there is a small on-site farm-shop where produce is grown on site. Currently, hens also produce eggs for sale and the nursery has also reared Christmas Turkeys, and is anticipating doing so this year again. It is understood that a number of years ago, the nursery suffered a break-in and the flock of Christmas Turkeys were all stolen, a series of other break-ins have resulted in new varieties of Dahlia tubers being stolen, as well as equipment being taken.
- 6.12 The site visit took in all the aspects of the nursery and the site as a whole, and the scale of the Dahlia cultivation was acknowledged.
- 6.13 Following robust assessment of the information that has been submitted and made available, it is acknowledged that the business has been managed for a number of years from the applicant's home, some 1.5 miles away. Furthermore, given that the number of poultry (chickens and turkey) at the site is relatively small requiring a limited labour requirement for their welfare, there is no evidence of an essential need for a full-time employee to be resident on the site. It is therefore concluded that the total labour requirement relating to the horticultural and poultry enterprises on the site could be met by a part-time worker, as detailed within the RAC assessment.
- 6.14 In terms of the financial viability and sustainability of the business, it is noted that there has been an effort to keep more organised accounts over the past 9 months, with additional financial details made available to the Council recently. The submitted details show that some years have ended with financial losses whilst some years have achieved profit. However, it is apparent that the figures fail to incorporate costs of sales, expenses and the applicant's own labour (as a salary), and so fail to present a true full business plan that can be assessed and broken down into the relevant income stream within the business.
- 6.15 Overall, and following detailed consultation with the Council's Agricultural Consultant, it is not considered that a dwelling on the site is justified. Based on the information submitted the nature of the business is not considered to be sufficiently financially viable or sustainable now or in the long term, whilst there is no functional need for a full-time employee to permanently reside on site. In the absence of evidence that a dwelling is needed to serve a viable business, it is not considered that the proposal would meet the criteria of HDPF 20 and HDPF 26.

### **Design and Appearance**

- 6.16 Policy 32 of the HDPF requires new development to 'Complement locally distinctive characters and heritage of the district', 'Contribute a sense of place both in the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings'. Policy 33 requires developments to relate sympathetically with the built surroundings.
- 6.17 The creation of a new permanent rural workers dwelling on this site is submitted to be in support of the existing horticultural nursery. Although the physical proximity of the proposed dwelling could be said to be linked to the ongoing operations of the existing nursery business, with the location set away from the public highway and separated by intervening agricultural land, thus maintaining, to an extent, the overall perception of the rural character.
- 6.18 However, for any development to be considered acceptable in principle to its countryside location, it must first fulfil the criteria set out under HDPF policy 26, as well as be assessed in line with HDPF policy 20, in order to establish an essential / functional need for new agricultural workers dwellings. In this instance, the proposal has not been adequately demonstrated as being associated with a rural business that is financially viable or sustainable in the long term.

- 6.17 It is therefore considered that as the proposal is fundamentally harmful to the countryside by its very location, where new development continues to be strictly controlled, there would be no mitigating circumstances to offset the harm that a new permanent dwelling, along with the associated residential paraphernalia, would cause in this instance.
- 6.18 The proposed development therefore fails to comply with policies 2, 25, 27, 32 and 33 of the HDPF.

#### **Trees and Landscaping**

- 6.19 No adverse impacts are envisaged as part of the proposal and all works should be possible to be carried out without loss of the boundary hedge to the site's eastern boundary. The development site itself currently forms part of the productive agricultural holding, currently used as part of the rotational chicken coops.

#### **Amenity Impacts**

- 6.20 Policy 33 of the HDPF (2015) also seeks to avoid unacceptable harm to neighbouring amenity. The application site lies some distance off any residential properties and their curtilages and would therefore not give rise to any associated impacts on neighbouring residential amenities.
- 6.21 The proposal is therefore considered to meet the criteria of HDPF policy 33.

#### **Highways Impacts**

- 6.22 The LHA notes the existing access to the wider site off the publically maintained highway, which is an existing and established vehicular access to the site. Therefore, the creation of a new staff dwelling would not lead to a material intensification of the access and use, as the applicant's currently have to carry out a number of car-borne trips daily to / from the site.
- 6.23 Overall, the proposal would not lead to a 'severe' impact on the operation of the Highway network which would be contrary to the NPPF or local planning policies. Accordingly, a planning condition is recommended to secure the provision of parking and turning space as indicated on the submitted plans.
- 6.24 The proposed on-site staff dwelling would lead to the applicant's being on site as part of the business, and would therefore likely lead to a reduction in car-based trips to and from the site to their current residence, where Dahlia tubers are stored over winter.

#### **Conclusion**

- 6.25 In conclusion, the site lies in the countryside where the rural policies of restraint apply, and where sustainable growth patterns are sought. It is noted that the Development Plan policies do provide support for new dwellings only in exceptional circumstance, such as where there is an essential need for rural workers to live on or near their place of work. In order for these exceptional circumstances to apply, there has to be robust evidence to demonstrate that the rural business is viable and can financially support the costs of the proposed new dwelling, as well as being functionally required in order to support the established business.
- 6.26 National planning policies and guidance, as well as the HDPF policies, seek a robust level of comfort from the fact that the relevant rural business is currently financially viable and has the ability of remaining viable for the foreseeable future, to retain a link to the surrounding land or an active rural business, or that the need arises from an operational need or animal welfare requirement. Local and national planning policies seek to ensure that any new rural housing serves its purpose, and can be retained as such to support an ongoing viable rural business.

- 6.27 In this instance, Officers acknowledge the existence of the established and well-known local business, renowned in the horticultural industry for prize-winning Dahlia cultivation. Furthermore, it is understood that the business has previously suffered as a result of criminal damage and theft, which leads to the practice of removing the Dahlia tubers from site at the end of each growing season to store off-site, before returning them to site at the start of the new year. The provision of an on-site dwelling, and the ability for the applicants to live on site, would alleviate the need for this off-site storage and associated work involved, and is also seen as providing on-site security and a deterrent against potential future criminal activities and theft. Officers are also sympathetic to the applicants desire to be closer to their business, which is noted to be physically demanding, as well as emotionally and financially detrimental when theft occurs, such as the theft of the turkey pullets some years ago, and the theft of new Dahlia cultivars.
- 6.28 Ryecroft Nursery currently accommodates a relatively small number of birds at the site, which would not result in the requirement of a full-time employee to reside on site for any animal welfare purposes. Furthermore, the Dahlia cultivation, although requiring lifting in autumn, storing off-site and then being returned to site in the following spring, has been successfully managed for the past 10 years by the applicant, whilst residing some 1.5 miles away from the site. There is therefore not considered to be a proven essential need for a permanent dwelling to support the business.
- 6.29 From the financial details that have been made available to the Council for assessment it would appear that the business has been 'ticking over' during the past 10 years, with small profits and losses apparent over the years. However, the supplied figures appear to omit the costs of sales, labour and expenses, thus failing to provide a full business plan that accounts for and details the sources of all business income and associated costs of each income stream within the business. As a result, it has not been robustly demonstrated that the current business is currently financially viable and sustainable, either now or in the long term, to justify the permanent siting of a dwelling in the open countryside.
- 6.30 The proposal seeks a modestly proportioned 3-bed chalet bungalow, set within what is currently a small agricultural business and therefore potentially physically and visually linked with the nursery operations as they exist at the current time of determination. However, as set out above insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that the proposal would meet the essential, functional, financial and sustainable policy tests that must be satisfied to justify a new dwelling in the open countryside. Furthermore, whilst there may be a desire to live on site in order to provide some on-site security, this in itself is not sufficient justification to fulfil an essential and functional need for a new workers dwelling in the open countryside.
- 6.31 Accordingly, the proposal to erect a new agricultural workers dwelling on this site runs contrary to the requirements of local and national rural planning policies. The application is accordingly recommended for refusal.

#### COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)

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

**It is considered that this development constitutes CIL liable development.** At the time of drafting this report the proposal involves the following:

Use Description	Proposed	Existing	Net Gain
District Wide Zone 1	170.00	0	170.00
		<b>Total Gain</b>	<b>170.00</b>
		<b>Total Demolition</b>	<b>0.00</b>

Please note that exemptions and/or reliefs may be applied for up until the commencement of a chargeable development.

In the event that planning permission is granted, a CIL Liability Notice will be issued thereafter. CIL payments are payable on commencement of development.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 It is recommended that the application is Refused for the following reason

1. It has not been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority that there is a functional need for a permanent agricultural workers dwelling on the site, or that the business that it would serve is viable and sustainable. In the absence of such evidence the proposed dwelling represents housing development in the open countryside contrary to Policies 1, 2, 20, 26 and 40 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) and the National Planning Policy Framework 2019.

Background Papers: DC/18/2402