

Delegated Decision

Sign off Sheet

Ref. No:	DM/25/1845	Case Officer:	Andrew Horrell
Application Type:	Full Application		
Proposal:	Construction of 3 covered cattle yards over existing hardstanding areas to serve existing dairy enterprise.		
Site:	Lodgeland Farm, Crawley Lane, Balcombe, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH17 6LA, ,		
Validation Date	8 Aug 2025	Overall Expiry Date:	2 Sep 2025
Pre-Commencement Conditions Required:		Pre-Com Conditions Date Agreed:	
Recommendation:	Permission	Recommendation Date:	29 Sep 2025
Target Date:	3 Oct 2025	Recommending Officer Signature:	Andrew Horrell

Date Legal Agreement Completed: (if applicable)		No of Representations:	0
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Signed and Agreed By:	Stephen Ashdown	Date:	30 Sep 2025
Comments:			

MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL

DM/25/1845

**Lodgeland Farm, Crawley Lane, Balcombe, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH17 6LA,
Construction of 3 covered cattle yards over existing hardstanding areas to serve existing dairy
enterprise.**

Mr Guy Dutton

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

None received

SUMMARY OF CONSULTEES

None received

PARISH COUNCIL OBSERVATIONS

Balcombe Parish Council support the application and have no objections.

INTRODUCTION

Planning permission is sought for the installation of 3 covered cattle yards over existing hardstanding areas to serve existing dairy enterprise.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

12/02385/FUL - Construction of a new livestock building and extension of existing maize silage clamp and manure lagoon. (approved)

DM/15/0853 - Erection of 42m x 20m livestock dairy building. (approved)

DM/18/4477 - Proposed 4 No. free-standing Micro Cheese Dairy containers at Lodgeland Farm (approved)

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The site is a Farm unit with various farm buildings including pitched roofed barns with corrugated iron roof and timber cladding elevations.

To the east of the site is fields, to the west of the site is farm buildings, to the south of the site is the slurry pit with fields beyond and to the north is the access track with the highway beyond.

The site is outside of the built-up area of Balcombe and within the High Weald AONB.

APPLICATION DETAILS

The existing pitched roofed dairy building and adjoining collecting yard approximately measures 19m in depth, 51m in width with a height to eaves of 6m and an overall height of 8m.

The existing flat roofed cubicle building approximately measures 23m in depth, 67m in width with an overall height of 7m.

The extension to the existing dairy building approximately measures 19m in depth, 10.7m in width with matching eaves and ridge height to the existing dairy building.

The extension to the flat roofed existing cubicle building approximately measures 12.5m in depth, 64m in width with an overall height of 8.9m. The will enclosure the open feed yard

The roof linking the cubicle building and the dairy building to cover the open feed yard approximately measures 12.74m in depth, 44m in width with a height to eaves of 4.75m and an overall height of 6.7m.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND LIST OF POLICIES

Planning legislation holds that the determination of a planning application shall be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Using this as the starting point, the development plan for this part of Mid Sussex consists of the Mid Sussex District Plan, Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) and the Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan.

National policy (which is contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance) does not form part of the development plan, but is an important material consideration.

Mid Sussex District Plan (Mar 2018)

The Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 was adopted at Full Council on 28 March 2018.

Relevant policies:

Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside
Policy DP16: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Policy DP26: Character and Design

Site Allocations DPD

The SADPD was adopted on 29 June 2022. It allocates sufficient housing and employment land to meet identified needs to 2031.

There are no relevant policies.

Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan

The Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan was made on 22 September 2016.

Relevant policies:

Policy 3 - Design

Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2039 - Submission Draft (Regulation 19)

The District Council is reviewing and updating the District Plan. Upon adoption, the new District Plan 2021-2039 will replace the current District Plan 2014-2031 and its policies will have full weight. In accordance with the NPPF, Local Planning Authorities may give weight to relevant policies of the emerging plan according to the stage of preparation; the extent to which there are unresolved objections to the relevant policies; and the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the NPPF. The draft District Plan 2021-2039 (Regulation 19) is currently at Examination and the Stage 1 hearings were concluded on 31 October 2024. There are unresolved objections to some of the policies in the draft District Plan and as such, only minimal weight can be given to the Plan and this planning application has been assessed against the policies of the adopted District Plan.

Relevant policies:

DPC1: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside

DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
DPB1: Character and Design

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Dec 2024)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024 is also a material consideration and paragraphs 8 (overarching objectives), 11 (presumption in favour of sustainable development), 131 and 135 (design) and 189 (National Parks and National Landscapes) are considered to be relevant to this application.

High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029 (2024)

This Plan has been prepared by the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (including representatives from 15 local authorities, including Mid Sussex District Council) and sets out the long-term objectives for conserving this nationally important landscape.

ASSESSMENT

Principle of development

Policy DP12 of the Mid Sussex District Plan states (in part):

'The countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty. Development will be permitted in the countryside, defined as the area outside of built-up area boundaries on the Policies Map, provided it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District, and:

- *it is necessary for the purposes of agriculture; or*
- *it is supported by a specific policy reference either elsewhere in the Plan, a Development Plan Document or relevant Neighbourhood Plan.'*

The application complies with the first criteria of DP12, as will provide for the improved agricultural operations by capturing rainwater from the roofs it would then be discharged from the farm centre as clean water through pipework to the local watercourse. This would reduce the quantity of dirty water that would be defined as slurry and need to be discharged to the slurry lagoon.

Design and visual impact on the character and appearance of the area

Policy DP26 of the District Plan relates to character and design. It states:

'All development and surrounding spaces, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings and replacement dwellings, will be well designed and reflect the distinctive character of the towns and villages while being sensitive to the countryside. All applicants will be required to demonstrate that development:

- o is of high quality design and layout and includes appropriate landscaping and greenspace;*
- o contributes positively to, and clearly defines, public and private realms and should normally be designed with active building frontages facing streets and public open spaces to animate and provide natural surveillance;*
- o creates a sense of place while addressing the character and scale of the surrounding buildings and landscape;*
- o protects open spaces, trees and gardens that contribute to the character of the area;*
- o protects valued townscapes and the separate identity and character of towns and villages;*
- o does not cause significant harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants of new dwellings, including taking account of the impact on privacy, outlook, daylight and sunlight, and noise, air and light pollution (see Policy DP29);*
- o creates a pedestrian-friendly layout that is safe, well connected, legible and accessible;*
- o incorporates well integrated parking that does not dominate the street environment, particularly where high density housing is proposed;*
- o positively addresses sustainability considerations in the layout and the building design;*

o take the opportunity to encourage community interaction by creating layouts with a strong neighbourhood focus/centre; larger (300+ unit) schemes will also normally be expected to incorporate a mixed use element;
o optimises the potential of the site to accommodate development.'

Policy 3 of the Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan has a similar ethos.

The extensions match in design to the existing farmyard buildings, with matching materials to be used. Therefore, the proposal is deemed to comply with DP26 of the mid Sussex District Plan and policy 3 of the Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan.

Impact on the High Weald AONB

The site is located within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The legal framework for AONBs (also known as National Landscapes) in England and Wales is provided by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act) which at Section 82 reaffirms the primary purpose of AONBs: to conserve and enhance natural beauty. Section 84 of the CRoW Act requires Local Planning Authorities to *'take all such action as appears to them expedient for accomplishment of the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB'*. The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act (2023) amended Section 85 of the CRoW Act, to create a new duty on relevant authorities to *'seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area' when discharging their functions in AONBs'*. A similar ethos is found within The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan which is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications in the AONB.

Policy DP16 of the Mid Sussex District Plan states:

'Development within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), as shown on the Policies Maps, will only be permitted where it conserves or enhances natural beauty and has regard to the High Weald AONB Management Plan, in particular:

- *the identified landscape features or components of natural beauty and to their setting;*
- *the traditional interaction of people with nature, and appropriate land management;*
- *character and local distinctiveness, settlement pattern, sense of place and setting of the AONB;*
and
- *the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage.*

Small scale proposals which support the economy and social well-being of the AONB that are compatible with the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty will be supported.

Development on land that contributes to the setting of the AONB will only be permitted where it does not detract from the visual qualities and essential characteristics of the AONB, and in particular should not adversely affect the views into and out of the AONB by virtue of its location or design.'

Paragraph 189 of the NPPF states that:

'Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimize adverse impacts on the designated areas.'

Given the agricultural nature of the site and that the proposals are to be visually similar to the current buildings on the site, it is not considered that the proposal would detract from the visual quality of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Accordingly, the scheme would comply with Policy DP16 of the Mid Sussex District Plan and paragraph 189 of the NPPF.

Impact on neighbouring amenity

Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan states (in part):

'All applicants will be required to demonstrate that development:

- *does not cause significant harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants of new dwellings, including taking account of the impact on privacy, outlook, daylight and sunlight, and noise, air and light pollution (see Policy DP29)'*

Given the nature of the proposal and the distance to the neighbouring properties, it is not considered that the proposal will result in any adverse impact to neighbouring properties.

Accordingly, the scheme would comply with Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity net gain is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. As the impact on habitat is less than 25sqm this development is exempt from the requirement to provide biodiversity net gain.

PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

The application is deemed to be of an appropriate scale and design in relation to rural character of the site, with no harm to the AONB, and would not cause significant detriment to surrounding residents. Accordingly, it is considered that the proposed development would comply with Policies DP12, DP16 and DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, Policy 3 of the Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan and the NPPF and is therefore considered acceptable.

Decision: Permission

Case Officer: Andrew Horrell