



Planning Statement

Unit 5, Vinnetrow Business Centre, Vinnetrow Road, Runcton, Chichester PO20 1QH
- Section 73 Application to vary opening hours –
On behalf of Kingsbridge Estates Limited

Planning Statement dated: 25/09/2023
Author: Natalie Fellows BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

Vinnetrow Business Park

Vinnetrow Business Park is a well-established commercial office complex located in Runcton. It is strategically located just 2 miles south of Chichester City Centre, the A27 south coast trunk road and the wider road network.

Unit 5, the subject of this application, is a self-contained office building arranged over ground and first floors. There are shared amenities in terms of toilets on both floors, with accessible ground floor WC and shower facilities. There is also a small kitchenette on each floor, new electric heating, EV Car Charging (wall mounted on the Eastern side of the premises), communal bin store, shared car parking spaces (14 allocated to this unit with an additional overflow car parking area to the northeast of the business park), enclosed cycle parking provision and an outdoor amenity space for staff which includes picnic benches for use during the day / at lunch times. The premises have been recently refurbished in order to attract a new office occupier, with the ground floor currently in use.

The upstairs has been actively marketed by various agents and an insurance firm which is locally based have expressed an interest. They are happy to occupy the premises, but this new lease agreement offer is subject to the office hours being extended so this is consistent with the rest of the business complex. This is to allow their staff to work flexibly during the week which is now common practice. The current condition of the permission for Unit 5 restricts vehicles entering and leaving the site between certain times and we have suggested an alternative condition that follows the approval for Unit 4 next door or the adjacent premises within the courtyard.

The Current Condition reads as:

Condition 1 - No vehicles shall enter or leave the site except between the following hours:
07:30 to 19:00 Monday to Friday inclusive
08:00 to 13:00 Saturdays
And no vehicles movements at all on Sundays or Public Holidays.

The S.73 application seeks to vary this condition to state:

Units 5 Vinnetrow Business Park shall only be used between the following times unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Monday - Friday 07:00am - 21:00pm

Saturday 08:00am - 16:30pm

And at no time on a Sunday, Bank Holiday or other public holiday.

Reason: In the interests of protecting neighbouring amenity.

Unit 4 (which adjoins the premises) is allowed to be used for the same hours (up until 9pm on weekdays and up to 4.30pm on Saturdays) under planning reference 20/00206/FUL.

Again, these hours are permitted in the courtyard complex (units 1-4) to the east under planning reference 20/00491/FUL and unit 5 under 19/02457/FUL. They are governed by a different overarching permission 05/02087/FUL as amended by 10/02076/FUL and a subsequent variation to enable a clinic use in unit 5. Each of the more recent applications found the extended opening hours until 9pm acceptable during the week given these use classes are compatible within residential areas.

The Environmental Health Officer (EHO) also raised no concerns in each of the applications.

The revised condition wording suggested is considered more appropriate, as opposed to trying to restrict vehicle movements and consistent with the adjacent premises planning conditions.

In light of the above, it is hoped that this minor amendment to the opening hours will be supported by the Council. This amendment is essential for modern day working practices and will ensure that the offices are let in the longer term. This is important as the business park is important to a vast array of local businesses and other rural supply chains and services provided to the local area. The business seeking to locate in Unit 5 have staff that are from the local area – something the insurance company is keen to retain when they relocate.

The Site

Vinnetrow Business Park is located to the east side of Vinnetrow Road. It is located outside of the settlement boundary, in a countryside location. There is one vehicular access into the site, with a secondary access for pedestrians further south along Vinnetrow Road. This was once open to farm traffic but subsequently fenced off because of planning requirements.

Most of the buildings within the complex have been refurbished and modernised over the years, with the exception of Unit 2, a former dairy building located centrally (to the east of the courtyard). This is in need of replacement or significant improvement. The wider complex consists of a range of businesses making use of the storage, offices, health clinics, specialist gym and nursery school premises the site has.

There is a string of dwellings facing the lane to the north and south of the site, including a farmhouse to the north which is Grade II Listed. There are no pavements providing access to the site from the City Centre, despite its close proximity. There is a short section of pavement nearest the roundabout and a pedestrian bridge over the A27. The site is 500m away from the Chichester bypass (A27) and Bognor Road Roundabout and considered a sustainable location. The site is accessible for experienced cyclists.

A bridleway (path number 2792) travels through the business park using the secondary access (which is closed to vehicles). It heads in an east direction and then north following the track / edge of the glasshouses before heading again eastwards. Please see Appendix One for public rights of way information.

The site is in an area that has a low risk of flooding from rivers or the sea. It is also identified as having a very low risk of flooding from surface water (please see Appendix Two for more information).

The site does not fall within any ecological or heritage designations itself but on the western side of the road is a known bat corridor. The dwelling to the northwest, Vinnetrow Farmhouse is a Grade II Listed Building. Due to mature vegetation on its boundaries, the property and its grounds are hard to see within the business park itself.

It is understood that the site is not connected to mains public foul network and has a private treatment system for sewerage and surface water.

The site is in a West Sussex Mineral Safeguarding area and is within 5-7km of Chichester and Pagham Harbour SPA and within the 12km buffer zone of the Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC.

There are no external changes proposed to the premises or grounds as a result of this application. There are only a few existing wall mounted external lights within the office complex on the eastern elevation. The external lights are currently on an automatic timer switch and turn on in the mornings at 5am and are switched off at 7am. They turn back on in the evening at 7pm and go off again at 9.30pm. This prevents unnecessary illumination at night when the premises are not in use, protecting the dark night sky. Each of the lights are on the premises themselves have been kept to a minimum (as shown on the existing elevations) and reflect a style of light which is reflective of the year they were erected. Whilst they are not downward facing, the overall illuminance of them is low as only used for wayfinding (as designed when originally erected in the year 2000). There is no bollard or street lighting within this particular car park area as this was never felt necessary and this continues to be the case.

The business park is located in North Mundham and Tangmere Ward and falls within Chichester District Council administrative area. It is an important employment complex for a range of businesses.



Figure 1 – Aerial photograph and images of the site / wider context

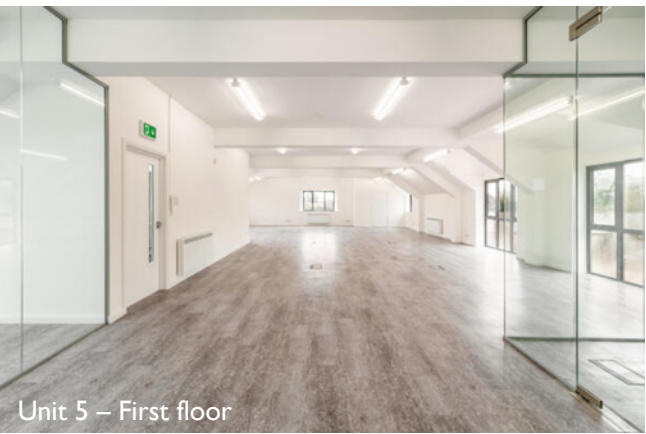
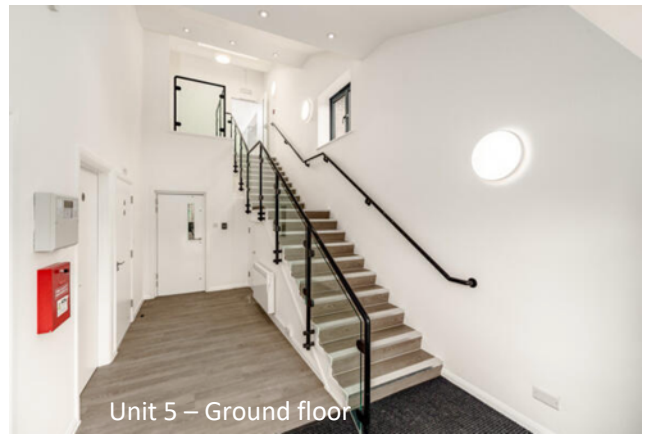
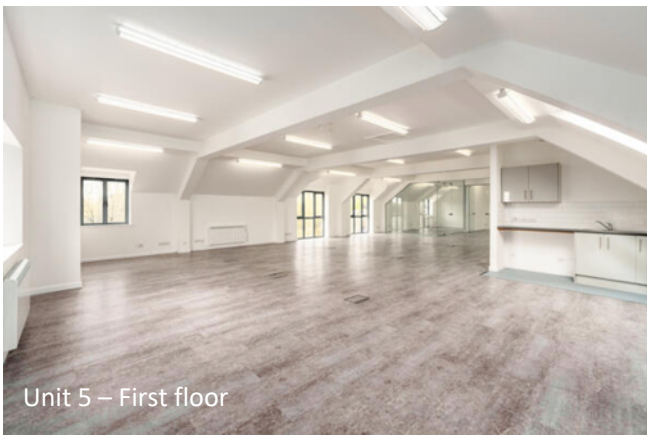


Figure 2 – Photograph and images of the site / wider context

Current Planning Policy & Planning Assessment

The relevant paragraphs of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, September 2023) have been considered including section 12 (Achieving well-designed places) and section 6 (Building a strong, competitive economy).

In accordance with the current Local Plan, the business park is located within the Horticultural Development Area (policy 32). However, given it is very separate in terms of its day to day operations and it doesn't have any associations with the wider horticultural enterprises to the east (which are accessed independently from this site via the A259 much further to the north west), there have been representations made to remove the business park from outside of this designation.

The emerging Local Plan documents have shown the business park to be removed from the HDA in draft policy constraints maps (see Appendix Three for details). This has limited weight at the moment given the early stages of the local plan process but gives a clear indication of the direction of travel in terms of future policies that impact the site.

Vinnetrow is an existing, well established employment site, therefore Policy 26 is more relevant when assessing future development proposals in our opinion, as is Policy 46 which allows the change of use and/or re-use of existing buildings in the countryside.

Overall, the proposal can be considered to comply with policy 26 of the Chichester Local Plan as the proposal would benefit the local economy given it ensures the premises remain in an employment use in the longer-term.

The extended opening hours proposed reflect more modern ways of working, where offices often have people working longer hours some days to enable staff have greater flexibility (either shorter days later in the week or enabling a day off every fortnight etc). This is something that the Council themselves promote. This is reinforced in Section 6 of the NPPF, paragraph 81 which states that

'decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.'

Paragraph 82 goes on to say that planning policies should

'd) be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices (such as live-work accommodation), and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances'

Paragraph 84 seeks to support a prosperous rural economy by

'a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings'.

This application seeks to ensure the office remains attractive to a wide range of businesses seeking to locate and expand here.

The application proposes no external changes or alterations and therefore the proposal would have a neutral impact on the wider landscape character (which is an existing well-designed business complex that reflects its surroundings).

Paragraph 127 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

The application site is set within an existing business park and the site is flanked by neighbouring commercial units to the north, east and south. The proposed changes to the hours the office use can operate reflects the hours approved for the wider site, including the specialist gym to the north and the individual units found within the courtyard development to the east. The slight extension to the hours office workers may be in the building will not intensify the use and will not result in disturbance to neighbouring properties.

Summary of the most relevant current planning policies are:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy 1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy 2 Development Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy 3 The Economy and Employment Provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy 22 Integrated Coastal Zone Management for the Manhood Peninsular
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy 26 Existing Employment Sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy 32 Horticultural Development Area
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy 35 Affordable Housing Exception Sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy 37 Accommodation for Agricultural and other Rural Workers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy 39 Transport, Accessibility, and Parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy 40 Carbon Reduction Policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy 42 Flood Risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy 45 Development in the Countryside
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy 46 Alterations, Changes of Use and/or Re-use of Existing Buildings in the Countryside 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy 48 Natural Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy 49 Biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy 52 Green Infrastructure

Emerging Local Plan (Chichester Local Plan 2021 – 2039)

The Submission Local Plan went out to consultation recently, ending in March 2023. The emerging Planning Policy maps have removed Vinnetrow Business Park from outside the Horticultural Development Area (HDA).

The site was considered ‘developable’ in the call for sites process / HELAA 2021 under site reference HNM0020. The site was promoted for possible expansion and intensification of existing commercial uses (see Appendix Three).

At the present time, Vinnetrow Business Park which is well established already, has not been included specifically as an allocated site for further expansion. The reason being that the Local Plan Review only identifies strategic employment sites.

The principles of refurbishment, modernisation and upgrading existing stock is retained and continues to encourage intensification of existing uses in the latest version of the Local Plan Review. The application to modify the existing condition so this reflects more modern, flexible working practices should therefore be encouraged.

Emerging Neighbourhood Plan

North Mundham Parish have been pursuing a Neighbourhood Plan for sometime but this appears to have not progressed since April 2022. The business park site was not put forward for consideration in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Planning History & Background

Vinnetrow Business Park was originally a pig farm but since the early 1990s has been through various conversions and subject to redevelopment into a range of commercial uses during this period. One of the first planning permissions granted enabled the use of the redundant farm buildings for storage, wholesaling and a depot for swimming pool contractors. It was subject to various planning conditions on individual buildings and has restricted hours of use. This application has been subject of various amendments over the years to make this more responsive to business needs.

The various schemes that have taken place were seen as a betterment to the farming activities that were previously taking place at the site, especially as pig farming can cause a nuisance if in close proximity to residential properties.

Unit 5 which is the subject of this application was built in the year 2000, having replaced former agricultural buildings 4, 5 and 10. Unit 5 is a one and half storey building whereas Unit 4 is only single storey in height which is partially used as a specialist gym for the over 55's. These two premises were allowed to be constructed by planning permission 99/01938/FUL which was amended by 99/02969/FUL (which altered the vehicle movements allowed up until 7pm in the week – which we are seeking to vary).

In terms of redevelopment that is relevant to this application, the north-western building has been extended so units 9 and 4 and 5 are joined together (see planning reference 01/01445/FUL for details). Previously there was an unusable gap between the premises which was later infilled.

Unit 3 in the north-eastern corner has been extended to the east and a purpose-built children's day nursery constructed to the south-west near Vinnetrow Road (Unit 6 and 7).

Unit 1 was also demolished and replaced with an office complex arranged in a u-shape, now referred to as the 'courtyard'.

Unit 2 is the only premises that have not been extensively refurbished or replaced, located centrally within the site, opposite the courtyard / Unit 5. Unit 2 is currently unoccupied and has permission to be used for B8 storage or distribution purposes. This is the same as Unit 8 which was also previously used for agricultural purposes located in the southeastern area of the site, but has undergone many improvements and refurbishment, including the erection of acoustic fencing and gates. This is much sought after premises due to its size which is more akin to business needs. Unit 2 is somewhat restricted due to its size, position and height.

The Courtyard redevelopment was constructed in 2010, following the demolition of a modern farm building (Unit 1) which was used for commercial storage purposes. Between 2013 and 2019 The Courtyard, Unit 2, Unit 8 and the paddock area was occupied temporarily by Chichester Free School until it reverted back to commercial uses. This included the use of modular buildings within the paddock land for up to 780 pupils in total. The current commercial uses are far less intensive than the activities and noise generated from the Free School during that period.

Since then, the courtyard has been used as offices or clinic uses. There is a specialist gym within the single storey Unit 4 in the north-western area of the site (which is attached to Unit 5, the subject of this application). Unit 2 and 8 are currently or last used for storage purposes. Unit 6 and 7 are used as a children's day nursery.

Each of the above changes made have been under various planning permissions and each have a set of planning conditions attached to the various permissions. Some planning conditions are poorly worded due to their age and do not reflect current planning guidance whereby Government is trying to make changes of use easier if they are compatible with residential uses/areas. This was brought into effect with the recent changes to the Use Classes Order, namely the broader Class E definitions.

Conclusion

Unit 5 which is the subject of this application was built in the year 2000, having replaced former agricultural buildings 4, 5 and 10. Unit 5 is a one and half storey building whereas Unit 4 is only single storey in height which is partially used as a specialist gym for the over 55's.

These two premises were allowed to be constructed by planning permission 99/01938/FUL which was amended by a S.73 application 99/02969/FUL (which altered the vehicle movements allowed up until 7pm in the week – which we are seeking to vary).

This application seeks to vary condition 1 of planning permission 99/02969/FUL which description was for an 'amendment of Condition 9 of permission no. NM/99/01938/FUL to allow permitted office building on site of buildings 4, 5 and 10 to be used 07:30 to 19:00 Monday to Friday inclusive (except Bank Holidays)' approved on 21 March 2000.

The only condition attached to the amended permission states:

Condition 1 - No vehicles shall enter or leave the site except between the following hours:
07:30 to 19:00 Monday to Friday inclusive
08:00 to 13:00 Saturdays
And no vehicles movements at all on Sundays or Public Holidays.

The S.73 application seeks to vary this condition to state:

Units 5 Vinnetrov Business Park shall only be used between the following times unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
Monday - Friday 07:00am - 21:00pm
Saturday 08:00am - 16:30pm
And at no time on a Sunday, Bank Holiday or other public holiday.

Reason: In the interests of protecting neighbouring amenity.

This application to vary the condition is to bring it more in line with the surrounding premises within Vinnetrov Business Park. Rather than control vehicle movements, the revised condition seeks to control the opening hours of the offices in Unit 5. This as a result of the request from a potential occupier that offers its members of staff flexible working practices. The revisions sought will ensure the offices remain competitive and attractive to a variety of local businesses in the longer term.

The application proposes no external changes or alterations and therefore the proposal would have a neutral impact on the wider landscape character (which is an existing well-designed business complex that reflects its semi-rural surroundings).

The changes to the opening hours of the offices reflects modern day business needs. No changes to external lighting are proposed as a result of the changes sought as the current lighting is considered sufficient but this can be controlled via condition.

The new updated condition would be much clearer in its intention and have no impact on flight lines that bats may be using in the area, this in turn means the proposals will have no impact on any nearby European designated sites. This is because bats are more likely to be using the mature woodland areas on the western side of Vinnetrov Road which is identified as a potential wildlife corridor or other hedgerow and treed boundaries to the north or east where it is more open, undeveloped agricultural land. Most of the activity associated with Unit 5 is to the rear which is enclosed by other buildings to the north, east and south. The proposed changes to the hours the office use can operate reflects the hours approved for the wider site,

including the specialist gym to the north and the individual units found within the courtyard development to the east. The slight extension to the hours office workers may be in the building will not intensify the use and will not result in disturbance to neighbouring properties. The nearest being Vinnetrow Farmhouse to the north beyond the flanked buildings or No.3 and No.4 Vinnetrow Cottages to the south beyond the Children's Nursery buildings and public right of way entrance which is some distance away from this unit.

In light of the above, it is considered that the proposed amendments to the planning condition are acceptable in planning terms and help support the on-going vitality and vibrancy of the important employment centre.

If the Council or stakeholders have any further questions regarding the amendment sought please do not hesitate to get in contact with the planning consultant leading this project.



Fellows Planning Limited

APPENDIX

Appendix One

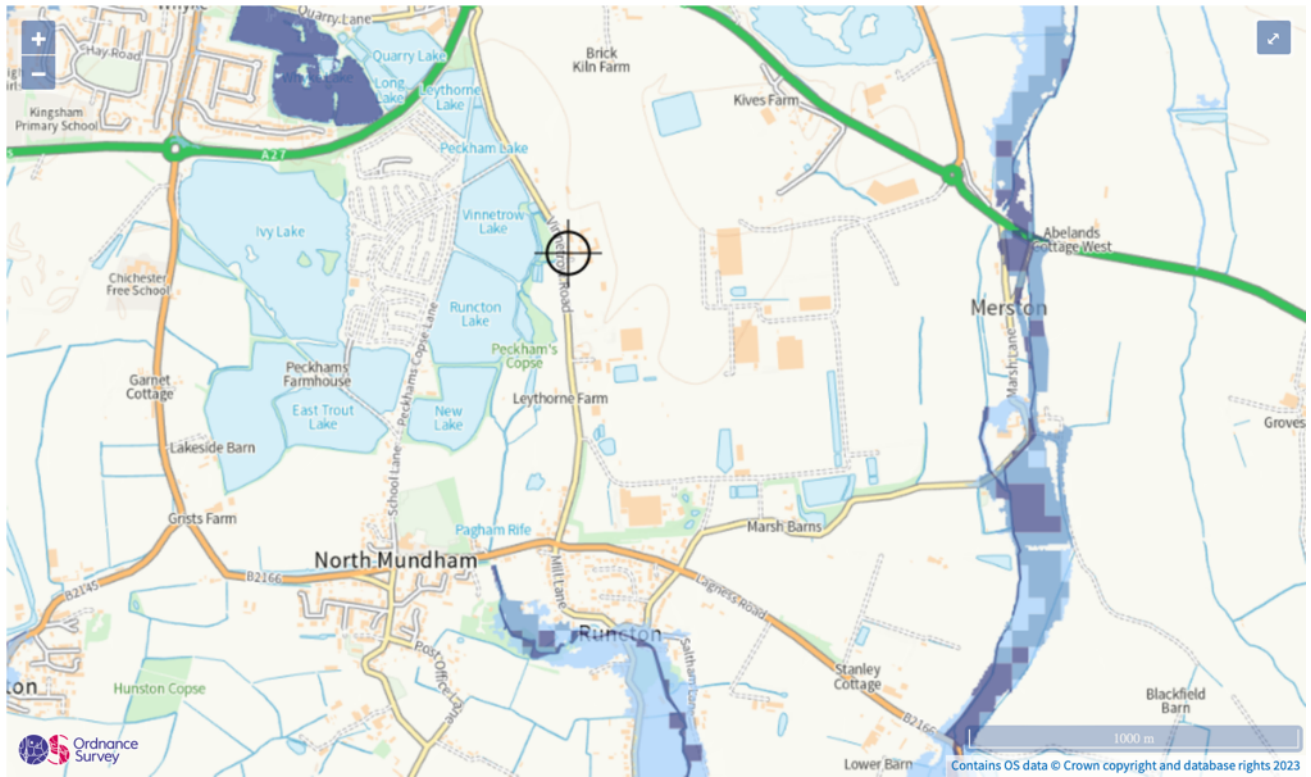
Public Rights of Way Map



Bridleway 2792 travels through the business park. Source: West Sussex County Council
<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/land-waste-and-housing/public-paths-and-the-countryside/public-rights-of-way/public-rights-of-way-imap/imap/>

Appendix Two

Long-term Flood Risk

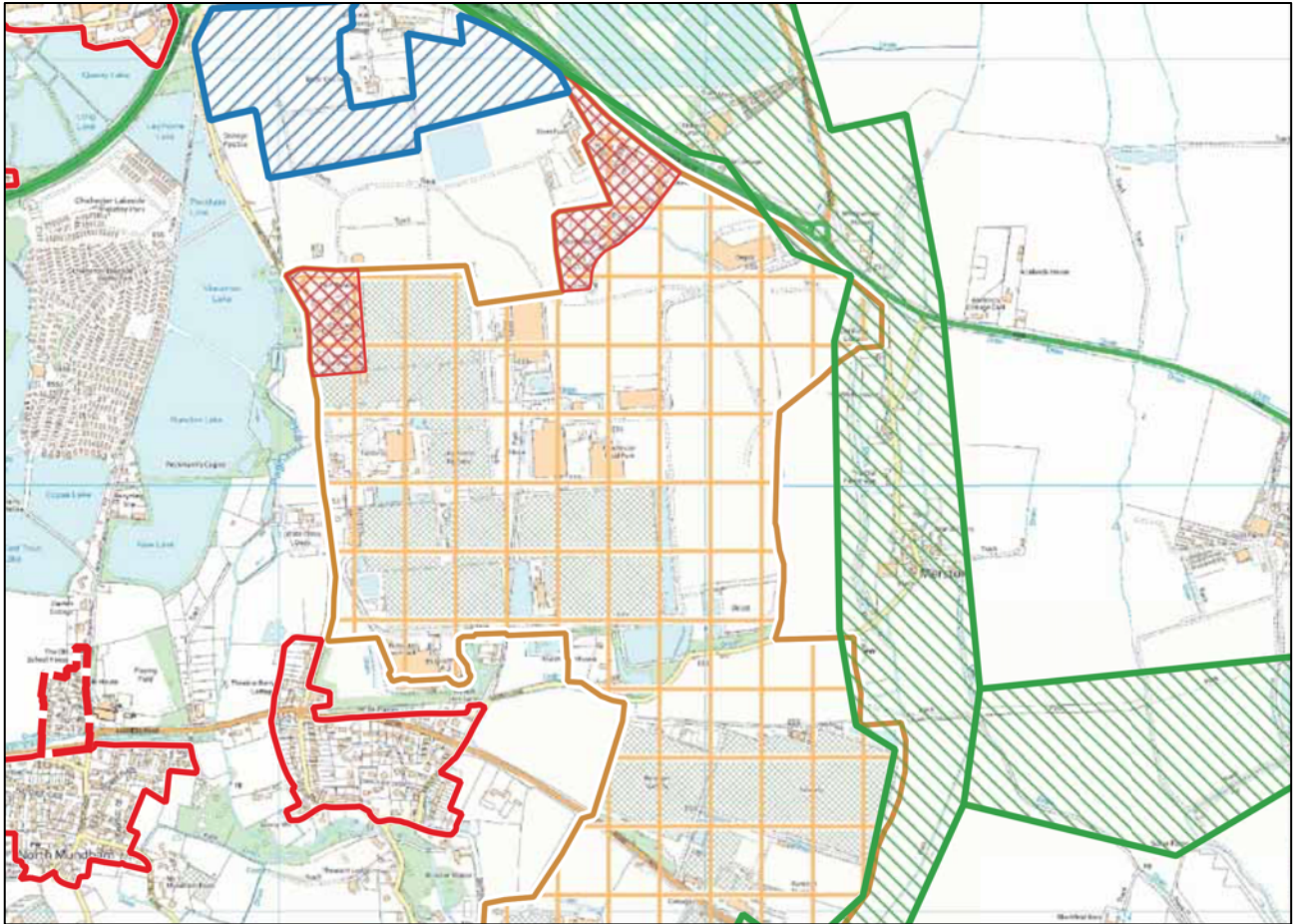


● High ● Medium ● Low ● Very low ⊕ Location you selected

<https://check-long-term-flood-risk.service.gov.uk/map?eastng=488093.93&northing=103357.22&map=RiversOrSea>

Appendix Three

Submission Local Plan (Consultation version 3 February to 17 March 2023) –
 Planning Policy (Extract of Map E3a) which seeks to remove the business park from the Horticultural Development Area



Policy E3 Addressing Horticultural extension and deletions to Runcton HDA Needs –

Legend

-  Amended settlement boundary
-  Existing settlement boundary
-  Site allocation
-  Strategic wildlife corridor
-  Proposed deletion from HDA
-  Proposed extension to HDA
-  Horticultural Development Area
-  Chichester District Boundary