

Delegated Decision

Sign off Sheet

Ref. No:	DM/25/2615	Case Officer:	Andrew Watt
Application Type:	Full Application		
Proposal:	A new vehicular access onto Cuckfield Road, including a part retrospective and part proposed internal roadway.		
Site:	Holmsted Farm, Staplefield Road, Cuckfield, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH17 5JF, ,		
Validation Date	21 Oct 2025	Overall Expiry Date:	11 Nov 2025
Pre-Commencement Conditions Required:		Pre-Com Conditions Date Agreed:	
Recommendation:	Permission	Recommendation Date:	3 Feb 2026
Target Date:	16 Dec 2025	Recommending Officer Signature:	Andrew Watt

Date Legal Agreement Completed: (if applicable)		No of Representations:	0
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Signed and Agreed By:	Steven King	Date:	3 Feb 2026
Comments:			

MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL

DM/25/2615

**Holmsted Farm, Staplefield Road, Cuckfield, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH17 5JF,
A new vehicular access onto Cuckfield Road, including a part retrospective and part proposed
internal roadway.**

Mr Hayward

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

None.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTEES

MSDC Consultant Ecologist

No objection, subject to condition.

WSCC Highways

No objection, subject to condition and informative.

TOWN / PARISH COUNCIL OBSERVATIONS

No comments received.

INTRODUCTION

Full planning permission is sought for a new vehicular access onto Cuckfield Road, including a part retrospective and part proposed internal roadway.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

00/01705/FUL - Construction of an additional farm access track - Permission - 09.11.2000

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The site consists of a strip of land around a dog paddock on elevated ground, which forms part of a farm, which has been heavily diversified with both commercial and leisure businesses operating to the north via 2 separate accesses further north on lower ground. The site includes part of an existing farm track access onto Cuckfield Road. To the south and west is arable land and opposite to the south-east are a group of dwellings, surrounded by agricultural land.

The site is located within the countryside and within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is designated as a Great Crested Newt - Impact Risk Zone (Red).

APPLICATION DETAILS

Full planning permission is sought for a new vehicular access onto Cuckfield Road, including a part retrospective and part proposed internal roadway.

The scheme will utilise the existing farm track access onto Cuckfield Road but be extended due west running alongside the southern boundary of an enclosed dog paddock, to connect with an existing internal roadway. The track will be approximately 130m in length and 5m wide at the junction and throughout. It is intended to be used to provide a dedicated access to existing campsite and other

leisure facilities on the site, including the dog paddock, which are separate to other commercial and private enterprises within the site and which have existing accesses to the north serving them. The agent has advised that 'the intention [will be] to tarmac and seal the access for the first 25m, and for it to revert to finely crushed hardcore reminiscent of a farm track for the majority of the length', matching those existing to the west.

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 Ansty, Staplefield and Brook Street 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 DP21: Transport
Policy DP26: Character and Design
Policy DP38: Biodiversity

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.

Ansty, Staplefield and Brook Street Neighbourhood Plan (Feb 2017)

Mid Sussex District Council formally 'made' the Ansty, Staplefield and Brook Street Neighbourhood Plan part of the Local Development Plan for the majority of the Parish of Ansty and Staplefield as of 2 February 2017. The policies contained therein carry full weight as part of the Development Plan for planning decisions within the relevant parts of Ansty, Staplefield and Brook Street.

Relevant policies:

Policy AS3: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Other Legislation

Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000

Other Material Considerations

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:

DPN1: Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Nature Recovery
DPN2: Biodiversity Net Gain
DPC1: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside
DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
DPB1: Character and Design
DPT1: Placemaking and Connectivity

Mid Sussex Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (Nov 2020)

The Council has adopted a 'Mid Sussex Design Guide' SPD that aims to help deliver high quality development across the district that responds appropriately to its context and is inclusive and sustainable. The Design Guide was adopted by Council on 4 November 2020 as an SPD for use in the consideration and determination of planning applications. The SPD is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Relevant design principles include:

Principle DG11: Respond to the existing townscape, heritage assets and historic landscape

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Dec 2024)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024 is a material consideration and paragraphs 8 (overarching objectives), 11 (presumption in favour of sustainable development), 12 (status of development plan), 39 (decision-making), 48 (determining applications), 115, 116, 117 and 118 (highways matters), 131 and 135 (design), 187 (conserving and enhancing the natural environment), 189 (National Parks and National Landscapes) and 193 (biodiversity and ancient woodland) 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

Design and impact on the character and appearance of the High Weald AONB

Policy DP12 of the Mid Sussex District Plan seeks to protect the countryside and permits development provided it maintains or enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District. This is supported by Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, which states (in part) that:

'All development and surrounding spaces ... will be well designed ... while being sensitive to the countryside.'

The site is also 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 aims to conserve or enhance the natural beauty of the AONB, as does Policy AS3 of the Ansty, Staplefield and Brook Street Neighbourhood Plan.

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.'

The applicant has justified the need for the access to separate the commercial and leisure uses on the site. At present, users of the dog pasture, campsite, outdoor sport and sauna experiences require vehicles and pedestrians to share the same limited space with heavy machinery for the commercial uses, which are not necessarily compatible. This argument is accepted, and the application makes use of an existing farm access serving the fields south of the dog pasture.

Although the point of access onto Cuckfield Road will be widened slightly (from approximately 4m to 5m) and surfaced with tarmac, its formalisation is unlikely to be harmful to the character of the area when viewed from the road. Firstly, there is a group of dwellings opposite, some 50m to the south-east, which have individual accesses, so such features are not uncommon. Secondly, two further accesses serving the various businesses on the wider Holmsted Farm site are located further north, which are themselves tarmacked.

The remaining extent of the track across arable land is unlikely to be visible from the road given the rise in land levels to the west and the elevated nature of the site around the dog paddock. It would be viewed in context with this existing use (permitted in 2023) and with a network of existing tracks running through the site to the west and north, some formalised, some less so, which it will be connected to.

Subject to a condition securing the surfacing, it is not considered that the development would detract from the character of the area or the visual quality of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and accordingly would comply with the above policies and guidance.

Impact on neighbouring amenity

Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan seeks to ensure that development does not cause significant harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants.

It is not considered that the access will adversely affect the amenities of neighbouring dwellings to the south-east, due to the distance and the intensity of traffic movements, particularly when compared to the level of traffic on Cuckfield Road itself.

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

Highways

Policy DP21 of the Mid Sussex District Plan seeks to ensure that developments are sustainably located and safely designed.

The application has been accompanied by a Transport Statement and Road Safety Audit. A Speed Survey was undertaken to determine the visibility splays, which are achievable (i.e. 2.4m x 160m in both directions, shown on an Access Plan), although minor verge maintenance may be required to ensure they remain unobstructed. The Audit recommends that a maintenance plan be secured by planning condition, to ensure that the vegetation is kept to less than 0.6m high, and the Designers' Response has satisfactorily addressed this matter.

The Highway Authority has raised no objection to the application, subject to condition securing the access details are carried out according to the Access Plan, and accordingly the scheme would comply with Policy DP21 of the Mid Sussex District Plan.

Ecology

Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) lists species of animal (other than birds) which are provided special protection under the Act. Under Section 13 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), all wild plants are protected from being uprooted without the consent of the landowner. In addition to the protection afforded by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), certain species are also covered by European legislation. These species are listed in Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, 7c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended).

Policy DP38 of the Mid Sussex District Plan seeks to ensure that developments protect and enhance biodiversity. Chapter 15 of the NPPF advises that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity. Paragraph 193, advises that applications should be refused if significant harm to biodiversity or loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats will be caused.

A Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy has been submitted as part of this application, which sets out some proposed enhancements of the site, including:

- Enhancement of grassland habitat
- Implementation of sensitive lighting scheme
- Implementation of 3 log piles as hibernacula for invertebrates and reptiles

The Council's Ecological consultant has considered the application and raises no objection to the scheme. Subject to compliance with a suitably worded condition, it is considered that the development would comply with Policy DP38 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, Chapter 15 of the NPPF (including paragraph 193) and the legislation outlined above.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity net gain is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain this application is deemed to have been granted subject to the biodiversity net gain condition for development to deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat.

The biodiversity net gain condition is set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Schedule 7A, Part 2, 13(2). It states:

*'The condition is that the development may not be begun unless—
(a) a biodiversity gain plan has been submitted to the planning authority (see paragraph 14), and
(b) the planning authority has approved the plan (see paragraph 15).'*

The Council's Ecological consultant has considered the application and raises no objection to the scheme, being satisfied with the submitted information. No additional conditions are necessary to be imposed, and therefore the development would comply with biodiversity net gain legislation, policy and guidance.

Other matters

The site is located within a designated Great Crested Newt - Impact Risk Zone (Red). However, having regard to the nature of the application, it is unlikely to have an impact on newts and accordingly there would be no conflict with biodiversity legislation, policy and guidance.

PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

The application is deemed to be of an appropriate scale design and would not detract from the visual quality of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There would be no harm caused to neighbouring residents. The access will be acceptable from a highway safety point of view. There would be no harm to biodiversity. Accordingly it is considered that the proposed development would comply with Policies DP12, DP16, DP21, DP26 and DP38 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, Policy AS3 of the Ansty, Staplefield and Brook Street Neighbourhood Plan, the Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD and the NPPF and is therefore considered acceptable.

Decision: Permission

Case Officer: Andrew Watt