

Delegated Decision

Sign off Sheet

Ref. No:	DM/25/2870	Case Officer:	Peter Davies
Application Type:	Householder Application		
Proposal:	The proposed work includes a garage conversion into home office space.		
Site:	2 Watermead, Balcombe, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH17 6EY, , ,		
Validation Date	7 Nov 2025	Overall Expiry Date:	5 Dec 2025
Pre-Commencement Conditions Required:		Pre-Com Conditions Date Agreed:	
Recommendation:	Permission	Recommendation Date:	8 Jan 2026
Target Date:	2 Jan 2026	Recommending Officer Signature:	<i>Peter Davies</i>

Date Legal Agreement Completed: (if applicable)		No of Representations:	0
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Signed and Agreed By:	<i>Stephen Ashdown</i>	Date:	9 Jan 2026
Comments:			

MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL

DM/25/2870

**2 Watermead, Balcombe, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH17 6EY, ,
The proposed work includes a garage conversion into home office space.
Jonathan And Maria Welch**

REPRESENTATION RECEIVED

None received.

PARISH COUNCIL OBSERVATIONS

Balcombe Parish Council has no objection.

INTRODUCTION

The application seeks planning permission for a garage conversion and rooflights.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

DM/15/5038 - Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of 5 detached houses. Permission

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The application property is a detached two storey dwelling located at the entrance of a private new build cul-de-sac Watermead. The property is located within the built-up area boundary of Balcombe, in the Balcombe Conservation Area and in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The application property has a pitched roof with catslide roof on the south side over the attached garage. The dwelling is constructed from brick with hanging tile at first floor level, plain roof tiles and white timber fenestration. The dwelling has 2 black rooflights on the south facing roof slope. The dwelling is set back from the highway with off street parking to the front. The locality is characterised by predominantly brick dwellings of varying scale and design.

APPLICATION DETAILS

The application seeks planning permission for a garage conversion to a study with the garage door to be bricked up and a window installed. 2 no. rooflights are to be installed on the catslide roof to serve the study to be created and 1 no. rooflight is to be installed on the north side to serve an ensuite bathroom.

The materials are to match the existing dwelling.

Planning permission is required as permitted development rights for garage conversions were removed in application DM/15/5038.

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 District Plan, Site Allocation Development Plan Document (DPD) and Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan

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

Mid Sussex District Plan

The District Plan was adopted at Full Council on 28th March 2018.

Relevant policies:

DP16 - High Weald AONB
DP21 - Transport
DP26 - Character and Design
DP35 - Conservation Areas

Site Allocations DPD

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

There are no relevant policies.

Neighbourhood Plan

Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan made in 2016.

Relevant policies:

Policy 3 - Design

Other Material Considerations

Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2039 Consultation Draft

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 the 31st 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:

DPS2 - Sustainable Design and Construction
DPB1 - Character and Design
DPB3 - Conservation Areas
DPC4 - High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
DPT4 - Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure

Mid Sussex Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

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 4th 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.

Paragraphs 8, 11, 131 and 135 are considered to be relevant.

National Planning Policy Guidance

ASSESSMENT

It is considered that the main issues that need to be considered in the determination of this application are as follows;

- Impact on Heritage Assets and Character and Appearance
- Impact on the High Weald AONB
- Impact on neighbouring properties
- Impact on parking provision
- Biodiversity Net Gain

Impact on Heritage Assets and Character and Appearance

The site is located within the Balcombe Conservation Area, as designated in 1984. A Conservation Area is defined as an area of "special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".

Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states '*In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any powers under any of the provisions mentioned in subsection (2), special attention shall be paid to the desirability of conservation preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.*'

Policy DP35 of the District Plan states:

'Development in a conservation area will be required to conserve or enhance its special character, appearance and the range of activities which contribute to it. This will be achieved by ensuring that:

- o New buildings and extensions are sensitively designed to reflect the special characteristics of the area in terms of their scale, density, design and through the use of complementary materials;*
- o Open spaces, gardens, landscaping and boundary features that contribute to the special character of the area are protected. Any new landscaping or boundary features are designed to reflect that character;*
- o Traditional shop fronts that are a key feature of the conservation area are protected. Any alterations to shopfronts in a conservation area will only be permitted where they do not result in the loss of a traditional shopfront and the new design is sympathetic to the character of the existing building and street scene in which it is located;*
- o Existing buildings that contribute to the character of the conservation area are protected. Where demolition is permitted, the replacement buildings are of a design that reflects the special characteristics of the area;*
- o Activities such as markets, crafts or other activities which contribute to the special character and appearance of the conservation area are supported;*
- o New pavements, roads and other surfaces reflect the materials and scale of the existing streets and surfaces in the conservation area. Development will also protect the setting of the conservation area and in particular views into and out of the area. New buildings of outstanding or innovative design may be acceptable in conservation areas provided that their impact would not cause material harm to the area.'*

Paragraphs 212 - 215 of the NPPF states:

'212. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

213. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;
b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

214. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation;
and c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

215. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.'

Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 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:

- is of high quality design and layout and includes appropriate landscaping and greenspace;
- 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;
- creates a sense of place while addressing the character and scale of the surrounding buildings and landscape;
- protects open spaces, trees and gardens that contribute to the character of the area;
- protects valued townscapes and the separate identity and character of towns and villages;
- 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 DP27);
- creates a pedestrian-friendly layout that is safe, well connected, legible and accessible;
- incorporates well integrated parking that does not dominate the street environment, particularly where high density housing is proposed;
- positively addresses sustainability considerations in the layout and the building design;
- 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;

optimises the potential of the site to accommodate development.'

Policy 3 of the Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan relates to design and states in part that:

'The scale, density, massing, height, landscape design, layout and materials of all development proposals, including alterations to existing buildings, will be required to reflect the architectural and historic character and scale of the surrounding buildings and to avoid any significant detrimental effect on the landscape and natural beauty of the High Weald AONB and the significance and character or appearance of the Balcombe Conservation Area, where a building will command a view.'

A similar ethos is found within the Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD.

The application property is a new build and the proposed garage conversion will only result in a replacement of the garage door with a brick wall and a window, with velux windows installed to the roof. The materials to be used are to match the existing dwelling. It is therefore considered that the proposed works would result in a neutral harm to the Balcombe Conservation Area.

The proposal is therefore considered to address the character of the existing dwelling and the surrounding area, and as such the proposal is deemed to comply with policies DP26 and DP35 of the District Plan, policy 3 of the Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan and the NPPF.

Impact on the High Weald AONB

The legal framework for AONBs, (also known as National Landscapes) in England and Wales is provided by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000 which at Section 82 reaffirms the primary purpose of AONBs: to conserve and enhance natural beauty. Section 84 of the CRoW 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.

Paragraph 189 of the NPPF states:

'Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes 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.'

Policy DP16 in the District Plan seeks to protect the character of the countryside and states that development will be permitted where it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District and is supported by a specific policy reference in the District Plan, Neighbourhood Plan or Development Plan Document. In this case policy DP26 is the relevant policy that supports high quality development.

The application relates to a proposed garage conversion of an existing dwelling. It is situated within the built-up area of Balcombe. As such the proposal would not form an isolated development within the wider landscape. Due to the development being external alterations, it is not considered to have an adverse impact on the overall landscape quality of the AONB.

As such the proposal would comply with the requirements of Policy DP16 of the District Plan, The High Weald AONB Management Plan and paragraph 189 of the NPPF.

Impact on neighbouring properties

Policy DP26 in part seeks to ensure 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);'

The proposed garage conversion would overlook onto the street scene and therefore not cause significant harm to neighbouring amenities.

The proposed rooflights on the south side serving the garage to be converted would be approximately 3.5 metres above the finished floor level and would therefore not create overlooking to Ashdown to the south.

The proposed rooflight on the north side would serve and ensuite bathroom on the first floor and be located approximately 3.80 metres above the finished floor level and therefore not create overlooking towards 4 Watermead to the north.

Therefore, the proposal is not considered to cause significant harm to neighbouring amenities and complies with the above-mentioned part of Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan

Impact on parking provision

Policy DP21 in part states:

'The scheme provides adequate car parking for the proposed development taking into account the accessibility of the development, the type, mix and use of the development and the availability and opportunities for public transport; and with the relevant Neighbourhood Plan where applicable;'

West Sussex County Council September 2020 Parking Standards Guidance, outlines that for a 4 bed dwelling in parking behaviour zone 1, 2.7 spaces should be provided. The dwelling has parking for 3 cars on the drive and 1 space in the garage.

The 3 spaces on the drive would be retained and therefore would provide sufficient parking space that meets the parking requirements set out within the WSCC Guidance. The proposal is therefore, considered to comply with Policy DP21 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. This is a householder application within the meaning of article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. As a householder application this development is exempt from the requirement to provide biodiversity net gain.

PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

The proposal is considered to be appropriate in terms of design and form to the dwellinghouse and locality, and would not cause harm to the Balcombe Conservation Area, the High Weald AONB or to the amenities of neighbouring properties.

In conclusion, the proposal complies with Mid Sussex District Plan policies DP16, DP21, DP26 and DP35, policy 3 of the Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan, and the relevant provisions of the NPPF. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

Decision: Permission

Case Officer: Peter Davies