

Planning Statement

Assistant Housemasters Accommodation, North School, Ardingly College, College Road, Ardingly, West Sussex, RH17 6SQ

Prepared for:

Ardingly College

Prepared by:

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Savills has been instructed by Ardingly College to submit this planning application and listed building consent application for

“Creation of accommodation for the Lower School assistant housemaster at the first floor of the North School wing”

- 1.2. This Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with the following plans and reports:

Document	Prepared by	Reference
Planning Statement	Savills	-
Design and Access Statement	Penwarden Hale Architects	Rev. 01
Site Location Plan	Penwarden Hale Architects	0001 Rev. 01
Site Plan	Penwarden Hale Architects	0002 Rev.01
Existing Floor Plans	Penwarden Hale Architects	0010 Rev. 01
Existing Ceiling Plan	Penwarden Hale Architects	0011 Rev. 01
Existing North-East Elevations	Penwarden Hale Architects	0030 Rev. 01
Existing North-West Elevations	Penwarden Hale Architects	0031 Rev. 01
Existing Floor Plans showing Demolition	Penwarden Hale Architects	0050 Rev. 01
Existing Ceiling Plan showing Demolition	Penwarden Hale Architects	0051 Rev. 01
Proposed Floor Plans	Penwarden Hale Architects	0110 Rev. 01
Proposed Ceiling Plan	Penwarden Hale Architects	0160 Rev. 01
Proposed North-East Elevations	Penwarden Hale Architects	0300 Rev. 01
Proposed North-West Elevations	Penwarden Hale Architects	0301 Rev. 01
Heritage Statement and Impact Assessment	HB Archaeology & Conservation Ltd	2024620
Application Form	Savills	-

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2. Site and Surroundings

- 2.1. Ardingly College campus is located 1.13km south of Ardingly village and 5.8km north of Haywards Heath. It is an independent co-educational boarding and day school for children aged 2-18, founded in 1858 by Canon Nathaniel Woodard and has been based at the current 230 acre campus south of Ardingly village since 1870. It is one of the top 10 UK International Baccalaureate Independent Schools and is a registered charity.
- 2.2. The application site is located within the main college building (the 'H' block) located centrally within the Ardingly College campus. The historic 'H' block is a Grade II listed building and is at the heart of Ardingly College campus. It is the principal school building and the focal point of the College. The foundation stone for the building dates from 1864, with the last section the north east wing (known as New Wing) erected in 1926-27.
- 2.3. The North School is the north western arm of the 'H' Block building. The proposed works are to be undertaken on the first floor of the North School, with the exact location shown in Figure 2.1 below.



Figure 2.1: Aerial view of the site (outlined in red).

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- 2.4. The pupil roll at the school currently totals 1046 across the Pre-Prep, Prep and Senior Schools. This has risen from 1029 pupils 3 years ago (2021) and 926 pupils 10 years ago (2014). The current number of boarding pupils is 295.
- 2.5. The entire Ardingly College campus is classified as being located outside of the defined development boundary of Ardingly village and is therefore designated as Countryside. It also falls within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and is identified as being within Flood Zone 1 with the lowest risk of fluvial flooding. The main part of the campus does however fall with a defined built zone as set out in Ardingly Neighbourhood Plan.

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3. Planning History

3.1. The College has been subject to a number of planning applications over time, however the most recent and relevant to the proposal are outlined in Table 4.1 below:

Reference	Proposal	Determination date	Outcome
DM/24/2131	Proposed repairs, replacement and refurbishment to sections of the H Block section of the main Ardingly College building, including replacement rainwater goods, roof repair, stonework repair, and clockface repair & refurbishment.	30/10/2024	Approved
DM/21/4214	Internal alterations on the upper floors of North School (New Wing) to facilitate a new pastoral space for Years 7 and 8 following college re-structure.	24/01/2022	Approved
DM/17/2260	Internal renovation works to the Prep School Boarding accommodation, North School.	27/07/2017	Approved

Table 4.1: Table of relevant planning history of the Site.

4. The Proposed Development

- 4.1. The proposals are for works to the first floor of the North School wing to provide accommodation for the Lower School Assistant Housemaster who is currently accommodated in a small bedsit room within the South School wing of the 'H' block. The proposals will provide more suitable living accommodation for the Assistant Housemaster, close to the Lower School boarders who they have responsibility for overnight.
- 4.2. In order to accommodate the assistant housemaster's accommodation within the North Wing, minor modifications are proposed to the internal layout. This includes the modification of sections of some internal walls. No external works are proposed.
- 4.3. Existing access arrangements to the North School wing will be maintained, and no new independent access to the accommodation is proposed. The proposed ancillary accommodation will continue to fall within the lawful wider Class C2 use of the school buildings.

5. Planning Policy

- 5.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) requires that planning decisions be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

- 5.2. The revised NPPF was published in December 2024, replacing the previous NPPF (2023). It sets out the national policy which guides Local Planning Authorities (LPA) on plan making and decision taking.
- 5.3. The government places great emphasis on the presumption in favour of sustainability and for decision taking, this means proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay (paragraph 11). In order to achieve sustainable development, the planning system should seek to deliver three overarching objectives – an economic objective, a social objective and an environmental objective. Development proposals should ensure they pursue the three overarching objectives as well as adhering to other policy set out in the NPPF.

The Development Plan

- The Mid Sussex District Plan (2018);
 - Any made Neighbourhood Plans.
- 5.4. In addition to these documents, there is also a need to consider relevant guidance contained within Supplementary Planning Guidance and Documents.

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

- 5.5. Paragraph 12 of the NPPF reiterates the statutory status of the Development Plan as the starting point for decision making. Reflecting section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004 (the Act), paragraph 12 states:
- 5.6. *“The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision-making. Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood plans that form part of the development plan), permission should not usually be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed”.*

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- 5.7. Paragraph 85 states *"Planning policies and 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. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future"*.
- 5.8. Paragraph 100 relates specifically to schools, and sets out how local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to development that will widen choice in education, giving great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools, and work with schools to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.
- 5.9. Paragraph 124 sets out that *"Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions"*.
- 5.10. Chapter 12 *Achieving well-designed places*, sets out that the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Therefore it is important that developments will function well and add to the quality of the area over their lifetime; are visually attractive; are sympathetic to local character and history; maintain a strong sense of place; optimise the potential of the site to accommodate an appropriate amount of development and support local facilities; and create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible.
- 5.11. Chapter 15 *Conserving and Enhancing the natural environment* sets out in paragraph 189 that "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 scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited"*.
- 5.12. Chapter 16 of the NPPF specifically addresses '*Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment*'. It identifies that heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest Significance, such as World Heritage Sites. Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.
- 5.13. Paragraph 207 states that *"In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance."*

The Mid Sussex District Plan (2018) (MSDP)

- 5.14. The Mid Sussex District Council's District Plan was adopted in March 2018 and provides the overarching guide for development management across the District. With regard to this proposal, the following policies are therefore applicable:

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- 5.15. Policy DP12 (Protection and Enhancement of Countryside) states that
- *“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 supported by a specific policy reference either elsewhere in the Plan, a Development Plan Document or relevant Neighbourhood Plan.”*
- 5.16. Policy DP16 (High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) sets out that:
- *“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. 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.”*
- 5.17. Policy DP26 (Character and Design) states that all development must demonstrate that:
- It is of a high quality design and layout, and includes appropriate landscaping and greenspace;
 - 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.
- 5.18. Policy DP 34 (Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets) states that all development will be required to protect listed buildings and their settings. This will be achieved by ensuring that:
- A thorough understanding of the significance of the listed building and its setting has been demonstrated. This will be proportionate to the importance of the building and potential impact of the proposal;
 - Alterations or extensions to a listed building respect its historic form, scale, setting, significance and fabric. Proposals for the conversion or change of use of a listed building retain its significance and character whilst ensuring that the building remains in a viable use;
 - Traditional building materials and construction techniques are normally used. The installation of uPVC windows and doors will not be acceptable;
 - Satellite antennae, solar panels or other renewable energy installations are not sited in a prominent location, and where possible within the curtilage rather than on the building itself;
 - Special regard is given to protecting the setting of a listed building;
 - Where the historic fabric of a building may be affected by alterations or other proposals, the applicant is expected to fund the recording or exploratory opening up of historic fabric.
- 5.19. Policy DP39 (Sustainable Design and Construction) sets out that all development proposals must seek to improve the sustainability of development. Where possible this should include measures that reduce energy use, maximise efficient use of resources, ensure longer term resilience against risks associated with climate change.

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Emerging Local Plan

- 5.20. The Mid Sussex District Council are currently at examination for the District Plan. The Plan was submitted for Examination on 8th July 2024 and hearings were held between Tuesday 22nd October and Thursday 31st October 2024. The Plan sets out planning policies and proposals for new development in the District over the period from 2021 to 2039. Once adopted, the Local Plan will replace the current suite of Development Plan documents.
- 5.21. Although not yet adopted, the following emerging policies have been considered in the formulation of the proposals:
- DPC1 Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside
 - DPC4 High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
 - DPB2 Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets
 - DPB1 Character and Design
 - DPS2 Sustainable Design and Construction

Neighbourhood Plan

- 5.22. Ardingly College lies within the Ardingly Neighbourhood Plan Area. The Ardingly Neighbourhood Plan (adopted in March 2015) contains a specific policy in relation to development at the college, Policy ARD18, however all relevant policies must be considered.
- 5.23. Policy ARD18 (Ardingly College) supports development proposals within the central built core of the campus, provided that any development:
- Conserves or enhances the listed buildings and their setting;
 - Recognises any impact that they may have on the AONB and are landscaped appropriately; and
 - Enhances the College's position as a school and major local employer.
- 5.24. The application site lies within this defined built core.
- 5.25. Policy ARD9 (Heritage Assets) supports development proposals relating to listed buildings or their setting which conserve or enhance their quality and character, reflecting policies outlined within national policy.

6. Planning Considerations

- 6.1. The central 'H' block of the College dates from 1870, with the North Wing section dating from 1880. Precisely how this section of the building has been utilised has evolved, with changes in the section of the school utilising the north school varying over time. In order to continue to make the best use of the buildings and facilities within the college, further changes are now being sought.

Principle of development

- 6.2. The proposals are not seeking to add any built form to the campus, and there are no proposed external changes to the appearance of the central 'H' block at the core of the campus. The proposals are seeking to ensure that the existing built form on campus is best utilised for the College's ongoing educational use.
- 6.3. The proposals seek to create accommodation for the Lower School Assistant Housemaster in the first floor of North School wing. As an expanding school with a strong reputation, noted as one of the top 10 UK International Baccalaureate Independent Schools, Ardingly College seek to provide the best environment for both staff and students in all parts of their academic experience at Ardingly. The creation of a dedicated Lower School space following the restructure of the school and the addition of Year 7 and 8 to the Senior School has shown strong demand for pupils, both day and boarding, and this necessitates having both an Assistant Housemaster and Housemaster close by on site.
- 6.4. The current accommodation available for the assistant housemaster is a very small bedsit located well away from the North School wing in the in the South School section of the 'H' block. This 'bolt hole' is not suitable as long term accommodation for a member of staff who, with the presence of boarders at the College, will need to be available throughout the day and night. Therefore the proposals are seeking to create a self-contained area that is suitable and appropriate for this important member of staff.
- 6.5. The site of the proposed accommodation for the Assistant Housemaster is an area of the North School that underwent significant alterations 2 years ago in line with alterations approved under LBC Ref. DM/21/4214. These proposals converted this area from staff offices and a conference room into a day house space with study area for one of the Lower School houses to use. Prior to these relatively recent reconfiguration, this area was actually used for the majority of its life as the Junior School Headmaster's private house so these proposals will be returning this area to its original use.
- 6.6. Paragraph 100 of the NPPF sets out how local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to development that will widen choice in education, and give great weight to the need to alter or expand schools. Furthermore, the Ardingly Neighbourhood Plan (and specifically Policy ARD18) support development proposals within the central built core of the campus that enhance the college's position as a school, so long as the setting of the listed buildings on site are conserved. There will be no external changes to the appearance of the building or its immediate setting as a result of these proposals, and therefore the proposals will be in accordance with policy ARD 18.

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Lawful Use

- 6.7. For the avoidance of any doubt this application also does not seek the creation of a standalone residential unit within this building, the existing (and proposed) wider use will continue to fall under Class C2 as this accommodation will remain ancillary to the wider educational use and will not be occupied separately.

Heritage Impact

- 6.8. HB Archaeology & Conservation Ltd have produced a Heritage Statement to provide relevant and proportionate information to support the works proposed under this application. As addressed above, there will be no external changes to the building, and no change in its appearance or character when viewed externally. The proposals will result in some small internal changes to include the removal of 3 partitions, the repositioning of 3 partitions, and the removal and insertion of a new doorway. Where changes are proposed, they are either fully reversible or limited to the insertion of a single doorway.
- 6.9. The minimal loss of historic fabric is offset by clear enhancements to the site, revealing two currently congested internally projecting chimney breasts and the removal of the partition that divides one of the arched windows on the building's northwest elevation. All original features of special architectural or historic interest inherent within the building fabric will be preserved. Moreover, with the partial reinstatement of the historic plan form of the upper levels the architectural interest and therefore significance of the heritage asset will be enhanced.
- 6.10. As such, in accordance with the 1990 Act, the relevant provisions of the NPPF and Policy 34 of the MSDP and Historic England guidance, the proposed works would cause no harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset (Grade II listed building). There are no external impacts, demonstrating the commitment of the college to safeguarding the significance of historical buildings within its campus.

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7. Conclusion

- 7.1. This Planning Statement supports the submission of an application for planning and listed building consent for internal alterations on the first floor of the North School wing. The proposal involves minor internal modifications to facilitate the creation of an appropriate residential accommodation for the Assistant Housemaster. No external works are proposed.
- 7.2. The section of the North School in which the works are proposed historically been the part of the College in which residential accommodation has been located.
- 7.3. As identified in the Heritage Statement, the proposed works would cause no harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset (Grade II listed building). Taken on balance, the scheme would provide an overall heritage benefit to the architectural interest of the listed building.
- 7.4. Overall, the proposals will be in keeping with the MSDP, the Ardingly Neighbourhood Plan Policy ARD18 and the relevant provisions of the NPPF (2024).

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