



Alpha Planning Ltd.

**Planning, Design and
Access Statement**

Change of use of Hitchins
Cottage Annexes to two
self-contained one-
bedroom holiday lets

At:

Hitchins Cottage Annexes, Vowel
Lane, East Grinstead, Mid Sussex,
RH19 4LL

On behalf of:

Kingscote Valley Ltd

APL Ref: APL/00426/KVL

30 July 2026

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement is prepared by Alpha Planning Ltd. and is submitted in support of a planning application by Kingscote Valley Ltd for the change of use of the existing Hitchins Cottage annexe building, Vowel Lane, East Grinstead, Mid Sussex, RH19 4LL.
- 1.2 The proposal is for short-stay visitor accommodation only. It is not intended for permanent occupation, and the development would be managed accordingly through the site's operational arrangements and, if necessary, planning condition.

2.0 Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The annexe building is related to Hitchins Cottage and is located off Vowels Lane to the north of the village of West Hoathley.
- 2.2 The application site located in the countryside, within the High Weald National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), and within the Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) influence area. The site is served by an existing access and sits within an established rural setting with a mixture of residential and other land uses in the wider vicinity.
- 2.3 The building itself is an existing annexe/garage structure. The proposal does not involve any extension, enlargement of the footprint, increase in height or increase in massing, and it would not introduce any new independent built form into the countryside.

3.0 The Proposal

- 3.1 The proposed development seeks the conversion of the existing annexe building into two self-contained one-bedroom holiday lets.

Layout

- 3.2 The proposal introduces kitchen facilities and bathrooms to each unit, enabling their use as self-contained holiday accommodation. No structural reconfiguration is required beyond these modest internal works.

Scale

- 3.3 No external alterations of material significance are proposed. The established building envelope would remain unchanged, with no increase in built form and no change to the



buildings scale, massing or footprint, and the development would therefore be very limited in its physical and visual effect.

Appearance

- 3.4 The proposal involves the reuse of an existing building with no changes proposed to the external appearance of the building.

Access and Parking

- 3.5 There is ample parking within the immediate vicinity for potential users of the proposed holiday accommodation. The block plan submitted with the application indicates that opposite the entrance to the garages in The Barn (to the northern side of The Barn), there is parking for at least four vehicles. However, as one-bedroom holiday lets it is unlikely that there would be more than one car per holiday let. Therefore, there is more than adequate available parking in the immediate vicinity for the development proposed.

Landscaping

- 3.6 Given that there are no changes to the footprint of the building and the change is to the use, no major landscaping is proposed as a part of the development. Each holiday let will have a small patio area directly outside the entrance doors, with planter beds to the front of the building adjacent to the shingle driveway.

Sustainability

- 3.7 The proposal, entailing the re-use of an existing building, represents a sustainable form of rural tourism that aligns with the relevant policies contained within the Mid Sussex District Plan, the National Planning Policy Framework and the statutory purposes of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- 3.8 The proposal would not result in a net loss nor gain of residential units, rather it enables the building to operate as visitor accommodation.

4.0 Planning History

- 4.1 The site has an established planning history which shows that the site is not an isolated undeveloped countryside parcel. The most relevant past applications are listed below.
- 4.2 DM/17/3893: Proposed conversion of existing studio and garage into a three-bedroom residence for estate worker. Granted 21.06.2018.



- 4.3 DM/22/0536: Conversion from existing garages and studio into a dwellinghouse, together with the construction of a detached pair of garages associated with the dwelling (retrospective). Granted 18.10.2023.
- 4.4 DM/24/2924 – Variation of condition 2 relating to DM/22/0536. Refused 26.02.2025.
- 4.5 DM/25/0783 – Non-material amendment to DM/22/0536 to remove words from the description of development in the decision notice. Granted 04.04.2025.
- 4.6 DM/25/1246 - Variation of condition no 2 relating to planning application DM/22/0536 - for the condition to be varied and propose the following revised wording - 'The parking spaces shown shaded blue on Drawing 001 (dated 27 November 2024) shall be retained at all times for their designated purpose.' Granted 10.07.2025.
- 4.7 The current proposal differs from previous applications for residential conversion schemes for Hitchins Cottage because it is for holiday accommodation rather than a permanent dwelling. That distinction is important when considering countryside policy, housing policy and Ashdown Forest impacts.

5.0 Relevant Planning Policy

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in December 2024, sets out the Government's planning policies for England. A consultation on revisions to the NPPF was published in December 2025 and ran until 10 March 2026, with the final version expected to be published in Autumn 2026. As a consequence, limited weight at this stage can be attached to policies within the emerging NPPF.
- 5.3 The NPPF provides guidance for local planning authorities both in drawing up plans and in determining applications. The NPPF states that decision-makers "should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible" (paragraph 38).
- 5.4 The development plan for Mid Sussex District Council comprises:
 - Mid Sussex District Plan 2018; and
 - West Hoathley Neighbourhood Plan 2014 – 2031

- 5.5 The principal adopted development plan policies relevant to the proposal are: DP12 (Protection and Enhancement of Countryside), DP16 (High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), DP17 (Ashdown Forest SPA/SAC), DP19 (Sustainable Tourism), DP21 (Transport), DP26 (Character and Design), DP29 (Noise, Air and Light Pollution), DP39 (Sustainable Design and Construction) and DP41 (Flood Risk and Drainage) of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014–2031, together with the relevant policies of the West Hoathley Neighbourhood Plan where applicable. The adopted District Plan remains the main basis for decision-making.
- 5.6 Policy DP12 protects the countryside but permits development where it maintains or enhances rural and landscape character and is supported by another specific policy of the plan. Policy DP19 supports tourism-related development in the countryside, including visitor accommodation and the re-use of rural buildings, where it supports the sustainable growth of the rural economy and maintains or enhances rural character.
- 5.7 Policy DP16 requires development within the High Weald National Landscape to conserve and enhance natural beauty. The NPPF likewise gives great weight to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in designated landscapes.
- 5.8 In addition to the adopted District Plan, the Council is preparing the Mid Sussex District Plan 2021 - 2039 (Regulation 19), currently at Examination with hearings having concluded on the 19th March 2026. The District Plan remains at Examination until the Inspector has published his report, until that time only limited weight can be given to policies in the emerging Plan and therefore this statement assesses the proposal against the policies of the adopted District Plan.

6.0 Analysis

Principle of Development

- 6.1 The key policy issue is whether the proposed holiday-let use is an acceptable countryside/tourism reuse of the existing building. The proposal is not new housing in the countryside and should not be treated as such. Instead, it is a modest tourism reuse of an existing structure, which aligns with Policy DP19 of the District Plan and the broader NPPF support for sustainable rural economic activity.



- 6.2 The proposal accords with Policy DP12 because it does not introduce new built form, does not erode the openness of the countryside and does not urbanise the site. It reuses an existing structure in a way that preserves the established rural character of the area.

Tourism and Rural Economy

- 6.3 The proposal will provide small-scale self-catering accommodation in an established rural location. That accords with the economic objective in Policy DP19 of supporting the sustainable growth of the rural economy through visitor accommodation and the re-use of rural buildings.
- 6.4 There is a clear tourism context for the proposal. The High Weald tourism evidence identifies that rural tourism is supported by overnight stays, that there is demand for high quality self-catering accommodation, and that visitors increasingly seek distinctive, experience-led countryside breaks.
- 6.5 Mid Sussex District Council's own sustainable economy evidence also shows that the visitor economy matters locally: the staying visitor market, while a minority of trips, generates a much larger share of economic impact, and the majority of those staying trips are for holiday purposes.
- 6.6 The proposal would therefore make a positive but proportionate contribution to the local tourism offer by adding two high-quality holiday units in an area where countryside tourism is already part of the established visitor economy.

Design and Appearance

- 6.7 The development would preserve the existing building form and appearance. There would be no extension, no increase in scale and no alteration to the building's footprint or massing. In design terms, the proposal is therefore highly restrained.
- 6.8 Because the proposal does not require changes of external character, it will conserve the rural appearance of the site and will not detract from the wider High Weald landscape. That is consistent with Policies DP16, DP26 and the NPPF's protection for valued landscapes.

Parking and Access

- 6.9 The site benefits from existing vehicular access and parking within the immediate vicinity (around The Barn and Hitchins Cottage itself). The holiday lets are small in scale and are expected to generate limited traffic, normally associated with short-stay arrivals and departures rather than daily commuting.



- 6.10 The parking available within the site is sufficient for the proposed use, and the holiday-let operation can be managed so that vehicles remain within the designated parking areas. If required, parking and turning can be controlled by condition.

Residential Amenity

- 6.11 The proposed use would not cause significant harm to neighbouring amenity. The scheme does not involve external enlargement or new overlooking elements, and the scale of use is small.
- 6.12 Any potential for noise, disturbance or lighting effects can be controlled by the limited scale of the accommodation and by operational management. Guest information can also be used to set expectations about quiet rural occupation, parking, bin storage and respectful use of the site.

Impact on the High Weald National Landscape

- 6.13 The proposal lies within the High Weald National Landscape, where great weight must be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty. The scheme has been designed to be very low impact, with no increase in built form and no material change to the building's external appearance.
- 6.14 In that context, the proposal would conserve the character of the site and would not undermine the special qualities of the National Landscape. The small-scale reuse of an existing rural building for visitor accommodation is consistent with the management of the landscape and with the support given to appropriate rural tourism development.
- Accordingly, the development is judged to preserve the High Weald National Landscape, in line with the High Weald Management Plan, Policy DP16 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, and paragraph 189 of the NPPF

Ashdown Forest

- 6.15 The site lies within the Ashdown Forest influence area and has therefore been considered in relation to Policy DP17 and the Habitats Regulations. However, the proposal is for short-stay holiday accommodation, not permanent residential development.
- 6.16 That distinction matters because the principal recreational pressure concern around Ashdown Forest is generally associated with a net increase in permanent residents and their routine patterns of recreation. This proposal does not create new dwellings for permanent occupation, and the level of visitor activity would be limited and intermittent.



- 6.17 Accordingly, the proposal is not expected to have a material adverse effect on the integrity of the Ashdown Forest SPA/SAC. If the Local Planning Authority considers screening, tariff or other mitigation to be necessary, the applicant is willing to address that in the normal way.

Sustainability

- 6.18 The proposal represents sustainable development in economic, social and environmental terms. Economically, it supports the local visitor economy and helps diversify rural income. Socially, it provides additional holiday accommodation in a countryside location close to walking and leisure opportunities. Environmentally, it reuses an existing building without expanding development into the countryside.

- 6.19 The scheme therefore aligns with the NPPF's support for sustainable development and the reuse of existing buildings where this can be achieved without unacceptable harm.

Space Standards

- 6.20 The holiday-let units are intended as high-quality one-bedroom self-contained accommodation and significantly exceed the Nationally Described Space Standards that would apply to a comparable permanent dwelling. That is a positive factor, even though the standards are not the main test for visitor accommodation.

Demand for accommodation

- 6.21 There is a clear basis for concluding that demand exists for small-scale rural visitor accommodation in the High Weald and Mid Sussex area. The High Weald tourism report identifies a growing demand for high quality self-catering, unusual and experience-led accommodation, with strong appeal for countryside short breaks and overnight stays.
- 6.22 The Mid Sussex District profile shows that the local economy benefits from a substantial visitor economy and that the staying visitor market generates a high proportion of economic impact. It also confirms that the District has a strong rural character and is well connected to tourism and leisure markets.
- 6.23 In practical terms, East Grinstead and the wider High Weald already support a range of hotels, B&Bs and self-catering accommodation, which indicates an established market rather than a speculative one. The proposal would add two modest units into that existing market, rather than creating a large-scale new tourism destination.



Operational management

- 6.24 The holiday lets would be managed so as to remain low-impact and compatible with the rural setting. This would include control over booking, arrival and departure times, parking, refuse storage, external lighting and guest information.
- 6.25 With regard to refuse provision is made within the units for the storage of waste and recyclable material. Waste collection from the site is undertaken by the Council with compostable items collected every week, recycling every two weeks, and household waste every three weeks. The various bins will be wheeled down to the end of the driveway to Vowels Lane where they are collected by the Council teams.
- 6.26 Guest information would explicitly encourage respectful rural behaviour, including quiet enjoyment of the site, use of the designated parking spaces, careful management of waste and sensitivity to neighbouring occupiers and the surrounding countryside.

7.0 Summary and Conclusions

- 7.1 The proposal is a small-scale and policy-compliant reuse of an existing rural building for visitor accommodation. It accords with the adopted Mid Sussex District Plan, the NPPF and the policy objectives for the High Weald, because it supports rural tourism, preserves the character of the countryside, avoids new built development and does not give rise to material harm to amenity or landscape character.
- 7.2 For those reasons, planning permission should be granted.