

PLANNING STATEMENT

Proposed Internal Reconfiguration to Provide One Additional Self-Contained Residential Unit (Revised Scheme)

**Whittaker House
1 Leppard Walk
East Grinstead
RH19 3BY**

1. INTRODUCTION

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a revised planning application seeking permission for the internal reconfiguration of part of the ground floor of Whittaker House to facilitate the creation of one additional self-contained residential dwelling.

The application follows the refusal of planning application DM/26/0432 by Mid Sussex District Council on 26 May 2026 for a retrospective scheme comprising an additional two-bedroom residential unit within the completed development.

The Applicant has exercised its right of appeal against that decision, and the appeal remains undetermined at the time of submission.

This revised application is submitted without prejudice to that appeal and represents a constructive response to the concerns identified by the Local Planning Authority during determination of the previous application.

Whilst the Applicant maintains that the previous refusal was not justified in planning terms, the revised proposal has been prepared to address the Council's concerns directly by reducing the proposed accommodation from a two-bedroom dwelling to a one-bedroom dwelling, improving the internal arrangement, enhancing cycle storage provision and providing a clear pathway to addressing the technical matters identified by the Council.

The proposal therefore represents a materially improved scheme whilst continuing to deliver an additional dwelling within an existing completed residential building located within a highly sustainable town centre location.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

Whittaker House occupies a prominent and sustainable location within East Grinstead town centre.

The site comprises a recently completed residential development which replaced the former Tower Car Sales premises following the grant and implementation of planning permission DM/22/0921.

The surrounding area comprises a mix of residential, commercial and town centre uses. Residents benefit from immediate access to shops, services, employment opportunities, public transport facilities and community infrastructure.

The site is located within the defined built-up area of East Grinstead where residential development is accepted in principle.

Importantly, the principle of residential development at the site has been firmly established through previous permissions and subsequent implementation.

The proposal therefore relates solely to the optimisation of accommodation within an existing residential building.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

The planning history of the site is extensive and has been comprehensively assessed by the Local Planning Authority.

Most notably:

- DM/21/3534 granted permission for redevelopment of the site to provide residential accommodation.
- DM/22/0921 approved amendments to the consented scheme and was subsequently implemented.
- DM/24/1404 approved amendments to external materials.
- DM/26/0432 sought retrospective permission for an additional self-contained residential unit and was refused on 26 May 2026.
- An appeal has subsequently been lodged against that refusal and remains outstanding.

The current application seeks to address the concerns raised by the Council whilst retaining the fundamental objective of delivering an additional residential dwelling within an approved and completed building.

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE REVISED PROPOSAL

The revised proposal comprises the internal reconfiguration of part of the ground floor of Whittaker House to provide one additional self-contained one-bedroom residential unit.

The proposal does not involve:

- Any increase in building footprint;
- Any increase in height;
- Any increase in massing;
- Any external extensions;
- Any alteration to the approved architectural appearance of the building.

The physical floorspace remains unchanged from the previously submitted scheme.

However, the revised layout removes the second bedroom previously proposed and replaces it with additional living accommodation, resulting in a more spacious and functional one-bedroom dwelling.

The revised plans also provide enhanced cycle storage arrangements and dedicated external storage facilities associated with the dwelling.

The proposal therefore represents a material improvement over the previously refused scheme.

5. PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

The principle of residential development on the site is not disputed.

Indeed, the Council's delegated officer report expressly confirms that the site lies within the built-up area of East Grinstead and acknowledges that the location is appropriate for residential development. The report further confirms that the principle of residential use has already been established through previous planning permissions and implementation.

The proposal does not introduce a new land use.

Nor does it alter the established residential character of the development.

Instead, it represents the efficient utilisation of existing floorspace within an already completed residential building.

The proposal therefore accords with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework which encourages the efficient use of previously developed land and supports the delivery of additional housing within sustainable urban locations.

5A. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY ASSESSMENT

Policy DP20 – Infrastructure

Policy DP20 seeks to ensure that development is supported by the infrastructure necessary to mitigate its impacts.

The Council's previous refusal was not based upon any finding that the development itself would result in unacceptable impacts incapable of mitigation. Rather, the refusal arose solely from the absence of a mechanism to secure the requested contributions.

The Applicant has confirmed a willingness to address the infrastructure requirements identified by the Council through the appropriate legal mechanism.

Accordingly, the previous objection does not represent a substantive planning concern relating to the acceptability of the development itself. It is instead an administrative matter capable of resolution through the established planning process.

The proposal therefore does not conflict with the objectives of Policy DP20.

Policy DP21 – Transport

Policy DP21 seeks to ensure that development promotes sustainable transport choices and provides appropriate facilities for alternative modes of travel.

The site occupies a highly sustainable town centre location within easy walking distance of shops, services, employment opportunities and public transport connections.

The Council's previous concern related solely to the configuration and capacity of the cycle parking arrangements associated with the development.

The revised proposal directly addresses this concern through the provision of enhanced cycle storage facilities capable of accommodating the level of provision expected for the development.

The proposal therefore accords with the objectives of Policy DP21.

Policies DP26 and EG3 – Design and Quality

Policies DP26 and EG3 seek to secure high quality design and satisfactory living environments.

The Council accepted through previous permissions that the scale, form, appearance, massing and architectural approach of the development are acceptable.

Importantly, the present application does not alter any of those characteristics.

The building remains exactly as constructed and previously approved.

The Council's concerns therefore relate solely to the quality of accommodation provided within the additional dwelling.

The revised proposal materially improves the previously submitted scheme by reducing the unit from a two-bedroom dwelling to a one-bedroom dwelling whilst retaining the same floorspace.

This significantly reduces occupancy levels and results in a more spacious and functional internal arrangement.

The revised proposal therefore provides a materially improved standard of accommodation when compared to the previously refused scheme.

Policy DP27 – Dwelling Space Standards

The previous refusal placed significant reliance upon Policy DP27 and the Nationally Described Space Standards.

However, the Council's assessment was undertaken on the basis of a two-bedroom dwelling.

The revised proposal fundamentally alters that assessment.

Whilst the floorspace remains unchanged, the accommodation is now proposed as a one-bedroom dwelling.

The same floorspace is therefore available to a substantially reduced level of occupation.

The result is a significantly improved relationship between floorspace, occupancy and residential amenity.

The revised proposal therefore addresses one of the principal concerns identified within the previous refusal and substantially improves compliance with the objectives underpinning Policy DP27.

5B. MATERIAL WEIGHT OF THE PREVIOUS REFUSAL

The Applicant acknowledges the previous refusal of planning application DM/26/0432.

However, it is important that the previous decision is considered in its proper context.

The previous refusal does not establish a policy objection to the principle of an additional dwelling at the site.

Indeed, the officer's report expressly confirms that:

- The site occupies a sustainable location within East Grinstead;
- Residential development is acceptable in principle;
- The site lies within the built-up area;
- The Council cannot presently demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites;
- The proposal would deliver an additional dwelling on previously developed land.

The majority of the previous refusal reasons therefore related either to technical matters capable of mitigation or to detailed design concerns associated with the specific layout then under consideration.

Those concerns have now been directly addressed through the revised proposal.

The previous refusal should therefore be afforded limited weight in the determination of the current application.

5C. THE RELEVANCE OF THE LIVE APPEAL

The appeal relating to application DM/26/0432 remains undetermined.

The existence of that appeal is a material planning consideration.

The appeal seeks planning permission for an additional dwelling at the site and therefore directly concerns the same principle currently under consideration by the Local Planning Authority.

The present application has been prepared specifically to address the concerns raised within the refusal decision and officer report.

Consequently, the scheme before the Council is materially different from, and materially superior to, the scheme currently before the Planning Inspectorate.

Should the appeal be allowed, the principle of the additional dwelling would be established through a decision of the Secretary of State.

Whilst the Council must determine the current application on its own merits, the existence of a realistic fallback position is capable of attracting significant weight.

The revised proposal provides the Local Planning Authority with an opportunity to approve a materially improved scheme without awaiting the outcome of the appeal process.

5D. PLANNING BENEFITS OF THE REVISED SCHEME

The revised proposal generates a number of clear planning benefits.

These include:

- Delivery of an additional dwelling within a sustainable town centre location;
 - Efficient use of previously developed land;
 - Optimisation of an existing completed building;
 - No increase in building footprint, height or massing;
 - No adverse impact upon neighbouring amenity;
 - No visual impact upon the character or appearance of the area;
 - Improved accommodation standards when compared with the previously refused scheme;
 - Enhanced cycle storage provision;
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- Additional housing delivery within a district currently unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply.

These benefits attract significant weight in favour of the proposal and must be considered within the overall planning balance.

6. PREVIOUS REFUSAL AND RESPONSE TO REFUSAL REASONS

Refusal Reason 1 – Ashdown Forest Mitigation

The first reason for refusal related solely to the absence of mitigation associated with the Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area.

Importantly, Natural England raised no objection to the proposal subject to the securing of appropriate mitigation measures. The principle of mitigation is therefore accepted and the matter is capable of resolution through the established mechanisms utilised by the Council.

The first reason for refusal does not therefore relate to the acceptability of the development itself and carries limited weight in the assessment of the revised proposal.

Refusal Reason 2 – Infrastructure Contributions

The second reason for refusal related to infrastructure contributions.

Again, this was not a reason relating to the principle, design or acceptability of the development.

Rather, it concerned the securing of financial contributions through the appropriate legal mechanism.

The Applicant confirms its willingness to enter into any necessary legal agreement and/or provide any agreed contribution required by the Local Planning Authority.

Consequently, the second refusal reason is capable of immediate resolution and should not be regarded as a substantive objection to the development itself.

Refusal Reason 3 – Residential Quality

The third refusal reason formed the principal basis of the Council's decision.

However, the Council's assessment was undertaken on the basis of a two-bedroom dwelling providing approximately 58 square metres of accommodation.

The revised proposal materially changes that position.

The proposed dwelling is now a one-bedroom unit whilst retaining the same overall floorspace.

The result is a significantly reduced occupancy level together with a more generous internal layout and substantially improved living environment.

The revised arrangement removes the previous reliance upon a second bedroom and creates a more spacious and practical dwelling better suited to modern living requirements.

The proposal therefore directly addresses the principal concern identified by the Council.

The previous refusal relied heavily upon earlier appeal decisions relating to materially different development proposals considered under historic applications for the site.

Those decisions related to alternative layouts and accommodation arrangements and cannot simply be transposed to the revised scheme now under consideration.

The amended proposal must therefore be assessed on its own merits.

When considered in that context, the revised one-bedroom arrangement provides a satisfactory standard of accommodation and a significantly improved living environment compared with the previously refused scheme.

Refusal Reason 4 – Cycle Storage

The Council's fourth reason for refusal related to cycle storage provision.

The revised scheme directly addresses this matter through the provision of enhanced cycle storage facilities, including dedicated locker-style cycle storage capable of accommodating the level of provision sought by the Local Highway Authority.

The revised proposal therefore overcomes the concerns previously identified.

7. FIVE YEAR HOUSING LAND SUPPLY

The Council's own delegated officer report confirms that Mid Sussex District Council is presently unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites when assessed against current national policy requirements.

This is a significant material consideration.

The National Planning Policy Framework places substantial weight upon the delivery of additional housing, particularly within sustainable locations and on previously developed land.

The proposal delivers an additional dwelling within a completed building without generating any material visual, landscape or environmental impacts.

As such, the proposal represents a sustainable and efficient form of development to which significant positive weight should be attached.

8. FALLBACK POSITION

A material consideration in the determination of this application is the existence of the live appeal relating to application DM/26/0432.

That appeal remains undetermined.

Should the appeal be allowed, the principle of the additional dwelling would be accepted in the form previously proposed.

The revised application before the Council is materially superior to the appealed scheme.

The proposal provides:

- Reduced occupancy;
- Improved internal arrangement;
- Enhanced cycle storage;
- Additional storage facilities;
- A more generous standard of accommodation.

Accordingly, even if substantial weight is not attached to the live appeal itself, the existence of a realistic fallback position is a material consideration that weighs in favour of the revised proposal.

9. PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

The proposal seeks permission for the creation of one additional self-contained residential dwelling within an existing completed residential building located in a highly sustainable town centre location.

The principle of residential development is accepted.

The proposal does not alter the external appearance, scale, massing or footprint of the building.

The previous refusal reasons relating to Ashdown Forest mitigation and infrastructure contributions are capable of resolution through established mechanisms.

The revised scheme directly addresses the Council's principal concerns regarding residential quality and cycle storage provision.

The proposal delivers an additional dwelling on previously developed land within a location specifically suited to sustainable residential occupation.

The development therefore represents sustainable development in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, the Mid Sussex District Plan and the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan.

For the reasons set out above, planning permission should be granted.