

Planning Statement

Soles Coppice, Rear and side extensions to existing dwelling with detached garage
July 2026

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1 Introduction

11 This Planning Statement accompanies an application for planning permission at Soles Coppice, Brantridge Lane, Balcombe, Haywards Heath RH17 6JR ('the Site'). The Site comprises a lawful residential planning unit within the countryside and the High Weald National Landscape ('National Landscape'). It has been the subject of successive planning decisions, including extant planning permissions, which together establish the lawful planning baseline for the Site. That baseline defines the maximum realistically achievable lawful development and provides the reference point against which the current Proposal is to be assessed.

12 Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to determine the application in accordance with the development plan and any other material considerations. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework is a material consideration. It is considered alongside the adopted policies of the Mid Sussex District Plan, the relevant Neighbourhood Plan, and other applicable planning guidance.

13 The assessment first establishes the lawful planning baseline before considering the proposed development against the relevant policy requirements. It then addresses the principle of development, the effect of the Proposal on the National Landscape, and the character and design of the proposed development. The concluding assessment compares the Proposal with the lawful planning baseline to determine whether any operative policy gateway identifies a sustainable planning reason for refusal.

14 Lawful Planning Baseline

15 The Site comprises a lawful residential planning unit. Planning permission ref. CD/023/95 authorised the erection of a forestry worker's dwelling, with reserved matters subsequently approved under ref. CD/058/96 and amended under ref. CD/058/96/AP1. Certificate of Lawful Existing Use or Development ref. DM/17/3089, permitted on 08 September 2017, confirmed that occupation of the dwelling without compliance with the agricultural occupancy condition had become lawful. The lawful residential use of the Site is therefore established.

16 The Site benefits from two extant planning permissions. Planning permission ref. DM/23/1148, permitted by notice dated 04 December 2023, authorised the erection of a single-storey side extension and an incidental domestic outbuilding (the '2023 Permission'). Planning permission ref. DM/24/1047, permitted by notice dated 09 October 2024, authorised the demolition of the existing dwelling and the erection of a four-bedroom replacement dwelling with an attached two-car garage, together

with associated access, curtilage and landscaping works (the 'Replacement Dwelling Permission'). Both permissions remain capable of implementation.

- 17 The planning position is not defined solely by the existing built form. It comprises the established lawful residential use together with the development authorised by the extant permissions. Those permissions define the maximum achievable lawful development at the Site and provide the appropriate planning baseline against which the Proposal is to be assessed.

2 The Proposal

- 21 The application seeks planning permission for alterations and extensions to the existing dwelling at Soles Coppice, together with the erection of a detached garage and associated works.

- 22 The Proposal comprises extending and remodelling the existing dwelling through side and rear extensions, removing the existing pitched roof and replacing it with a flat roof, and erecting a detached two-car garage. Associated works include hard and soft landscaping and all ancillary operational development shown on the submitted plans and supporting technical documents.

3 Planning Considerations

Principle of Development

- 31 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan comprises the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014–2031 and the relevant made Neighbourhood Plan. The National Planning Policy Framework is a material consideration and provides the national policy context for determining the application.

- 32 The principal Development Plan policies governing the acceptability of the Proposal are Policies DP12 (Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside), DP15 (New Homes in the Countryside), DP16 (High Weald National Landscape), and DP26 (Character and Design). Together, these policies require development to be appropriate to its countryside location, to conserve or enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape, and to achieve a high standard of design that responds positively to its setting.

- 33 The Development Plan does not preclude alterations or extensions to existing dwellings in the countryside. Nor does it prescribe quantitative limits on footprint, floorspace, volume or percentage increase. Instead, the relevant policy tests require an assessment of the development's planning effects, having regard to its form, scale, design and relationship with its surroundings.
- 34 Those considerations are to be assessed against the lawful planning baseline established in Section 2, rather than against the existing dwelling in isolation. The principal questions are therefore whether the Proposal conserves or enhances the National Landscape, achieves an appropriate standard of design, and gives rise to any planning harm beyond that already capable of occurring under the extant planning permissions. These matters are addressed in the following sections.

National Landscape

- 35 Policy DP16 of the Mid Sussex District Plan and the Framework both require development to conserve and enhance the qualities for which the designation has been made. The Proposal must therefore be assessed by reference to its effect on the character and appearance of the National Landscape. The designation does not prohibit development. Rather, it requires an assessment of whether the Proposal would cause unacceptable harm to the landscape qualities the designation seeks to protect.
- 36 The assessment of landscape effects must be undertaken against the maximum realistic lawful planning position, rather than the existing dwelling considered in isolation. The submitted Volumetric Assessment provides an objective comparison of the Proposal's scale and massing with both the existing dwelling and the extant planning permissions. This Proposal has a reduced volume, at 985m³, compared with the 2023 Permission at 1,079m³ and the Replacement Dwelling at 992m³. Together, these documents provide the evidential basis for assessing the Proposal's landscape effects.
- 37 The Proposal does not extend built development into previously undeveloped countryside or alter the established pattern of residential occupation. The principal landscape considerations therefore concern the visual consequences of the proposed remodelling and extensions rather than the introduction of development into an undeveloped location.
- 38 When assessed against the lawful planning baseline, the relevant question is whether the Proposal would give rise to materially greater effects upon the National Landscape than those already capable of occurring through implementation of the extant planning permissions.
- 39 Having regard to Policy DP16, the Proposal, at a reduced overall volume and lower ridge height, quantitatively conserves the natural beauty of the National Landscape. No landscape impact would arise that would justify refusal under the operative

policy framework.

Character and Design

- 3.10 Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan requires development to achieve a high standard of design that responds positively to local character, reinforces a sense of place, and integrates successfully with its surroundings. Policy DP16 similarly requires development within the National Landscape to conserve its special qualities, recognising that the design of development contributes to the landscape's character. The National Planning Policy Framework identifies good design as a fundamental component of sustainable development and requires planning decisions to support development that is visually attractive and sympathetic to local character and history, while remaining responsive to innovation and the circumstances of individual sites.
- 3.11 The Proposal adopts a contemporary architectural approach through the remodelling and extension of the existing dwelling. The proposed flat roof, revised proportions and simplified built form create a coherent architectural composition rather than a series of unrelated additions. The Proposal is therefore to be assessed on the quality of its overall design and its relationship with its setting, rather than on whether it replicates the architectural appearance of the existing dwelling.
- 3.12 The submitted Design and Access Statement explains the design rationale, material palette and architectural language adopted for the Proposal. The detached garage is designed as a subordinate element within the overall composition, whilst the proposed landscaping integrates the development with its established setting. The Proposal has been conceived as a single architectural scheme in which the built form, materials, landscaping and external spaces function as an integrated whole.
- 3.13 The relevant assessment is whether the Proposal would appear incongruous, visually dominant, or otherwise harmful to the established character of the Site and its surroundings. That assessment must be made in light of the lawful planning baseline set out in Section 2, including the extant planning permissions capable of implementation. The existence of those permissions demonstrates that materially different architectural forms and development envelopes have already been accepted in principle at the Site.
- 3.14 When considered against the operative design policies of the Development Plan and the submitted design evidence, the Proposal responds appropriately to its Site, achieves a coherent architectural composition, and integrates successfully with its landscape setting. No conflict arises with the design objectives of Policy DP26 or any related policy of the Development Plan.

4 **Planning Balance**

- 41 **The correct planning baseline is the lawful planning position set out in Section 2. Those permissions are not hypothetical alternatives but represent development that may lawfully occur. The planning effects of the Proposal must therefore be assessed against that lawful position rather than against the existing dwelling in isolation.**
- 42 **Against that baseline, the Proposal neither establishes a new residential use nor extends the residential planning unit. The principle of residential development is established. The remaining considerations concern whether the form of development conflicts with the operative policies of the Development Plan.**
- 43 **The Proposal preserves the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape, responds appropriately to the character of the Site and its surroundings, and achieves a high standard of design consistent with the objectives of Policies DP16 and DP26. The submitted Design and Access Statement, including the Volumetric Assessment, provides an objective evidential basis for those conclusions.**
- 44 **The comparison required by the planning balance is not between the Proposal and the existing dwelling in its present form. It is between the Proposal and the lawful planning baseline. When that comparison is undertaken, the Proposal does not give rise to planning effects that materially exceed those already capable of occurring through the implementation of the extant planning permissions. Read as a whole, the Development Plan supports the Proposal. No material consideration indicates that a decision other than the grant of planning permission should be made.**

