

Planning Statement

**Change of use to purposes falling within Class E(g) of the Town and
Country Planning (Use Classes) Order, 1987, as amended**

**Deers Leap Park, Saint Hill Farm, Saint Hill Green, East Grinstead, West
Sussex**

Prepared for

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Date

August 2025

Version

FINAL

Contents	Page
1. Introduction	1
2. Site and Surroundings	2
3. Site History	2
4. Proposed Change of use	4
5. Planning Policy	6
6. Planning Considerations	13
Principle Of A Class E Use	13
Neighbour Amenity	14
Access And Parking	15
7. Summary and Conclusion	16

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This Planning Statement supports a full planning application for the change of use of buildings at Deers Leap Park, Saint Hill Farm, Saint Hill Green, East Grinstead. The proposal seek permission for their use under Class E(g) of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987, as amended.
- 1.2. This application follows the submission and subsequent withdrawal of application DM/25/0963, which sought to vary of condition 3 of planning permission GR/05/02744 to allow the use of the reception building to be used for Class E(g) purposes. Upon review, officers concluded that the proposed variation could not be considered under Section 73, as it would alter the “operative part” of the original permission. Officers advised that a full planning application would be the appropriate route to seek consent for the proposed use.
- 1.3. In line with this advice, application DM/25/0963 was withdrawn. This new application has been submitted accordingly and extends beyond the scope of the previous proposal. It seeks consent for the change of use of all buildings previously used in associated with Deers Leap Park, thereby securing a definitive and comprehensive permission for the entire site.
- 1.4. The application relates solely to the change of use of the buildings. No operational development is proposed.
- 1.5. This Statement should be read in conjunction with the following plans:
 - Site Location Plan (25.30.SP01A);
 - Existing and Proposed Block Plans (25.30.BP01A);
 - Existing Plans and Elevations (25.30.EX01);
 - Existing Elevations (25.30.EX02);
 - Existing Plans (25.30.EX03);
 - Proposed Plans and Elevations (25.30.PL01);
 - Proposed Elevations (25.30.PL02); and
 - Proposed Plans (25.30.PL03).
- 1.6. This Statement describes the site, outlines relevant planning history, details the proposed development, summarises applicable planning policy, and assesses the proposal against the Development Plan and other material considerations, including the National Planning Policy Framework. It has been in accordance with the Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Amendment) Order 2015 and relevant guidance within the Planning Policy Guidance (PPG).

2. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1. The application site is located approximately 2.5km to the southwest of East Grinstead town centre. It is accessed via the B2110, using Saint Hill Road and West Hoathly Road. The site lies immediately west of West Hoathly Road and southeast of Saint Hill Manor, an Estate occupied by the Church of Scientology.
- 2.2. Saint Hill Farm comprises a variety of buildings differing in age, form, scale and external materials. At the northeast corner of the property is a courtyard of single-storey former agricultural buildings arranged in an almost enclosed quadrangle. It is this courtyard of buildings that this application relates to. These buildings are primarily constructed in facing brick under plain tile roofs, with the exception of a detached building on the eastern side, which features timber boarding and a slate roof. The internal courtyard is surfaced in concrete.
- 2.3. To the west of this group stands a two-storey former granary building, aligned north-south. It is built from stone and brick with a metal sheet roof, and most of its openings face west. Due to the sloping topography of the site, the granary's ground floor sits below that of the quadrangle buildings. The granary building has received approval for conversion to office use, and works to implement this permission have commenced.
- 2.4. Southwest of the application buildings is a cluster of more modern, predominantly former agricultural buildings now in commercial use. These include storage and distribution operations by Southern Sheeting Supplies and fabrication activities by South-East Fabricators. Further southeast lies a single-storey residential dwelling.
- 2.5. To the south of the site are areas of hardstanding used for vehicle parking and turning. The main vehicular access is located approximately 200 metres south of the application buildings. It is positioned on the west side of West Hoathly Road and turns sharply northward, running parallel to the public highway to serve the site.
- 2.6. North of the site is Saint Hill Manor, the UK headquarters of the Church of Scientology. Immediately adjacent to the application site is a building understood to be used for catering facilities serving the Manor. This was formed from the conversion of a former stable building (constructed in 1897). West of this is a recently constructed three-storey building, believed to be used for teaching and study purposes (LPA reference DM/18/0946).
- 2.7. The surrounding topography slopes generally eastward and southward from a high point on West Hoathly Road. Across the wider Saint Hill Farm site, the land falls by approximately 13 metre, from around 119m AOD to 106m AOD.

3. SITE HISTORY

- 3.1. The application site is owned by the Hobbs family, longstanding landowners and farmers in and around East Grinstead. Currently, the family owns and manages three farms in the area, covering approximately 250 acres, including land at Saint Hill Farm.

3.2. As part of the preparation of this application, the planning applications register, as held online by the Local Planning Authority has been reviewed. This reveals a number of applications relevant to the site and its surrounding buildings. The following are particularly pertinent to the proposals the subject of this application:

- **GR/054/95** - Alterations to land and buildings to include: retention of working farm; new footpath network linking up to existing footpaths; new nature trail, picnic areas, tree planting, off road bicycle course, change of use of existing redundant farm buildings and formation of new car parks not only to serve above uses, but also to serve 'Stone Hill' Rocks - Approved - 28th April 1995;
- **GR/330/99** - Proposed change of use of existing redundant agricultural buildings into B1 and B8 use and ancillary facilities to existing Deers Leap Park - Approved 25th August 2000 with subsequent amendments approved in 2001 and 2005;
- **05/02774/FUL** - Proposed change of use of existing bicycle reception hire and repair shop to use as bicycle reception, hire, repair and sales. Single storey extension to house utility services. - Approved - 12th January 2006;
- **13/00834/FUL** - Upgrading of the external appearance of the reception building to include replacement of the roof covering, new cladding to the walls, formation of new openings and the erection of a canopy to the Southern elevation to include a flagpole. New wood burning stove and flue to cafe building - Approved - 23rd April 2013;
- **13/00835/ADV** - Upgrading of the external appearance of the reception building to include replacement of the roof covering, new cladding to the walls, formation of new openings and the erection of a canopy to the southern elevation to include a flagpole. New wood burning stove and flue to cafe building - Approved - 23rd April 2013;
- **DM/16/2420** - Refurbishment of existing courtyard buildings. Conversion of existing granary building to create 2 No. office units with B1 use. Fenestration alterations to granary building including replacement roof covering and new rooflights. External hard and soft landscaping works to include provision of car parking in conjunction with office units - Approved - 11th August 2016; and
- **DM/24/0004** - Proposed demolition of existing commercial buildings (Use Class B8 and B2) and construction of replacement storage building (Class B8), new office building, conversion of former granary to offices (amendments to DM/19/2095), change of use of dwelling to Trade Counter, alternations to existing storage yard, construction of single storey replacement dwelling and detached garage, alterations to access, provision of additional vehicular parking and associated works and landscaping - Approved 26th June 2024.
- **DM/25/0963** - Proposed variation of condition 3 of GR/05/02744 to enable a building to be used for purposes falling within Class E(g) of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987, as amended - Application Withdrawn.

- 3.3. The planning history reflects the evolution of the site and wider farmholding.
- 3.4. The planning history illustrates the gradual evolution of the site from a traditional agricultural holding to a mixed-use site incorporating leisure, commercial, and office uses. The original 1995 permission (GR/054/95) marked the beginning of this transition, introducing recreational uses and repurposing redundant farm buildings. Subsequent approvals have supported the continued diversification of the site, including commercial conversions and infrastructure improvements.

4. PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE

- 4.1. As outlined above, planning permission was granted under application GR/054/95 for the introduction of leisure activities at Saint Hill Farm. This included the conversion of redundant farm buildings and the creation of new car parks. Among these were the detached building to the east of the quadrangle, which was established as a reception, bike hire, and bike store facility.
- 4.2. In January 2006, application 05/02774/FUL granted planning permission for this building to be used as a bicycle reception, for bicycle hire, repairs and for the sale of bicycles and associated equipment. However condition 3 of this consent restricts its use to:

“the sale of bicycles and associated equipment in association with and ancillary to the use of Deers Leap Park as a mountain biking and rambling venue.”

- 4.3. This condition remains in force and defines the current lawful use of the building
- 4.4. Planning permission for the change of use of the U-shaped former stable buildings was granted in August 2000 by virtue of application GR/330/99. Whilst the application submissions indicated that the proposed use of these buildings would be for additional facilities for Deers Leap Park, condition 10 of application GR/330/99 restricts the use of all of the buildings the subject of that application to either B1 or B8 uses.
- 4.5. Despite this, the buildings have consistently been used in association with the leisure activities at Deers Leap Park. Floor plans submitted with application DM/16/2420 (which sought refurbishment of the courtyard buildings) show uses including a café, toilet and shower facilities, storage, a bicycle showroom, classroom, and office space.
- 4.6. With the recent closure of Deers Leap Bikes, the landowner now seeks to secure planning permission for a change of use of all the buildings within the courtyard to Class E(g). This would allow the buildings to be marketed to a broader range of potential occupiers.
- 4.7. The proposal would result in the creation of nine small individual units within the U-shaped building, with the former reception building forming a tenth unit.
- 4.8. The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020 which came into effect on 1st September 2020 introduced significant changes to the Use Cases

Order. These includes the revocation of several existing classes and the creation of three new ones:

- Class E (Commercial, Business and Service;
- Class F1 (Learning and non-residential institutions);
- Class F2 (Local Community).

4.9. Class E encompasses a wider range of uses, including:

- (a) *“for the display or retail sale of goods, other than hot food, principally to visiting members of the public,*
- (b) *for the sale of food and drink principally to visiting members of the public where consumption of that food and drink is mostly undertaken on the premises,*
- (c) *for the provision of the following kinds of services principally to visiting members of the public*
 - (i) *financial services,*
 - (ii) *professional services (other than health or medical services), or*
 - (iii) *any other services which it is appropriate to provide in a commercial, business or service locality,*
- (d) *for indoor sport, recreation or fitness, not involving motorised vehicles or firearms, principally to visiting members of the public,*
- (e) *for the provision of medical or health services, principally to visiting members of the public, except the use of premises attached to the residence of the consultant or practitioner,*
- (f) *for a creche, day nursery or day centre, not including a residential use, principally to visiting members of the public,*
- (g) *or —*
 - (i) *an office to carry out any operational or administrative functions,*
 - (ii) *the research and development of products or processes, or*
 - (iii) *any industrial process,*

being a use, which can be carried out in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit.”

- 4.10. Section 7 of Statutory Instruction No. 2020/757 confirms that buildings previously used under Classes A1, A2, A3, or B1 as of 31st August 2020 are now treated as Class E uses.
- 4.11. Accordingly, the current lawful use of the detached building for bicycle reception, hire, repair, and sales falls within Class E. However, Condition 3 of application 05/02774/FUL continues to restrict its use to activities ancillary to Deers Leap Park.
- 4.12. Given the closure of Deers Leap Bikes and the historic use of the courtyard buildings in connection with it, the landowner now seeks to broaden the permitted use of these buildings. The proposed change to Class E(g) would allow for flexible occupation by businesses formerly falling under Class B1, such as offices, research and development, and light industrial uses compatible with a residential setting.

5. PLANNING POLICY

- 5.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act and section 70(2) of the Town and County Planning Act 1990 require that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2. The Development Plan for the purposes of the determination of this application comprises:
- The Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 (adopted 2018);
 - The Mid Sussex Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) (adopted 2022); and
 - The East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan (2016).
- 5.3. Material considerations include national planning guidance.

The National Planning Policy Framework

- 5.4. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It was most recently updated in December 2024.
- 5.5. It sets out that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, made up of the three dimensions of economic, social and environmental objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the three objectives (paragraphs 7 - 8).
- 5.6. Paragraph 10 states that *'so that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.'*
- 5.7. Paragraph 11 notes that Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This notes that for decision-taking, this means:

- Approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date Development Plan without delay; or
- Where there are no Development Plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, granting permission unless:
 - The application of policies in this framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development; or
 - Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

5.4. Section 6 sets out policies for building a strong, competitive economy. Paragraph 85 states that 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.

5.5. Paragraph 88 relates to supporting a prosperous rural economy and states that planning policies and decisions should enable, amongst other things:

- The sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through the conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;
- The development and diversification of agricultural and other land based rural businesses; and
- Sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside.

5.6. Paragraph 89 notes that planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to, or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. It notes that in these circumstances, it will be important to ensure development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable, for example, by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport.

5.7. Chapter 9 relates to promoting sustainable transport.

5.8. Paragraph 110 states that the planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of promoting sustainable transport objectives. Significant development should be focussed on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. It notes this can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health. It notes however that opportunities to

maximise sustainable transport options will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both Plan-making and decision-making.

- 5.9. Paragraph 115 states that in determining planning applications it should be ensured that, amongst other things, safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users.
- 5.10. Paragraph 116 notes that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

Mid Sussex District Plan

- 5.11. The Mid Sussex District Plan (MSDP) was adopted in March 2018, and seeks to guide development up to 2031.
- 5.12. Policy DP1 relates to sustainable economic development and sets out that the total number of additional jobs required within the district over the Plan period is estimated to be an average of 543 jobs per annum. It sets out this will be achieved by a range of measures that include encouraging high quality development of land and premises to meet the needs of 21st century businesses; supporting existing businesses, and allowing them room to expand, and encouraging inward investment.
- 5.13. It states that effective use of employment land and premises will be made, by amongst other things, permitting the appropriate intensification, conversion, redevelopment and/or extension for employment uses providing it is in accordance with other policies in the Plan.
- 5.14. Policy DP12 states that the countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty. It notes that development in such areas will be permitted, provided it maintains and where possible enhances the quality of the rural landscape and character of the district and is necessary for the purposes of agriculture or is supported by a specific policy reference elsewhere in a Development Plan Document (DPD).
- 5.15. Policy DP14 sets out support for sustainable rural development and the rural economy. It notes that provided it is not in conflict with Policy DP12 (Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside) and DP13 (Preventing Coalescence), new small scale economic development within the countryside will be permitted, provided it supports sustainable growth and the vitality of the rural economy and, where possible, utilises previously developed sites. It also states that the re-use and adaptation of rural buildings for business use in the countryside will be permitted where the building is of permanent construction and capable of re-use without substantial reconstruction or extensive alteration; the appearance and setting is not materially altered; and it is not a recently constructed agricultural building which has not been, or has been little, used for its original purpose.
- 5.16. Policy DP16 states that within the High Weald AONB, development will only be permitted where it conserves or enhances natural beauty and has regard to the High Weald AONB Management Plan. It notes that small scale proposals which support the economy and social wellbeing of the

AONB that are compatible with the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty will be supported.

- 5.17. Policy DP17 states that in order to prevent adverse effects on the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC, new development likely to have a significant effect, either alone or in combination with other development, will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures are put in place to avoid or mitigate any potential adverse effects.
- 5.18. Policy DP21 states that development will be required to support the objectives of the West Sussex Transport Plan 2011 - 2026, which include ensuring a high quality transport network that promotes a competitive and prosperous economy; a resilient transport network that complements the built and natural environment whilst reducing carbon emissions over time; access to services, employment and housing; and a transport network that feels, and is, safer and healthier to use.
- 5.19. In order to meet these objectives, it notes decisions on development proposals will take account of whether:
 - the scheme is sustainably located to minimise the need for travel, noting there might be circumstances where development needs to be located in the countryside, such as rural and economic uses (under Policy DP14: Sustainable Rural Development and the Rural Economy);
 - appropriate opportunities to facilitate and promote the increased use of alternative means of transport to the private car such as the provision of, and access to, safe and convenient routes for walking, cycling and public transport, including suitable facilities for secure and safe cycle parking, have been fully explored and taken up;
 - the scheme provides adequate parking for the proposed development taking into account the accessibility, the type mix and use of the development and the availability and opportunities for public transport;
 - the scheme avoids severe additional traffic congestion, individually or cumulatively, taking account of any proposed mitigation;
 - the scheme protects the safety of road users and pedestrians; and
 - the scheme does not harm the special qualities of the High Weald AONB through its transport impacts.
- 5.20. Policy DP26 relates to character and design. It notes that all development and surrounding spaces should be well-designed and reflect the distinctive character of built areas while being sensitive to the countryside. It requires applicants to demonstrate that development:
 - Is of high quality design and layout and includes appropriate landscaping and green space;
 - Contributes positively to, and clearly defines, public and private realms;

- Creates a sense of place while addressing the character and scale of surrounding buildings and landscaping;
- Protects open spaces, trees and gardens that contribute to the character of the area;
- 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;
- Creates a pedestrian friendly layout that is safe, well connected, legible and accessible;
- Positively addresses sustainability considerations in the layout and the building design; and
- Optimises the potential of the site to accommodate development.

5.21. Policy DP29 relates to noise, air and light pollution. It states that the environment, including nationally protected landscapes, and the quality of people's life will be protected from unacceptable levels of noise, light and air pollution. Development will only be permitted where it is designed, located and controlled to minimise the impact of noise on health and quality of life, neighbouring properties and the surrounding area; the impact on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes of artificial lighting proposals (including floodlighting) is minimised in terms of intensity and number of fittings; and it does not cause unacceptable levels of air pollution.

5.22. Policy DP34 states that development that retains buildings which are not listed, but are of architectural or historic merit or which make a significant and positive contribution to the streetscene will be permitted in preference to their demolition and redevelopment.

Mid Sussex Site Allocations DPD

5.23. The Mid Sussex Site Allocations DPD was adopted in June 2022. It is a 'daughter' document to support the MSDP. It principally seeks to allocate land for residential and commercial development over the remainder of the Plan period up to 2031. It also contains a number of development management policies.

5.24. Policy SA34 relates to existing employment sites, as defined and listed in Appendix A of the DPD. The application site is not included within that list, despite its longstanding and established lawful commercial use. Notwithstanding this, Policy SA34 is relevant insofar as it demonstrates the Council's desire to protect existing employment sites in Use Class E(g), B2 and B8.

East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan

5.25. The East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan (EGNP) was 'made' in November 2016. Its vision is *"to provide for a positive future for East Grinstead that is socially inclusive for all, vibrant, economically robust and will allow residents to live with a high degree of self-sufficiency in a town with a first rate natural, built and historic environment."*

- 5.26. In order to achieve this, the Plan sets out a number of core objectives. This includes promoting development that will provide sustainable economic growth, including business and tourism related development and maintain a prosperous town centre, and protect the countryside and urban open spaces for their landscape, wildlife, agricultural, recreational and natural resource value, including the AONB.
- 5.27. The Plan sets out a number of development policies.
- 5.28. Policy EG1 states that within the High Weald AONB planning permission will be refused for major development unless it complies with the exceptional circumstances set out in the NPPF. It notes that planning permission for other forms of development will be granted where the proposals are for, amongst other things, the conversion of redundant buildings. The policy notes that each policy compliant development must meet a number of criteria. This includes it is of the highest standard of design, natural and scenic beauty of the landscape is conserved or enhanced, and the proposals do not result in an obtrusive feature.
- 5.29. Policy EG2 states that planning permission will normally be granted for the sympathetic conversion of redundant rural buildings, limited small scale new development and extensions to existing buildings within the countryside area. It requires development to comply with a number of criteria. These include, that in the case of converted buildings, the new use has minimal impact on the openness of the countryside.
- 5.30. Policy EG3 states that planning permission will normally be granted for proposals which achieve good design. It states proposals should comply with a number of criteria. These include that:
- The form of the proposed development is proportionate and in keeping with the scale, height, materials and site coverage of the surrounding area;
 - The layout of the proposed development respects the topography and character of the site, protects important landscape features and does not harm adjoining amenity;
 - The proposal does not result in the loss of buildings or spaces that would have an unacceptable impact on the character of the area;
 - The proposal ensures satisfactory means of access for vehicles and pedestrians and provides adequate parking, cycle storage and refuse facilities onsite;
 - The design of new buildings and the layout of spaces, including footways, car and cycle parking areas, should be permeable and provide connectivity with neighbouring areas;
 - New development must be inclusive and where appropriate make satisfactory provision for the safe and easy access for those with mobility impairment;
 - The design of new developments must result in the creation of a safe and secure environment and incorporate adequate security measures and features to deter crime, fear of crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour; and

- Proposals make provision for green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancement.

5.31. Policy EG10 states that planning permission will be granted for the redevelopment, extension or alteration of existing 'B use' category business premises. It states applications will be granted where they comply with a number of criteria including that they:

- Are on a site defined as previously developed land;
- Meet the parking requirements of the adopted Development Plan;
- Provide a high quality landscape setting;
- Demonstrate that the residual cumulative impacts of development on the transport network are not severe;
- Meet their own infrastructure needs; and
- Are in a location and of a scale, form and design which is in character with its surroundings.

5.32. It notes that proposals for mixed use development of previously developed land business sites will be permitted providing the proposal includes a qualitative enhancement in the business floorspace being provided.

5.33. Policy EG11 states that all new business proposals will be expected to be supported by an appropriate assessment of the impact of the proposal on the highway network. It states that proposals which cause a severe cumulative impact in terms of road safety and increased congestion, which cannot be ameliorated through appropriate mitigation will be refused. The policy requires development to include access arrangements that are appropriately designed and provide adequate visibility splays.

5.34. Policy EG12 states that planning permission will be granted where vehicle parking provision, including cycle parking, is in accordance with the West Sussex County Council adopted parking standards and does not dominate the streetscene.

Other Material Considerations

5.35. The High Weald AONB Management Plan (2024-2029) sets out the policies for the management of the AONB, and for the carrying out of the Authority's functions in relation to the AONB. It confirms that the High Weald is one of the best preserved medieval landscapes in north west Europe, and that its outstanding beauty stems from its essentially rural and human scale character, with a high proportion of natural surfaces and the story of its past visible throughout.

Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2039 - Submission Draft

5.36. The District Council is in the process of reviewing and updating the District Plan. Upon adoption, the new District Plan 2021 - 2039 will replace the current District Plan 2014-2031 at which point its policies will have full weight.

- 5.37. The draft District Plan 2021-2039 (Regulation 19) was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination on 8th July 2024 and a number of initial hearings were held in October 2024.
- 5.38. In April 2025 the Inspector wrote to the Council setting out her initial findings on the emerging District Plan. In her view the Council has failed in its duty to co-operate with neighbouring authorities during the preparation of the emerging plan. Accordingly she has recommended that the Plan should be withdrawn from the examination.
- 5.39. 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.
- 5.40. At this stage given the findings of the examining Inspector and the remaining unresolved objections to the majority of the emerging policies, the policies of the emerging plan hold very little weight in the determination of this application.

6. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.41. In the assessment of this application, given that the proposal seeks the change of use of the buildings only i.e. there would be no associated visual changes to the site, the main issues are :
- Principle of a wider Class E Use;
 - Neighbour Amenity; and
 - Access and Parking.

- 6.1. Each is now considered in turn below.

Principle Of A Class E Use

- 6.2. The application site is located within a countryside setting for the purposes of planning policy. National and local planning guidance consistently supports the sustainable growth of the rural economy, particularly through the reuse of existing buildings. This principle is embedded across all tiers of policy, recognising the value of retaining and repurposing rural assets to support economic vitality.
- 6.3. At the local level, Policy DP14 of the MSDP explicitly encourages the reuse and adaptation of rural buildings for business purposes, provided they are of permanent construction, capable of reuse without substantial reconstruction or extensive alteration, and where their appearance and setting are not materially affected.
- 6.4. Similarly, the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan supports the redevelopment of existing commercial premises under Policy EG10, subject to compliance with defined criteria.
- 6.5. The buildings subject to this application are traditional agricultural structures that were first granted permission for commercial use in 1995. Since then, a series of planning approvals have

allowed for their physical enhancement and continued commercial operation. These permissions reflect the Local Planning Authority's long-standing recognition that the buildings are suitable for non-agricultural use and contribute positively to the local economy.

- 6.6. This position is further reinforced by the recent approval in 2024 for the significant redevelopment of the wider Saint Hill Farm site, which includes new commercial buildings for storage and office use. Although that permission does not cover the buildings within this application, it demonstrates the LPA's continued support for commercial activity across the site.
- 6.7. Given the established commercial use of the application buildings for over three decades, and the recent planning context of the wider site, the continued use of these buildings for commercial purposes is clearly acceptable in principle.
- 6.8. The proposed change of use to Class E(g) would allow the buildings to accommodate a broader range of occupiers, including those previously falling under the former Class B1 designation. This flexibility is essential to ensuring the long-term viability of the site and supporting the rural economy.
- 6.9. Accordingly, the proposal is fully aligned with the objectives of Chapter 6 of the NPPF (supporting a prosperous rural economy), Policies DP1, DP12, and DP14 of the MSDP (promoting sustainable development and rural business growth) and Policies EG1, EG2, and EG10 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan (supporting local employment and the reuse of existing commercial premises).

Neighbour Amenity

- 6.10. Policy DP26 of the MSDP seeks to prevent development that would result in a significant loss of residential amenity for neighbouring occupiers. This application has been carefully designed to ensure full compliance with this policy.
- 6.11. The site is surrounded by a mix of uses. To the north are buildings associated with the Church of Scientology, including a refectory and teaching facilities. To the south and west are buildings already in commercial use, with planning permission granted for their redevelopment into new commercial premises. A residential dwelling is located approximately 65 metres to the southwest of the application buildings; however, this property is occupied in connection with the adjacent commercial site and functions as a staff residence.
- 6.12. The nearest independent residential properties are situated approximately 55 metres to the northeast, across West Hoathly Road. These are well separated from the application site by both distance and intervening landscaping.
- 6.13. The proposed change of use would allow the buildings to be used for purposes falling within Class E(g), formerly Class B1, which includes offices, research and development, and light industrial activities. By definition, these are uses that can be carried out in residential areas without causing harm to local amenity through noise, vibration, or other environmental impacts.

- 6.14. Given the established commercial character of the surrounding area, the nature of the proposed uses, and the physical separation from nearby residential properties, it is considered that the proposal would not result in any undue impact on residential amenity.
- 6.15. The application therefore accords with the requirements of Policy DP26 and DP29 of the MSDP, as well as Policy EG3 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan, which supports development that respects the amenity of surrounding uses.

Access And Parking

- 6.16. The application site benefits from an established vehicular access located approximately 200 metres to the south, serving the wider Saint Hill Farm estate. This access was originally formed over 30 years ago as part of the site's diversification and reuse strategy and has since supported a range of land uses, including the former Deers Leap leisure enterprise.
- 6.17. As part of the recent planning permission for the wider redevelopment of Saint Hill Farm, approval was granted for improvements to this access, including widening and realignment to accommodate large goods vehicles. While these works are yet to be implemented, they demonstrate the Local Planning Authority's recognition of the site's capacity to support commercial activity and associated vehicle movements.
- 6.18. The current proposal involves the reuse of existing buildings that have historically generated traffic through their use as part of a leisure facility. The proposed change of use to Class E(g), covering offices, research and development, and light industrial uses, would not result in a materially greater volume of traffic than the existing lawful use. These uses are inherently low-impact and compatible with residential environments, further supporting the suitability of the site for such purposes.
- 6.19. Moreover, the site is surrounded by other commercial operations, and the traffic generated by the proposed use would be modest in comparison to the wider activity already taking place at Saint Hill Farm.
- 6.20. The application buildings comprise approximately 353 square metres of floorspace. According to West Sussex County Council's "Guidance on Parking at New Developments", Class E(g) uses require:
- 1 car parking space per 30 sqm – equating to 12 spaces
 - 1 cycle space per 150 sqm for staff – equating to 3 spaces
 - 1 cycle space per 500 sqm for visitors – equating to 1 space
- 6.21. The site is already served by a substantial area of hardstanding located just south of the application buildings. This area has long supported the parking needs of the site, including the former Deers Leap Park, and continues to provide ample capacity to meet the parking requirements of the proposed development in line with adopted standards.

- 6.22. In light of the established access, existing infrastructure, and modest traffic generation associated with the proposed use, it is considered that the development would have no adverse impact on highway safety or capacity. Adequate on-site parking provision is available to support the proposed use.
- 6.23. Accordingly, the application complies with the requirements of Chapter 9 of the NPPF (promoting sustainable transport); Policy DP21 of the MSDP (ensuring safe and suitable access) and Policies EG10, EG11, and EG12 of the EGNP (supporting appropriate infrastructure and parking provision for commercial development).

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- 7.1. This application seeks full planning permission for the change of use of existing buildings at Saint Hill Farm to uses falling within Class E(g) of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended). The buildings have a long-established commercial history, having been used in association with Deers Leap Park for over 30 years. Their continued use for business purposes is well-supported by planning policy at national, district, and neighbourhood levels.
- 7.2. The proposal aligns with the objectives of the NPPF and local policies including DP1, DP12, DP14, DP21, DP26, and DP29 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, and EG1, EG2, EG3, EG10, EG11, and EG12 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan. It promotes sustainable rural economic growth through the reuse of existing buildings, ensures compatibility with surrounding land uses, and provides adequate access and parking without adverse impact on residential amenity or highway safety.
- 7.3. The proposed Class E(g) use would allow flexible occupation by a range of low-impact business activities, supporting the long-term viability of the site and contributing positively to the local economy. The application represents a logical and policy-compliant evolution of the site's use and merits the support of the Local Planning Authority.