

Planning Statement

Retrospective Application for Subdivision of Existing Commercial Unit : Rear of 25 Gower Road, Haywards Heath, RH16 4PL

1. Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a retrospective planning application for the subdivision of an existing commercial unit at Rear of 25 Gower Road, Haywards Heath into two separate units.

The application seeks to regularise:

- The subdivision of the building into two commercial units; and
- Associated external alterations (subject to a separate lawful development application ref. PP-14792113).

The proposal does not seek to intensify the use beyond the historically established operation of the site, and is carefully framed to ensure that impacts on neighbouring amenity are appropriately controlled.

2. Site and Surroundings

The site is located on Rear of 25 Gower Road within the defined town centre boundary as set out in Policy DP2 of the Mid Sussex District Plan.

While Gower Road is predominantly residential in character, this section:

- Contains a mix of commercial and residential uses; and
- Provides direct access to Sussex Road, a more established commercial area.

The site has an established history of commercial use as a vehicle repair garage.

3. Relevant Planning History and Existing Use

The lawful use of the building is understood to be a vehicle repair garage, historically operating:

- 08:00–19:00 weekdays
- 08:00–17:00 Saturdays

There is evidence from adjacent planning records that:

- The garage use operated without recorded noise complaints; and
- The use was accepted as compatible within the surrounding context.

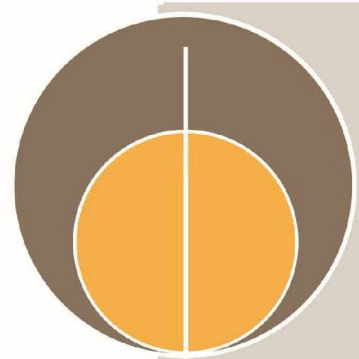
More recent correspondence from the Local Planning Authority confirms that:

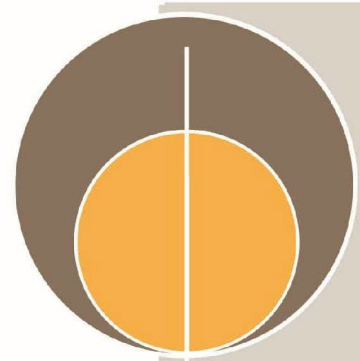
- Both the existing garage (MDR Automotive) and the retail unit (Best Options) fall within Use Class E.

Separately, the Local Licensing Authority granted an alcohol licence to the retail unit in Jan 2025, subject to standard operational conditions.

This is a material indicator that the unit has already been assessed and deemed suitable for controlled retail activity, including the sale of alcohol, from an amenity and management standpoint.

Planning and licensing are separate regimes, but the grant of a premises licence provides further evidence that the authorised retail use is considered appropriate in this location.





4. Description of Development

The development comprises:

- The subdivision of the original single commercial unit into:
- Unit 1 (front): Vehicle repair garage (MDR Automotive) -Planning Use Class E
- Unit 2 (rear): Retail unit (currently Best Options) – Planning Use Class E
- Associated internal works to form a separate unit
- External alterations including new windows and doors undertaken in 2020

The external alterations work are subject to an Application for a Lawful Development Certificate (Existing) ref: PP-14792113.

The retail unit is currently occupied as a small convenience-style shop and furniture store.

5. Planning Considerations

5.1 Principle of Development

The site lies within a designated town centre location under Policy DP2, where:

- Commercial uses are supported; and
- A mix of uses is encouraged to support vitality and viability.

The subdivision of an existing commercial unit:

- Does not introduce a new use into the area;
- Retains two uses within Class E; and
- Reflects the mixed-use character of the locality.

The principle of subdivision is therefore considered acceptable.

5.2 Impact on Residential Amenity

The key issue identified by the Local Planning Authority is the intensification of use arising from the creation of a second unit.

This application directly addresses that concern.

Control of Operating Hours

The application proposes that both units operate within the historic garage hours:

- 08:00–19:00 Monday to Friday
- 08:00–17:00 Saturdays
- No Sunday or Bank Holiday opening

This ensures that:

- The level of activity remains aligned with the previous lawful use;
- There is no material increase in evening or early morning disturbance; and
- The amenity of neighbouring residential properties is protected.

Intensity of Use

While the subdivision introduces an additional unit, the overall level of activity is not considered materially greater than the historic garage use, which typically includes:

- Vehicle movements
- Servicing and repair operations
- Associated customer visits

After the subdivision, the available space and therefore the operations of the garage activity reduced.

The proposed retail use is:

- Small in scale;
- Local in nature; and
- Capable of operating without significant noise or disturbance.

The grant of an alcohol licence in 2025 further confirms that the Licensing Authority considered the operation to be manageable and compatible with the locality when subject to standard safeguarding conditions.

While licensing and planning are separate statutory regimes, licensing approval reinforces that the activity does not give rise to unacceptable amenity impacts.

Through limited operating hours and the nature of the retail use, any perceived intensification is effectively mitigated and remains comparable to the historic baseline.

5.3 Highways and Access

The site benefits from an established access arrangement and has historically accommodated vehicle movements associated with a garage use.

The proposed subdivision:

- Does not materially alter access arrangements; and
- Is unlikely to result in a significant increase in traffic beyond the established baseline.
- There is on-site car parking provision available for both units.

5.4 External Alterations

External changes to the building are modest in scale and relate to:

- Formation of new openings; and
- Replacement of doors and windows.

These changes:

- Are consistent with the commercial character of the area; and
- Do not give rise to unacceptable visual or amenity impacts.

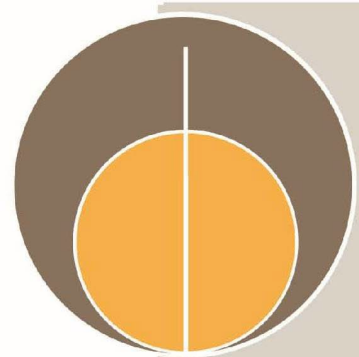
6. Planning Balance

The proposal:

- Regularises an existing situation;
- Retains active commercial uses within a town centre location;
- Supports local services and economic activity; and
- Includes appropriate controls to protect residential amenity.

Importantly, the grant of a premises licence in 2025 confirms that the authorised retail use has been assessed by the Licensing Authority and found acceptable within the area when subject to standard operational controls.

This materially supports the conclusion that the subdivision does not give rise to unacceptable impacts.



Overall, the development does not represent an intensification of use and remains wholly consistent with the historic operation of the site.

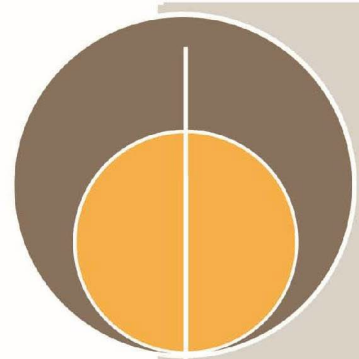
7. Conclusion

The subdivision of the existing commercial unit into two units is considered to be acceptable in principle and in practice.

The proposal:

- Falls within a supported town centre location;
- Retains uses within Class E; and
- Incorporates appropriate safeguards to protect neighbouring amenity.

The development therefore accords with the relevant policies of the Mid Sussex District Plan and national planning policy, and planning permission is respectfully sought.



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