



Planning & Heritage Statement

Erection of Pergola

West Hoathly Primary School, North Lane, West
Hoathly

Prepared by

WPS Planning

Planning Statement
West Hoathly Primary School

Prepared by:	Doug Wright
Date:	Feb 2026
Project Number:	105/2026

Contents

1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA	1
3.0 PLANNING HISTORY OF THE SITE	2
4.0 THE PROPOSAL	2
5.0 PLANNING POLICY	2
6.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT	4
7.0 CONCLUSION	10

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This statement supports an application for planning permission for the erection of a 7m x 3m pergola to provide covered external teaching and breakout space directly associated with an existing classroom. The proposal will support outdoor learning, improve the functionality of the school estate, and provide weather protection for pupils and staff.
- 1.2 The site lies within the West Hoathly Conservation Area. The works are modest in scale and designed to sit comfortably within the school grounds, with a lightweight form that preserves the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 1.3 This Statement sets out the site context, planning history, details of the proposal, relevant planning policy, and an expanded planning assessment based on the Mid Sussex District Plan (MSP) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1 The application site is located within the West Hoathly Conservation Area and forms part of the existing primary school complex at North Lane, West Hoathly. The school comprises a mix of buildings and extensions of varying periods and materials, along with hardstanding, play areas and grassed areas used for recreation and outdoor activity.
- 2.2 The pergola is proposed adjacent to an existing school building elevation within the established developed footprint of the school grounds. The immediate setting is already functional and institutional in character, with modern interventions typical of operational school sites.
- 2.3 The wider area is sensitive due to conservation area designation, with surrounding residential properties, mature vegetation and the historic village character forming the broader context.

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 The planning history for the site includes various works to the existing school building and various works to trees within the site.

4.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The proposal comprises a 7m x 3m lean-to pergola with a lightweight roof covering to provide shelter and a defined external teaching space. The pergola is intended to be installed into grass with posts and associated footings as required.
- 4.2 The pergola will be sited to function as an extension of the classroom environment, providing a covered area suitable for teaching, group work, quiet learning, and supervised outdoor activities. Most importantly, the proposal would provide an outdoor space during the summer to provide a shaded safe area with protection from sun and UV exposure.
- 4.3 The pergola is a modest, ancillary structure. It does not create additional floorspace in the sense of internal accommodation, and it does not intensify the use of the site beyond the established school use.

5.0 PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy

- 5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and that this should run through both plan-making and decision-taking. In terms of the determination of planning applications this should mean the approval of developments that accord with the development plan without delay, and that where the development plan is silent or relevant policies are out of date, that permission be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, or policies of the NPPF indicate otherwise.

5.2 Sustainable development is seen within the NPPF as having three roles, namely an economic, social and environmental role which should be a golden thread running through both plan making and decision taking.

5.3 The following sections within the NPPF are important factors in the assessment of the proposal:

- Section 2 – Achieving sustainable development
- Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places
- Section 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Local Plan

5.4 In terms of the local planning policy context for the Application Site, the adopted Development Plan for the Mid Sussex District is composed of the following relevant documents:

- Mid Sussex District Plan (MSDP)
 - Policy DP26: Character and Design
 - Policy DP25: Community Facilities and Local Services
 - Policy DP35: Conservation Areas
 - Policy DP34: Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets
 - Policy DP39: Sustainable Design and Construction

6.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Principle

- 6.1 Mid Sussex District Plan DP25 (Community Facilities and Local Services) supports the retention and enhancement of existing community facilities, including education uses, where proposals sustain and improve their function for the local community. DP26 (Character and Design) provides the overarching requirement that development should be well designed and respond positively to its context. Given the site lies within the West Hoathly Conservation Area, DP35 (Conservation Areas) is also directly engaged, alongside the statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area. These local policies align with national policy objectives to support sustainable development, including investment in social infrastructure such as schools, whilst ensuring heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.
- 6.2 The site has a long-established and lawful use as a primary school and the proposed pergola is a small-scale, ancillary addition required to support the effective operation of that use. The development does not introduce a new planning use, does not materially intensify the school's activity, and does not result in additional floorspace in a way that would alter the established character of the site. Instead, it provides a covered outdoor teaching and breakout area directly associated with an existing classroom, improving the usability of external space throughout the year and supporting modern educational practices and pupil wellbeing.
- 6.3 In principle, modest operational improvements of this nature are appropriate within the built envelope of an established school, provided they are proportionate, sensitively designed, and preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area. The proposal meets these tests through its limited footprint, lightweight open-sided form, and ability to be finished in subdued materials. The principle of development is therefore acceptable,

subject to detailed considerations of design, heritage impact and amenity, which are addressed in the sections that follow.

Design, scale and appearance

- 6.4 Policy context: Mid Sussex District Plan DP26 (Character and Design) requires development to respond positively to its context through high quality design, appropriate scale and massing, and suitable materials. Given the site lies within the West Hoathly Conservation Area, DP35 (Conservation Areas) is also directly engaged and requires development to preserve or enhance the conservation area's character and appearance. These local policies align with the statutory duty to pay special attention to preserving or enhancing conservation area character.
- 6.5 The proposed pergola has been deliberately conceived as a small-scale, lightweight and subordinate addition to the existing school building. At 7m x 3m it reads as an ancillary canopy rather than a new "building", and its open-sided form ensures visual permeability and avoids a bulky or enclosing structure.
- 6.6 The simple lean-to arrangement ensures the pergola sits comfortably against the host elevation and relates logically to the classroom it serves. This is a typical form of external teaching canopy used at schools, supporting clear supervision lines, accessibility, and straightforward movement between internal and external learning environments.
- 6.7 The proposal can be delivered in a recessive palette and simple detailing so it sits quietly within its setting. The use of muted timber tones (or painted/stained finishes) and a non-reflective roof covering will ensure the pergola appears well-mannered and appropriate within both the school grounds and the conservation area context.
- 6.8 The structure is inherently reversible and modest in construction terms. It does not require substantial alteration to the host building and could be removed in the future without fundamental change to the overall building form, which supports acceptability in a sensitive heritage context.

- 6.9 Overall, the pergola will provide a neat, purposeful edge to the classroom elevation, formalising an outdoor teaching “zone” in a coherent way and avoiding reliance on ad hoc temporary shelter arrangements.

Heritage and conservation area considerations

- 6.10 Policy context: Mid Sussex District Plan DP35 (Conservation Areas) expects proposals within conservation areas to preserve or enhance character and appearance, taking account of siting, scale, design and materials. DP34 (Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets) is also relevant where the setting of heritage assets may be affected. These policies reflect national policy objectives for conserving heritage significance while enabling sympathetic, sustainable change.
- 6.11 West Hoathly Conservation Area is designated for its special architectural and historic interest, deriving significance from the village’s historic form and settlement pattern, its intimate rural lanes and spaces, and the prevalence of traditional buildings and materials that collectively create a strong sense of place. The character of the conservation area is informed by the consistency of scale and grain, with older cottages and village buildings typically set within modest plots, and by the use of vernacular detailing and natural materials such as tile hanging, clay tiles, timber framing elements, brick and stone, which reinforce the area’s historic identity. Mature trees, hedgerows and a well-established landscape structure also make an important contribution, providing a soft rural setting, filtering views, and shaping the townscape as experienced from key routes through the village. The significance of the conservation area therefore lies not only in individual buildings, but in the collective value of its historic townscape, its relationship with the surrounding countryside, and the way incremental change is managed to preserve the village’s distinctive character and appearance.
- 6.12 The proposal is modest in scale, lightweight in form, and located within an established school setting where functional additions are commonplace and

expected over time. It does not introduce dominant massing and will read as a small ancillary feature to facilitate outdoor learning.

- 6.13 The pergola's open-sided nature and limited projection ensure it does not create a visually intrusive addition within the wider conservation area. Where visible, it will be perceived as a typical school canopy and can be designed with subdued finishes to avoid visual discord.
- 6.14 The proposal is largely reversible, which reduces heritage risk. Provided the structure is detailed simply and finished in appropriate materials and colours, it is considered capable of preserving the character and appearance of the West Hoathly Conservation Area.

Impact on neighbour amenity

- 6.15 Policy context: Mid Sussex District Plan DP26 (Character and Design) and DP29 (Noise, Air and Light Pollution) seek to ensure development does not result in unacceptable impacts on neighbouring amenity, including noise and disturbance, and that any lighting or external effects are appropriately controlled. The objective is to ensure development functions well without undue harm to others.
- 6.16 The pergola does not introduce a new use; it supports the established school use by enabling outdoor teaching in a controlled and supervised location adjacent to the classroom. There are no enclosed walls, no raised platforms, and no features that would give rise to overlooking or loss of privacy.
- 6.17 The scale and form of the pergola mean there is no overbearing relationship created. Its open character and limited height ensure it remains visually light and does not create an oppressive or dominant presence.
- 6.18 The covered area can assist with activity management by providing a defined learning space close to the classroom, potentially reducing dispersal of groups across the wider grounds. The proposal does not require additional lighting and will operate within established school hours and established patterns of use.

Highways, access and servicing

- 6.19 Policy context: Mid Sussex District Plan DP28 (Accessibility) expects safe and inclusive access arrangements, while DP26 supports development that functions well in practical terms. Although the proposal is small-scale, it should still demonstrate that it does not create operational or safety issues for pedestrian movement, servicing, or site circulation.
- 6.20 The development does not increase the school's capacity, pupil numbers, staffing levels or visitor activity. As such, there is no change to trip generation, drop-off and pick-up patterns, or parking demand.
- 6.21 The pergola does not require new access points or changes to existing circulation routes. It will support safe and practical transitions between the classroom and outdoor space, aiding inclusive use where pupils have differing mobility needs.
- 6.22 Construction impacts will be temporary and limited. Deliveries and installation can be managed within existing school arrangements and timed to avoid peak arrival and departure periods where necessary.

Sustainable design and construction

- 6.23 Policy context: Mid Sussex District Plan DP39 (Sustainable Design and Construction) promotes sustainable development outcomes, including durable, resource-efficient materials and a proportionate approach to reducing environmental impacts. For minor development, compliance is usually demonstrated through sensible specification and good construction practice rather than extensive technical evidence.
- 6.24 The pergola is a low-impact addition with modest material requirements and a long service life when specified appropriately. Timber construction, where proposed, can be sourced responsibly and finished for durability, limiting maintenance requirements and replacement frequency.

Planning Statement

West Hoathly Primary School

- 6.25 The structure supports sustainable use of the existing school estate by improving the usability of outdoor space across more of the year, potentially reducing the need for temporary shelters or less efficient short-term solutions.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The proposed 7m x 3m pergola represents a modest, well-considered improvement to the school's facilities, providing a covered outdoor classroom area that supports modern educational practice, particularly where outdoor learning, small group work and wellbeing-focused teaching approaches are increasingly important.
- 7.2 The development is clearly ancillary to the existing school use and does not introduce new accommodation, intensify the use of the site, or materially alter patterns of movement, servicing or traffic generation. It is therefore an appropriate form of development in principle, helping the school to function more effectively without creating wider impacts.
- 7.3 In design terms, the pergola is lightweight, open-sided and subordinate to the host building. It will read as a functional canopy feature rather than a dominant extension, and it can be controlled through planning conditions to ensure a recessive, high-quality finish that sits comfortably within its context. This is particularly relevant given the conservation area designation, where the emphasis is on ensuring development is sympathetic and well-mannered.
- 7.4 From a heritage perspective, the proposal preserves the character and appearance of the West Hoathly Conservation Area. It is small-scale, largely screened within the school grounds, and will be seen (if at all) as a limited and typical school enhancement. The works are also reversible, which further reduces heritage risk and supports the acceptability of the proposal in a sensitive setting.
- 7.5 The proposal will not result in unacceptable impacts on neighbouring amenity. There are no privacy issues, no overbearing impacts, and no change in operating hours or activity levels beyond the established school use. The covered space may, in practice, support better supervision and more structured use of outdoor areas by concentrating small group teaching near the classroom.

- 7.6 The development similarly raises no highway or servicing concerns. There is no increase in pupil roll or staff numbers, and therefore no associated increase in parking or traffic demand. Construction effects will be temporary and can be managed proportionately through good practice and, if necessary, an informative or condition relating to timing and site management.
- 7.7 Overall, the pergola provides clear public benefits through improved educational infrastructure and enhanced outdoor learning opportunities. It represents sustainable, low-impact investment in an important community facility. For these reasons, planning permission should be granted.