

Imberhorne Lower School, Windmill Lane, East Grinstead, RH19 2DT

Demolition of existing classroom and replacement with a new modular classroom together with refurbishment of adjacent access pathway.

Planning Statement



**Prepared on behalf of Imberhorne School
April 2026**

Contents

	Page
1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Application Site Context and History	2
3.0 The Proposal and Compliance with Planning Policy	6
4.0 Conclusions	14

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This planning statement has been produced by Parker Dann on behalf of Imberhorne School in support of the full application (Regulation 3) for development at the Lower School site in East Grinstead, West Sussex. The proposed development within the application is the demolition and replacement of an existing classroom and its replacement with a new modular classroom together with refurbishment of an adjacent access pathway. The proposal will also include the incorporation of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to upgrade the existing drainage system.

2.0 Application Site Context and History

- 2.1 Imberhorne School has two sites at Imberhorne Lane and Windmill Lane. This application relates to the site on the western side of Windmill Lane, known as Imberhorne Lower School.
- 2.2 The application site is located within an existing courtyard created by existing school buildings located towards the northern end of the existing built envelope of the site. It accommodates an existing single storey classroom building and associated access points to it. Adjacent areas within the courtyard are laid to grass. The wider School site lies within the Built-up Area Boundary of East Grinstead and is largely unconstrained as it does not fall within a Conservation Area, Flood Zone, National Landscape or Protected Habitats, and there are no Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments or Tree Protection Orders (TPOs) on the site.



Figure 1 Aerial View of the School with an arrow signalling the location of the proposed development.

- 2.3 The site falls within the 7km buffer zone of the Ashdown Forest, and there is a low (1 in 1000 extent) risk of surface water flooding within the building's courtyard, as shown in **Figure 2**, for which mitigation would be proposed.

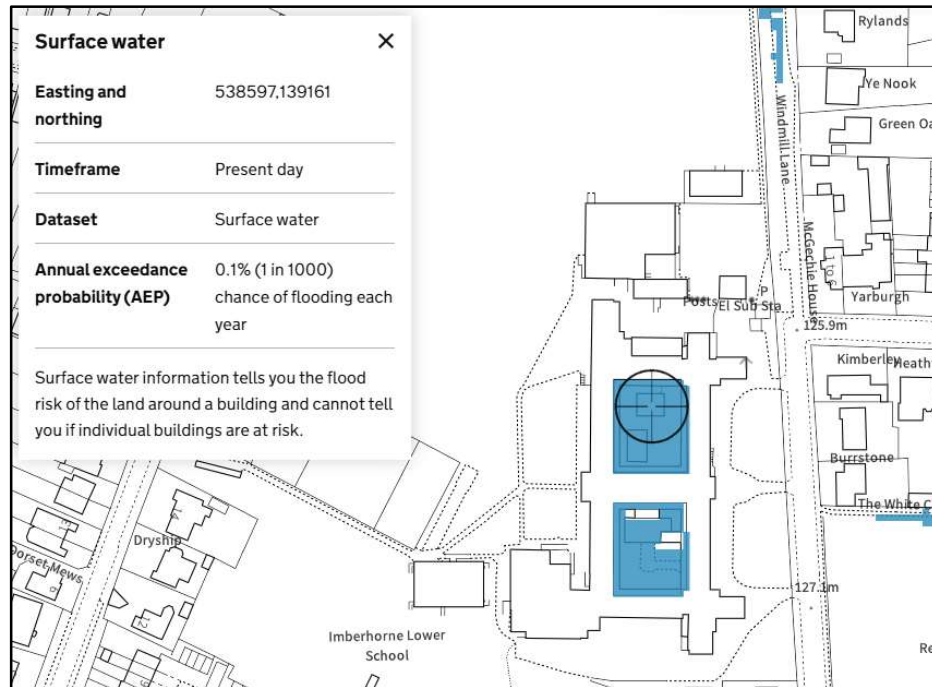


Figure 2 Location of Site showing the extent (1 in 1000) of Surface Water Flooding.

Site History

- 2.4 Although Imberhorne School was founded in 1708 as a Free Grammar School, the Imberhorne Lower School campus at Windmill Lane was not open until 1928 as a new East Grinstead County School, with spaces for 23 girls and 39 boys. The School underwent several expansions. By 1938, the school had grown to two forms in each of the first five years, with a small sixth year. 1946 saw the addition of a Junior Technical School, which was later enlarged in 1953 to provide a new technical block.
- 2.5 The school adopted the title of East Grinstead County Grammar School in 1958, and by 1963, the school had 535 pupils. Following the introduction of comprehensive education to East Grinstead in 1970 and the amalgamation of East Grinstead County Grammar School and Imberhorne County Secondary School, the Windmill Lane site housed around 500 pupils of the first and second years (ages 11 – 12).

- 2.6 Imberhorne Lower School at Windmill Lane now hosts year groups 7 to 9 in the age range of 11 to 14. Imberhorne School also has Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision for students identified as requiring extra support through their time at Imberhorne.
- 2.7 The sites' planning history available through the Mid-Sussex District Councils planning register has been summarised in the Table below.

Reference	Application Type	Proposal	Decision Date	Decision
DM/20/0400 (WSCC/007/20)	Regulation 3	<i>Amendment of Condition 1 of planning permission WSCC/010/10/GR to allow the continued siting and use of a temporary classroom.</i>	26/03/2020	Permit with Conditions
DM/15/0079 (WSCC/002/15/GR)	Regulation 3	<i>Amendment of condition 1 of planning permission WSCC/010/10/GR to allow the continued siting and use of a temporary classroom unit.</i>	09/02/2015	Permit with Conditions
14/03010/C3REG (WSCC/059/12/GR)	Regulation 3	<i>Installation of modular porta-cabin to provide additional teaching space for 5 years.</i>	09/10/2014	Permit with Conditions
14/02567/C3REG (WSCC/044/14/GR)	Regulation 3	<i>Erection of a barrel roof canopy.</i>	15/08/2014	Permit with Conditions
10/00089/C3REG (WSCC/010/10/GR)	Regulation 3	<i>The continued siting and use of a temporary classroom unit</i>	23/02/2010	Permit with Conditions
03/00494/C3REG	Regulation 3	<i>Continued Siting and use of 6 classroom units (E951) (Providing 5 classrooms) for an additional temporary period without compliance with condition 2 on planning permission GR/5/95.</i>	31/03/2003	No Objection
GR/317/97	Regulation 3	<i>Installation of a relocatable classroom unit to provide 5 no. additional classrooms at Imberhorne Lower School and remove temporary classrooms at Imberhorne Upper School.</i>	12/11/1997	No Objection

Imberhorne Lower School, Windmill Lane, East Grinstead, RH19 2DT
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 Planning Statement

GR/010/96	Regulation 3	<i>Demolition of the existing technology block and the installation of a modular building to provide five classrooms.</i>	18/03/1996	No Objection
GR/204/95	Regulation 3	<i>The construction of a new gymnasium and stores, changing rooms and the refurbishment of existing changing facilities.</i>	07/11/1995	No Objection
GR/005/95	Regulation 3	<i>Proposed 5-unit mobile classroom technology block, including demolition of the existing sub-standard technology building.</i>	27/02/1995	No Objection
GR/158/79	Full County Consent Regulation 4	<i>Erection of a temporary classroom for use as staff room.</i>	14/08/1979	Permission

3.0 The Proposal and Compliance with Planning Policy

- 3.1 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 require planning applications to be determined in accordance with the policies in the Development Plan, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Development Plan

- 3.2 The relevant Development Plan documents for this application are the Mid Sussex District Plan (adopted March 2018) and the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan (made November 2016). The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024) is also a material consideration in planning decisions.
- 3.3 Mid-Sussex District Council's emerging Local Plan, The 2021 – 2040 Mid Sussex District Plan, is currently under Examination (Stage 2). As such, and based on Paragraph 49 of the NPPF, policies within the emerging Local Plan of relevance to the proposal have also been considered and are addressed below.
- 3.4 Where these policies have received a large number of objections and unresolved issues (in line with Paragraph 49b of the NPPF), these have been excluded, and respective paragraphs, proposed for modification or deletion, have been omitted from this assessment.

Need

- 3.5 The current music classroom located elsewhere within the school has no practice rooms and is too small for classes of 30-32. This inhibits the teaching of the curriculum and means that the provision for students is decreased, reducing the breadth of their curriculum. The new classroom will be properly apportioned to accommodate these numbers, with additional storage and three practice rooms. It will therefore exponentially improve the curriculum provision for Music teaching.
- 3.6 The proposal involves the demolition of the existing dilapidated classroom, shown in **Figure 3**, currently used to accommodate the school's behavioural support

provision, and replacing it with a new modular classroom for the delivery of the music curriculum.

- 3.7 There are two existing access paths (shown in **Figure 4** below) that link the building with the main school building to the north. These are proposed to be retained. One would be refurbished and kept as a raised concrete path, encased with brickwork on either side, concrete paving on top, and new railings installed into the brickwork. It would be covered with a curved roof canopy.



Figure 3 Existing dilapidated classroom to be demolished (Looking West).

- 3.8 Drawing no. SP01 : Existing and Proposed Site Plan and Existing and Proposed Site Section submitted with the application confirms that the proposed new modular building is slightly larger than the existing building. The increased size is essential to help deliver the school's curriculum by providing a practice room and storage, but also to accommodate the number of students of 30 - 32 class groups, as highlighted in the Supporting Statement from the Strategic Development Manager of WSCC, submitted in support of this application.



Figure 4 Existing classroom to be demolished (Looking East).

Principle of Development

- 3.9 Policy DP25: Community Facilities and Local Services of the District Plan confirms that the provision or improvement of community facilities and local services that contribute to creating sustainable communities will be supported.
- 3.10 Paragraph 100 of the NPPF confirms that local planning authorities should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter early years, schools and post-16 facilities through decisions on applications.
- 3.11 Paragraph 101 of the NPPF states that significant weight should be placed on the importance of new, expanded or upgraded public service infrastructure when considering proposals for development.
- 3.12 Paragraph 125 c) of NPPF advises that planning decisions should give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, proposals for which should be approved unless substantial harm would be caused. Paragraph 128 b) of NPPF states that local planning authorities should support proposals to make more effective use of sites

that provide community services such as schools and hospitals, provided this maintains or improves the quality of service provision and access to open space.

- 3.13 There is therefore significant policy support at District and national level for the principle of the proposed development.

Modular Building Specifications and Sustainability

- 3.14 The proposed modular building is manufactured by Rollalong Ltd, an ISO 14001-certified modular building manufacturer committed to sustainable construction and carbon reduction.

- 3.15 All manufacturing operations are powered by 100% renewable electricity, meaning the modules are produced with no associated grid carbon emissions. Further measures, including rooftop photovoltaic (PV) installation and continued electrification of plant and vehicles, are planned to reduce emissions further.

- 3.16 The modular classrooms are manufactured in a controlled factory environment, which provides significant environmental advantages over traditional construction. These include:

- Substantially reduced waste, with approximately 98% of construction waste segregated for recycling, far exceeding typical site-based performance
- Higher build quality and consistency, reducing defects and improving long-term performance
- Precision installation of insulation and airtightness detailing, which is difficult to achieve reliably on site.

- 3.17 These manufacturing advantages directly translate into building performance that exceeds current Building Regulations requirements, including:

- Walls: 0.26 W/m²K (26% better than regulatory limit)
- Floors and roofs: 0.18 W/m²K (28% better than regulatory limit)
- Airtightness: 3 m³/h·m² @ 50 Pa (70% better than the maximum allowed under Part L)

- 3.18 This enhanced building fabric significantly reduces heat loss compared to a compliant “minimum standard” building, resulting in lower energy demand and reduced operational carbon emissions over the building’s lifetime.
- 3.19 In similar previous classroom projects, these units have demonstrated strong real-world performance, achieving EPC Band B without the use of renewable technologies, comfortably meeting regulatory requirements. When combined with air source heat pumps (SCOP 4.1–4.3, exceeding the regulatory baseline of 2.5 by up to 72%) and optional PV panels, the buildings can operate at or near net zero carbon in use. PV systems can typically offset 20–30% of annual electricity demand, further improving performance beyond regulatory expectations.
- 3.20 The materials used in construction are also selected to outperform typical specifications:
- FSC-certified timber, a renewable, low embodied carbon material that stores carbon throughout its lifecycle
 - Rockwool insulation, containing up to 75% recycled content, improving both thermal performance and environmental impact
 - Siniat plasterboard, with low embodied carbon (GWP typically below 20 kgCO₂e/m²) and full recyclability
- 3.21 In addition to operational performance, modular construction delivers clear whole-life carbon advantages. The units are designed for durability, adaptability, and potential relocation, enabling reuse across multiple sites and extending service life beyond 60 years depending on the manufacturing system we use. This contrasts with traditional construction, where buildings are typically demolished at end of use, resulting in significantly higher lifecycle carbon impacts.
- 3.22 Additionally, Rollalong’s South Coast location reduces transport distances, further lowering the embodied carbon associated with delivery.
- 3.23 Having regard to the above, and the location of the development within an already developed site, the proposal clearly positively addresses sustainability considerations in the layout and the building design in compliance with policies

DP26 : Character and Design and DP39: Sustainable Design and Construction of the District Plan and draft Policy DPB1: Character and Design of the emerging Local Plan¹.

Design

- 3.24 The proposed building will be discreetly positioned in an existing school courtyard. It will not be visible from Windmill Lane or any other publicly accessible location as it would be single storey. Drawing no. LP01 : Location Plan and Extended Elevations submitted with the application confirms that the building would be noticeably lower in height than the neighbouring existing school buildings that make up the courtyard.
- 3.25 The flat roof of the proposed building ensures it is subservient to the neighbouring buildings and assists with its discreet appearance. There are other flat roofed and low pitched roof buildings on the school site and therefore the building would not appear out of context.
- 3.26 The cladding of the building in natural wood veneer is appropriate – mindful that the building will replace an existing timber clad building.
- 3.27 The building will therefore be a high quality design that will add to the overall quality of the area and be sympathetic to local character and history as required by Policy DP26 : Character and Design of the District Plan, Policy EG3 – Promoting Good Design of the Neighbourhood Plan and paragraph 135 a) – c) of the NPPF. The building will also have a step-free design and therefore offers high standards of accessibility in compliance with Policy DP28 : Accessibility of the District Plan, Policy EG3 f) of the Neighbourhood Plan and paragraph 135 f) of the NPPF.

¹ Policy DPB1 will replace adopted Policy DP26. It has a stronger focus on sustainability, requiring development to prioritise sustainability and incorporate (inter alia) sustainable construction principles (in terms of materials as well as techniques). Although this policy received a large number of objections, these pertained to the 20-minute neighbourhood principle.

Landscaping and SuDS

- 3.28 In accordance with Policy DP26 of the District Plan, the existing grassed areas within the courtyard will be retained except where they are necessary to be removed to accommodate the slightly larger footprint of the replacement building. The existing trees within the courtyard will also be retained in accordance with Policy DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows and draft Policy DPN4: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows of the emerging Local Plan. Paving currently located between the two access paths to the north of the existing building will be removed and replaced with a permeable surface that will compensate for the loss of the grassed areas and will ensure that there is no overall loss of permeable surface within the courtyard. This approach is aligned with paragraph 172 c) of NPPF that encourages applicants to use opportunities provided by new development to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding, (making as much use as possible of natural flood management techniques as part of an integrated approach to flood risk management). Likewise, paragraph 164 a) advises that vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change should be addressed in new development through suitable adaptation measures, including through incorporating green infrastructure and sustainable drainage systems.

Site Access and Trees

- 3.29 Pedestrian access to the new building will be from the north – as per the arrangement with the existing building. Please see paragraph 3.3 above for further information on the improvements to this access. Vehicular access to the school site will be unchanged under the proposal – via Windmill Lane to the east. The modular classroom building will be delivered via Windmill Lane and an existing vehicular access into the school grounds. It will then be craned into position within the courtyard.
- 3.30 The Windmill Lane frontage of the school site is lined with mature trees (shown in **Figure 5** below) and the applicant will ensure that these are protected during the delivery and installation phase to ensure compliance with Policy DP37 : Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows of the District Plan, draft Policy DPN4: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows of the emerging Local Plan and paragraph 136 of the NPPF. An

arboricultural impact assessment has been commissioned to guide this process and will form part of the application submission. Conditions attached to the grant of planning permission will ensure its recommendations can be followed within the delivery and installation phase.

Access, Traffic Generation and Parking

- 3.31 There will be no change to traffic generation and parking demands associated with the school site and its existing access arrangements for vehicles as the proposal is to replace an existing school classroom with better quality accommodation and therefore numbers of staff and students will be unchanged by the proposal.



Figure 5 Main Access point for Imberhorne Lower School, showing tree lined road.

4.0 Conclusions

- 4.1 The supporting letter from the Strategic Development Manager of West Sussex County Council submitted in support of this application confirms that Imberhorne Lower School is in need of a new music classroom with associated facilities to help meet the school's curriculum. This is a material consideration that weighs in favour of the application.
- 4.2 The existing classroom is in a deteriorated state and is no longer fit for purpose, nor does it meet the needs of the school and the curriculum. It is proposed to be demolished as part of this application and replaced with a sympathetic modular building, designed to complement the school's existing buildings, which surround the courtyard. Although slightly larger than the existing one, the extra space would be essential to deliver a practice room and storage to support the music classroom.
- 4.3 The principle of such development is strongly supported by both District Plan policy and the NPPF and this statement has demonstrated that the proposal would accord with relevant national and Development Plan policy concerning design and landscaping.
- 4.4 This statement has also demonstrated that the proposed classroom would not only meet regulatory requirements on sustainable design, it would significantly exceed them in terms of thermal performance, airtightness, energy efficiency, waste reduction, and lifecycle sustainability. This results in a building solution with lower operational energy demand, reduced carbon emissions, and demonstrably improved environmental performance compared to traditional construction methods, strongly supporting the planning case. National and Development Plan policy on sustainable design is therefore complied with under this proposal.
- 4.5 This statement has also demonstrated that the proposed development would comply with policy concerning drainage, tree protection and transport matters.
- 4.6 Paragraph 8 of the NPPF confirms that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives – the 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 different objectives). This proposal is aligned with these objectives. The proposed development would be aligned with the **economic** objective as it would deliver an improvement to local education infrastructure that will help support economic growth within the East Grinstead area. It would meet the **social** objective by supporting the local community with a new education that better meets current and future needs. With the high quality sustainable design, on a previously developed site that avoids tree and habitat loss, the proposal will also support the **environmental** objective.

- 4.7 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF concerns the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Part c) provides guidance for decision-making on planning applications and confirms they should approve development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay. This statement has demonstrated that the proposed development complies with national and local policies and that the need for the development is a material consideration that also weighs in favour of the application. Planning permission should therefore be granted for the proposed development.