

Planning Statement

Proposed installation of 12 new commercial units

Gatehouse Hub, Neaves Lane, Goddards Green, West Sussex, BN6 9ZN

Prepared for

Bedford Park Developments Ltd

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Contents	Page
1. Introduction	1
2. Site and Surroundings	2
3. Planning History	2
4. Proposed Development	2
5. Planning Policy	3
6. Material Considerations	4
7. Planning Considerations	6
8. Summary and Conclusions	9

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This planning statement has been prepared in support of a full application seeking planning permission for the installation of 12 additional small commercial units at Gatehouse Hub, Neaves Park, Goddard's Green.
- 1.2. Permission for the development of a mixed used commercial development at Gatehouse Hub has been granted across a series of planning applications. Phase 1, which sought the redevelopment of the original commercial site was approved in August 2023 under application reference DM/23/1051. This application granted consent for the replacement of a variety of industrial buildings and areas of open storage with 19 units for Class E(g), B2 or B8 uses, along with a new wellness centre (Use Class E(d)).
- 1.3. Phase II of the development, approved under application DM/24/2482, granted consent for the relocation of the originally approved wellness centre and the construction of a further 1,640 sqm of floorspace for Class E(g), B2 or B8 uses.
- 1.4. Phase 1 has now been completed and is now occupied. Construction of phase 2 is well underway and nearing completion.
- 1.5. In combination the two phases will deliver some 5,680 sqm of commercial floorspace, across of mix of unit sizes ranging from 80 sqm to 600 sqm.
- 1.6. Following unprecedented demand for the smaller units in Phase 1, Phase 2 was specifically designed with a higher number of smaller units (80-90 sqm). However demand has emerged for even smaller units. Accordingly the applicant has sought to meet this demand through the installation of a small number of "pod" units, within Phase 1.
- 1.7. Given the demand for these smaller units the applicant has again reviewed the consented scheme to identify a further underused area of the site where additional "pod" units can be installed. This application therefore seeks consent for an additional 12 units, arranged as three groups of four pods just to the north of the commercial units permitted by application DM/24/2482.
- 1.8. Along with this supporting Planning Statement and the requisite planning application forms, the application is accompanied by the following documents and drawings:
 - Block and Location Plan (2404-P-900 B);
 - Existing Site Plan (2404-P-901 A);
 - Proposed Ground Floor Site Plan (2404-P-903 C);
 - Proposed Typical Pods Plan and Elevations (2404-P-905);
 - Proposed Street Elevation (2404-P-907);
 - Design and Access Statement;

- 1.9. This Statement sets out relevant planning policies, planning history, and assesses the scheme in accordance with the requirements of the Development Plan and other material considerations, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

2. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1. The application site is located towards the northern edge of Gatehouse Hub, a modern mixed-use commercial park currently comprising 45 units permitted for uses under Classes E(g), B2, and B8.
- 2.2. The site lies to the immediate north of units 3-9 just to the south of the mutual boundary with Gothards, a neighbouring residential property accessed off Gatehouse Lane.
- 2.3. The site area extends in total to some 560 sqm and hugs the southern edge of the landscaped boundary of the site approved under application DM/24/2482. To the immediate south is the access road and parking that sits to the north of units 3-9.
- 2.4. Access to the “pods” will be via the internal road serving Gatehouse Hub, which lies to the immediate east of the site and connects to Gatehouse Lane to the north.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1. In August 2023 planning permission was approved for the development of the former Farmers Stores site with a new mixed use commercial park including a wellness centre and 19 units for Class E(g), B2, or B8 uses (application DM/23/1051 refers). The application was unanimously supported by the Planning Committee and attracted no objections from any third parties. The Parish Council was supportive of the application as was the Ward Councillor.
- 3.2. Application DM/24/0318 sought a minor material amendment to application DM/23/1051 which was approved under officers delegated powers in April 2024.
- 3.3. This application has now been fully implemented.
- 3.4. In August 2024 permission was granted under application DM/24/2482, for a further 1,640 sqm of additional employment floorspace for class E(g), B2 and B8 uses alongside the relocation of the previously approved Wellness Centre.
- 3.5. Works in relation to application DM/24/2482 are well underway and will soon be completed.

4. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1. This section of this Statement should be read alongside the supporting Design and Access Statement.
- 4.2. As set out therein, permission is sought for the installation of 12 small pods units, that will be created either through the up-cycling of former shipping containers or traditionally built to replicate the same design and external appearance of an upcycled shipping container. .

- 4.3. The units each measure 2.5 metres by 6 metres, therefore providing some 13 sqm of floor space. They are flat roofed structures with a maximum height of 2.6 metres.
- 4.4. Each is accessed by double glazed doors in the end elevation and a secondary window is proposed in the north elevation of each unit.
- 4.5. The pods will all be finished with a black exterior to mimic the aesthetics of the surrounding units, with black framed glazing and white graphic numbering.
- 4.6. Each of the pods will be provided with a dedicated parking space. To the rear of these parking spaces additional soft landscaping is proposed.
- 4.7. It is proposed that the existing uses permitted across the wider site (Class E(g), B2 and B8) apply to the proposed pod units.

5. PLANNING POLICY

- 5.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Section 70(2) of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 sets out that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Section 38(3) states that the Development Plan includes the adopted Development Plan Documents (DPDs).
- 5.2. Material considerations include National Planning Guidance, and in particular the NPPF, together with supplementary planning documents adopted by the Local Planning Authority (LPA).
- 5.3. The approved Development Plan, in relation to this application, for the purposes of the Act, comprises the Mid Sussex District Plan, the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) and the 'made' Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Neighbourhood Plan (2015).
- 5.4. Other material considerations relevant to the determination of this application include the Mid Sussex Design Guide.

Mid Sussex District Plan

- 5.5. The Mid Sussex District Plan (MSDP) was adopted on 28th March 2018. It covers the period 2014 - 2031 and sets out a vision for how Mid Sussex wants to evolve and a delivery strategy for how that will be achieved.
- 5.6. The following policies are considered most relevant to these proposals:
 - DP1: Sustainable Economic Development
 - DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside
 - DP14: Sustainable Rural Development and the Rural Economy
 - DP21: Transport

- DP26: Character and Design
- DP29: Noise, Air and Light Pollution
- DP38: Biodiversity

Site Allocation DPD

- 5.7. The Mid Sussex Site Allocations Development Plan Document was adopted on 29th June 2022. The Site Allocations DPD identifies sufficient housing sites to provide a five year housing land supply to 2031 and also makes sure that enough land is allocated to meet identified employment need.
- 5.8. The following policies are considered most relevant to these proposals:
- Policy SA34: Existing Employment Sites

Hurstpierpoint And Sayers Common Neighbourhood Plan

- 5.9. The Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Neighbourhood Plan (HSCNP) seeks to cover the plan period 2014 - 2031. The HSCNP was 'made' by the District Council in March 2015. It sets out the development principles and allocation of areas for future building and land use.
- 5.10. Policy HurstC1 is relevant to these proposals

6. MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

National Planning Policy Framework

- 6.1. The NPPF sets out that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development (paragraph 7). Paragraph 8 goes on to explain that "Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways": an economic objective, a social objective and an environmental objective.
- 6.2. 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."*
- 6.3. Paragraph 11 sets out that the application of sustainable development for decision-taking means:
- *Approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date Development Plan without delay; or*
 - *where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*

- i. *the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance⁷ provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
- ii. *any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this 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.*

- 6.4. Chapter 6 seeks to ensure planning policies and decisions help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. It states that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account local business needs and wider opportunities for development.
- 6.5. Chapter 9 relates to “Promoting Sustainable Transport”. It states that “*development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios*” (paragraph 116).
- 6.6. Chapter 11 relates to “Making effective use of land” and encourages LPA’s to promote effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.
- 6.7. Chapter 12 relates to “Achieving well-designed places” and states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

Mid Sussex Design Guide 2020

- 6.8. The Council has adopted a 'Mid Sussex Design Guide' Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) that aims to help deliver high quality development across the district that responds appropriately to its context and is inclusive and sustainable. The Design Guide was adopted by Council on 4th November 2020 as an SPD for use in the consideration and determination of planning applications. The SPD is a material consideration in the determination of this planning application.

Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2039 Consultation Draft

- 6.9. The District Council is currently in the process of reviewing and updating the District Plan. Upon adoption the new District Plan 2021 - 2039 will replace the current adopted District Plan. 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.
- 6.10. In April 2025 the Inspector wrote to the Council setting out her initial findings on the emerging District Plan. In her view the Council had failed in its duty to co-operate with neighbouring authority’s during the preparation of the emerging plan. Accordingly she recommended that the Plan should be withdrawn from the examination.

- 6.11. However, following the Government's announcement that it plans to abolish the Duty to Cooperate the examination was re-opened earlier this year. A further series of hearing were held and the Inspector's interim conclusions and actions were issued in a Post Hearings Letter dated 26th March 2026. One of the most significant actions requires the Council to increase the amount of housing it is planning for to help meet the need for housing in local council areas where they are unable to meet their own need.
- 6.12. This means the Council must find 4,000 more homes in addition to the housing already included in the draft Plan. A preliminary list of additional sites has been produced which will now be subject to a more technical assessment. Following testing there will be further public consultation on the emerging plan. It will therefore be sometime before the new Local Plan is formally adopted.
- 6.13. While the policies of the emerging Local Plan are a material consideration, they currently carry limited weight in the determination of this application. The applicant acknowledges that the draft plan proposes allocating land surrounding the site for a mixed-use development, including residential uses. However, this allocation remains unconfirmed, and any detailed application for that land is a considerable way off.
- 6.14. Importantly, granting approval for this proposal would not prejudice future development opportunities on adjacent land. Any subsequent scheme could be appropriately designed and laid out to integrate with the existing site and its approved uses, ensuring a cohesive and well-planned environment.

7. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1. Having regard to the policies of the Development Plan and National Planning Guidance, it is considered that the main issues in the determination of this application are:
- Principle
 - Design, layout and impact on character of wider area
 - Access and parking
 - Neighbour amenity
 - Trees and Biodiversity
 - Surface Water Drainage
- 7.2. Each is now considered in turn below.

Principle

- 7.3. Policy DP1 of the District Plan champions Sustainable Economic Development aiming to strengthen the District's economic vitality and deliver wider benefits for the community. It sets out a clear ambition to attract and support businesses, driving growth and innovation. This will be achieved by:

- Promoting high, quality development of land and premises to meet the needs of modern, 21st century businesses;
- Supporting existing businesses, and enabling them to expand successfully;
- Encouraging inward investment, particularly the growth of clusters and networks in the knowledge-based, creative and high tech industries; and
- Delivering appropriate infrastructure to underpin business growth with a focus on high speed broadband connectivity.

7.4. Of particular relevance to this proposal is the policy's commitment to making "*effective use of employment land and premises*" including:

- *Permitting appropriate intensification, conversion, redevelopment and/or extension for employment uses providing it is in accordance with other policies in the Plan;*

7.5. The application site sits within an established mixed-use commercial park approved under application DM/24/2482 and the wider site identified as an Existing Employment Site in the Council's Site Allocation DPD. Policy SA34 explicitly supports proposals for intensification within the boundary of Existing Employment Site, subject to compliance with development plan and national policy. Furthermore, expansion of Existing Employment Sites is supported, where detailed layout and design is in keeping with the location, the expansion is contiguous with an existing employment site and the impacts of the expansion are acceptable.

7.6. By approving DM/24/2482, the Council has already endorsed the site for commercial purposes within Use Classes E(g), B2, and B8. The proposed pods are intended to continue these approved uses, offering smaller, highly usable units that meet market demand. The fact that the 6 similar units already erected to the south are already occupied by local businesses, demonstrates strong demand and clear alignment with DP1's objectives - supporting existing enterprises and fostering inward investment.

7.7. Both Policy DP1 and SA34 provide robust policy backing for intensifying employment sites, consistent with the NPPF, which places significant weight on supporting economic growth and productivity. The NPPF further emphasises the importance of addressing local business needs while unlocking wider development opportunities.

7.8. This application directly responds to those priorities, delivering flexible space for local businesses and advancing the District's economic aspirations. It fully accords with the development plan's vision to promote economic vitality. Accordingly, there is strong policy justification for approving this application.

Design, Layout And Impact On Character

7.9. The pods have been strategically positioned along the northern boundary of the site on an area of previously underused land. This location is naturally well-screened by the existing commercial buildings and boundary vegetation, ensuring that the pods sit comfortably within their surroundings.

- 7.10. Their modest scale, set against the backdrop of larger commercial structures, means that any limited views of the pods from outside the site will be unobtrusive. Far from appearing prominent or incongruous, the pods represent a discreet and complementary addition to the wider estate, enhancing its functionality without imposing on the landscape.
- 7.11. The carefully selected colour palette directly reflects the established aesthetic of the business park, creating a cohesive and visually harmonious environment in line with the principles of the Mid Sussex Design Guide (DG43 and DG44). This approach ensures a consistent design language across the estate.
- 7.12. Importantly, the layout of the pods retains and actually enhances landscaping within the site. This results in a net gain in soft landscaping, reinforcing the principle that greenery should remain the dominant feature, with buildings forming a neutral backdrop, exactly as encouraged by DG44.
- 7.13. The wider commercial estate adopts a modern, crisp design aesthetic, characterised by clean lines and flat roofs. The pods have been designed as scaled-down versions of the larger units, ensuring visual continuity and a sense of unity across the development.
- 7.14. The Mid Sussex Design Guide promotes employment sites that respond sensitively to their setting, minimise visual impact, and create welcoming environments. These objectives have clearly guided the design of the pods. When considering the original application (DM/24/2482), officers concluded that:

"the proposed development is considered to be acceptable in terms of design and would not have a significant impact on the wider countryside, being set within an existing Industrial site, thereby according with policies DP12 and DP26 of the District Plan."

- 7.15. The same conclusion applies here. The pods have been carefully designed to integrate with the existing estate, their small scale and enhanced landscaping minimise visual impact, and they contribute to a high-quality, welcoming business environment, fully in line with the aspirations of the development plan.

Access And Parking

- 7.16. Each of the pods benefits from a dedicated parking space ensuring convenient access for occupiers.
- 7.17. With East Sussex County Council's parking standards requiring only one space per 150 sqm of gross floor area, the pods would only generate the need for one additional parking space to comply with these standards. On the basis that the original application over provided parking spaces the addition of the 12 small units is not considered to impact parking demand and supply overall.
- 7.18. Moreover, the small scale and intended use of the pods means they will generate only minimal traffic, well within the levels already anticipated and consented for the site. As a result, the proposal will have no adverse impact on highway capacity or safety, fully aligning with sustainable transport objectives.

Neighbour Amenity

- 7.19. The application site is well separated from residential properties, ensuring that the proposal does not compromise local amenity. The nearest dwelling lies to the north, approximately 30 metres away. The approved plans granted under application DM/24/2482 introduced additional intervening planting along this boundary of the site.
- 7.20. Application DM/24/2482 included a condition controlling noise emissions from the larger commercial units. In practice, the pods will predominantly be occupied for office or storage purposes, meaning noise emissions will be negligible. As such, the pods will not generate any adverse impact on neighbouring properties, they will fully comply with Policy DP26 and the wider objectives of the District Plan.

Trees And Biodiversity

- 7.21. The pods are proposed to be sensitively positioned well away from the main estate boundary trees and vegetation, ensuring the boundary screening and wider estate setting are fully protected. They will be located within an area previously identified for hard surfacing, meaning there will be no loss of existing landscaping as a result of the proposals. Furthermore, the scheme presents an opportunity to enhance the biodiversity of the site, with additional soft landscaping to be introduced alongside the development.

Surface Water Drainage

- 7.22. The surface water drainage system for the wider estate has already been approved by virtue of the discharge of condition 3 attached to application DM/24/0421 and condition 3 of application DM/24/2482. This includes attenuation of surface water within sub-bases of granular infill, with any surface water flow from impermeable areas directed to porous paving or trapped gullies/channels which flow into the voided sub-base material before it is discharged at a restricted rate to a ditch on the western boundary of the site, via a bagworm headwall.
- 7.23. The approved surface water drainage scheme is unaffected by the small additional pod units and will continue to operate well within capacity.

8. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1. The proposed development represents a well-considered and policy-compliant enhancement to an established commercial estate. The proposed pods have been strategically positioned on underused land, ensuring minimal visual impact and full integration with the existing built form. Their design, colour palette, and landscaping approach align with the Mid Sussex Design Guide, delivering a coherent and high-quality environment.
- 8.2. The scheme achieves efficient use of employment land, responding directly to local business needs and supporting economic growth in accordance with Policies DP1 and SA34 and the NPPF. Each unit will benefit from dedicated parking provision, while the compact scale ensures no adverse impact on highway capacity or safety.
- 8.3. Residential amenity is fully protected, with an appropriate separation distance, screening and negligible noise emissions. The proposals therefore meet the requirements of Policy DP26.

- 8.4. In summary, the proposal delivers sustainable economic development, high-quality design, and environmental protection, fully aligned with the aspirations of the Development Plan. It represents a positive contribution to the District's economic vitality, and there are no policy grounds for objection.