

# **Erection of commercial buidling, reconfiguration of yard and associated works**

Parkfields Farm, Hophurst Lane, Crawley  
Down, West Sussex, RH10 4LN

## **Planning Statement**

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**Prepared for:** Croydon Fireplaces

# Document Information

## About

This document has been prepared for Croydon Fireplaces by Squires Planning.

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## Revision History

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## Graphics & Mapping

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Planning Statement has been prepared by Squires Planning in support of an application by Croydon Fireplaces for the:

*'Erection of commercial building, reconfiguration of yard and associated works*

- 1.2. This document provides an overview of the site, its context and the proposed development before considering the material considerations relevant in the determination of this application.

## Site & Situation

- 1.3. The site is situated to the north of Hophurst Lane, circa 700m east of the centre of Crawley Down. It comprises the main commercial building for Croydon Fireplaces and Milbrorow Chimney Sweeps, a yard with car parking, several containers and an open area of land with a horse walker and lunge pen. It has a separate access to Parkfields Farmhouse, which is to the east of the site onto Hophurst Lane.

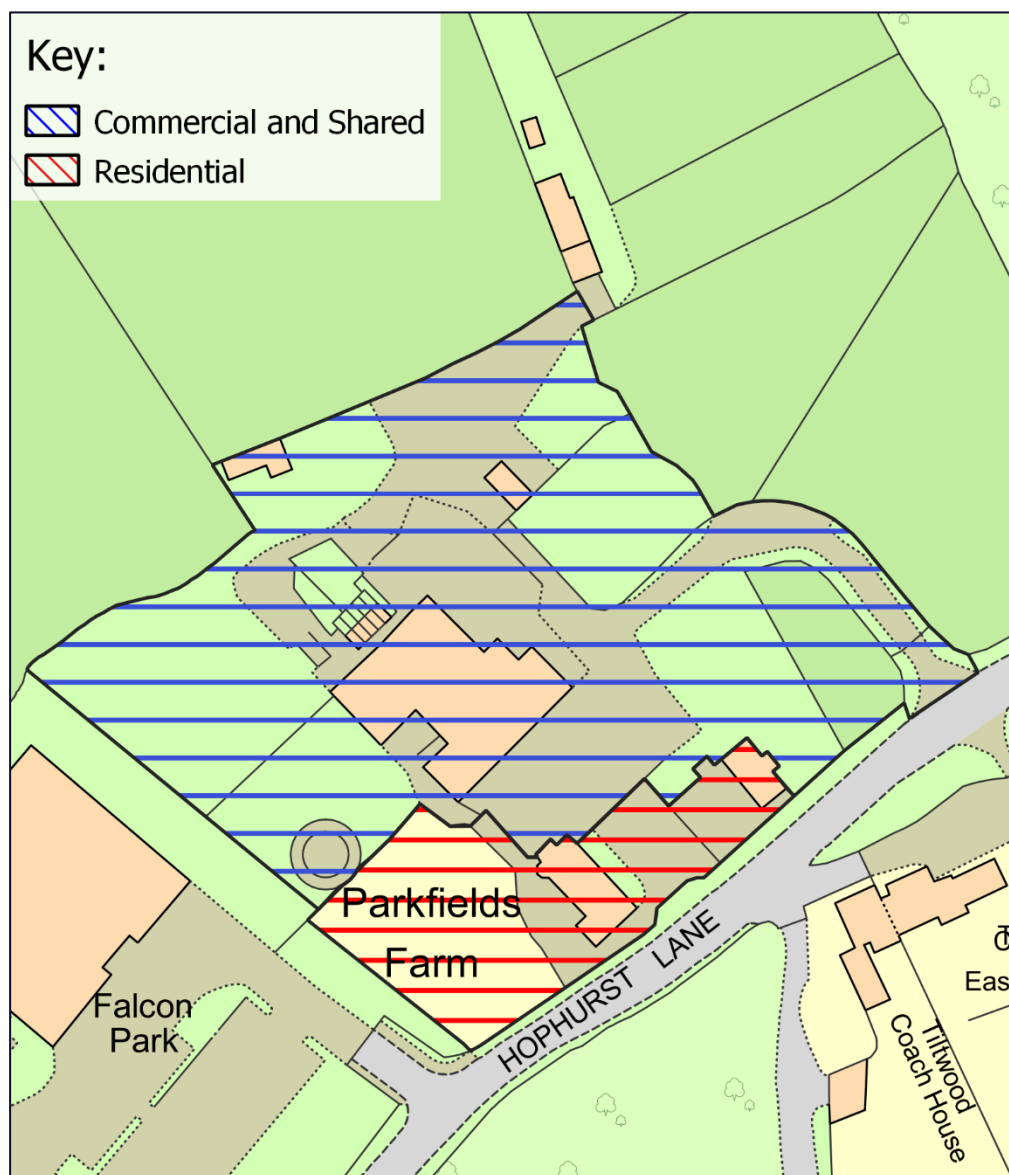


Figure 1 - Plan of the site showing the different land uses

- 1.4. As Figure 1 displays, the southern part of the site is the residential curtilage of Parkfields Farmhouse and the remainder of the site is in commercial use and operated by Croydon Fireplaces and Milborrow Chimney Sweeps.
- 1.5. It is bordered to the north and east by a line of trees, beyond which are fields and woodland, to the south by Hophurst Lane, and to the west by hedgerow beyond which is the neighbouring commercial site.
- 1.6. The site is outside of the built-up area boundary of Crawley Down so within the area for the protection and enhancement of the countryside, and within the Ashdown Forest 7m zone of influence. It is entirely within Flood Zone 1 and the nearest designated heritage asset is the Grade II listed Hophurst Farmhouse (list entry: 1182413) situated circa 260m northeast of the site.

## Planning History

- 1.7. The applications made on the site are set out below:

| Reference    | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Decision   |
|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| WP/002/75    | Erection of low profile dutch barn (max.height 10')                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Permission |
| WP/141/81    | Renewal of temporary permission for siting of mobile home                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Permission |
| WP/133/86    | Renewal of permission for site of mobile home                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Permission |
| WP/145/89    | Application under section 32 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 (as amended) to continue the use of an agricultural building as a quality control/production laboratory, along with ancillary office accommodation                                                  | Permission |
| WP/002/93    | Change of use – use of redundant rabbitry buildings for the storage of sterile liquid and dry powder media to be used in conjunction with existing quality control/production laboratory on the same site.                                                                 | Permission |
| WP/064/94    | Outline application: Replacement of 5 no. redundant rabbitry buildings with building of equivalent area, but with more stringent environmental standards.                                                                                                                  | Permission |
| WP/089/96    | Lawful development certificate: Application seeking confirmation that the use of the whole building for office use with standard office equipment to be installed (computers, typewriters etc), the office hours likely to be 0700 – 1900 hours Monday – Friday, is lawful | Permission |
| 02/01237/FUL | Access to paddock from Hophurst Lane (Amended plans received showing access connecting to existing parking area)                                                                                                                                                           | Permission |
| 03/00208/COU | Regularising application for continued B1/B2 use of existing building and land                                                                                                                                                                                             | Permission |
| 12/00759/FUL | Construction of a mezzanine floor within the existing barn to provide additional office space for relocation of the call centre.                                                                                                                                           | Permission |

- 1.8. The table above displays the history of the site, however there are no applications relevant to the proposed development.

## 2. The Proposed Development

- 2.1. This application seeks the '*Erection of commercial building, reconfiguration of yard and associated works*'.
- 2.2. The proposed commercial building would be situated to the northwest of the site. It would measure 34m in length, 19.70m in width and would have an eave height of 6m and an overall height of 8.25m. It would be constructed of metal sheeting for the walls and the roof and would have a vehicular entrance for deliveries. It will be used for storage of stock and equipment (Use Class B8).
- 2.3. The reconfiguring of the yard consists of reducing the existing chicken runs/dog kennels, concrete wall and racking to the north of the site and relocating a mobile home and several containers towards the northern boundary.
- 2.4. Associated works include the reduction of an existing chicken run to enable the existing vehicle apron to be extended and enable access to the proposed new building.

## 3. Planning Policy

- 3.1. Planning decisions should be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise (Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).
- 3.2. In this case, the adopted development plan consists of:
- Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031
  - Site Allocations Document
  - Local Plan 2004
  - Neighbourhood Plans
- 3.3. Policy contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in December 2024 is also material in the determination of this application.
- 3.4. The most relevant policies in the development plan and national policy are set out below.

### Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031

- 3.5. The District Plan was adopted in March 2018 and sets out a vision for how Mid Sussex wants to evolve and a delivery strategy for how that will be achieved through a suite of policies used in the determination of planning applications. The most relevant policies are discussed below.
- 3.6. **Policy DP1: Sustainable Economic Development** states 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 year*' which will be achieved by a range of methods including supporting existing businesses and allocating sites for employment generating development.
- 3.7. **Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside** states that '*Development will be permitted in the countryside... provided it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District*' and is necessary for the purposes of agriculture or is supported by a specific policy reference elsewhere in the development plan.
- 3.8. **Policy DP13: Preventing Coalescence** states that '*Provided it is not in conflict with Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside, development will be permitted if it does not result in the coalescence of settlements which harms the separate identity and amenity of settlements, and would not have an unacceptable urbanising effect on the area between settlements*'.
- 3.9. **Policy DP14: Sustainable rural development and the rural economy** highlights that small scale economic development, diversification of agricultural activities and the re-use and adaptation of rural buildings will be supported where it does not conflict with policies DP12 and DP13 and complies with the relevant criteria of the policy.
- 3.10. **Policy DP21: Transport** requires development to support the objectives of the West Sussex Transport Plan 2011-2026 by complying with 9 criteria relating to transport.

- 3.11. **Policy DP26: Character and Design** requires all development to '*be well designed and reflect the distinctive character of the towns and villages while being sensitive to the countryside*'. This is done by ensuring development complies with 11 criteria.
- 3.12. **Policy DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows** supports '*the protection and enhancement of trees, woodland and hedgerows, and encourage new planting*' and development that damages or leads to the loss of trees, woodland or hedgerow that contribute to the character of the area and landscape will not normally be permitted.
- 3.13. **Policy DP38: Biodiversity** seeks to protect and enhance biodiversity by requiring development to comply with 5 criteria.
- 3.14. **Policy DP39: Sustainable Design and Construction** requires development proposals to improve the sustainability of development by incorporating 6 measures.

## Crawley Down Neighbourhood Plan

- 3.15. The Crawley Down Neighbourhood Plan was 'made' in January 2016 and sets out 11 policies to ensure that new development in the Crawley Down Neighbourhood Plan Area will be sustainable and in accordance with the vision. The relevant policies from the Neighbourhood Plan are discussed below.
- 3.16. **Policy CDNP07: Retention of Existing Employment Sites and the Use of Vernacular Buildings** seeks to resist the use of land or buildings on existing employment sites for other purposes unless the use is no longer viable and alternate provision can be made elsewhere. It also supports new business development on land already in commercial use where 4 criteria are met. The policy also supports the use of vernacular buildings for employment use where it meets 7 criteria.
- 3.17. **Policy CDNP08: Prevention of Coalescence** will only permit development outside of the village boundary where it complies with 3 criteria.
- 3.18. **Policy CDNP09: Protect and Enhance Biodiversity** states that '*Proposals for new residential, employment and retail development will be expected to protect and enhance biodiversity and wildlife*' which is achieved by requiring development to comply with 5 criteria.
- 3.19. **Policy CDNP10: Promoting Sustainable Transport** requires development to promote sustainable transport by complying with 7 criteria.

## Supplementary Planning Documents

- 3.20. Whilst they do not form part of the adopted development plan, a number of supplementary planning documents (SPDs) are relevant. These are the Design Guide and West Sussex County Council's guidance on parking at new developments.

## 4. Main Considerations

- 4.1. In this section we will consider the main issues relevant to the proposed development.

### Principle of development

- 4.2. The proposed development comprises '*Erection of commercial building, reconfiguration of yard and associated works*'.
- 4.3. Policy DP12 of the District Plan supports development in the countryside where '*it is necessary for the purpose of agriculture; or it is supported by a specific policy reference elsewhere in the Plan, a Development Plan Document or relevant Neighbourhood Plan*'. In this case, it is not necessary for the purpose of agriculture, so will only be supported where it complies with a policy reference elsewhere in the development plan.
- 4.4. The development is supported by Policy DP1 which seeks to create an average of 543 jobs per year by '*Supporting existing businesses, and allowing them room to expand*' and '*Permitting appropriate intensification, conversion, redevelopment and/or extension for employment uses providing it is in accordance with other policies in the Plan*'.
- 4.5. Policy DP14 specifically relates to employment development outside of the built up area boundaries. It supports new small-scale economic development where '*it supports sustainable growth and the vitality of the rural economy*' and '*where possible, utilises previously developed sites*'.
- 4.6. The proposed commercial building will be used for the storage of stock and equipment associated with Croydon Fireplaces and Milborrow Chimney Sweeps, a long established rural business, improving their storage capacity and so '*supports sustainable growth and the vitality of the rural economy*'. Without being able to increase storage capacity on site, Croydon Fireplaces may have to look at sites elsewhere outside of the area to meet their business needs which would decrease the vitality of the rural economy. The building will also be situated within the previously developed site of the business. The proposed development therefore meets the two criteria and so complies with Policy DP14.
- 4.7. Policy CDNP07 of the Crawley Down Neighbourhood Plan supports new business development on land already in commercial use where it complies with several criteria each of which are taken in turn below.
- 4.8. The first criterion requires that '*the scale and nature of the proposals would not have significant harmful impact on the amenities of adjoining activities*'. There are two sites directly adjacent to the proposed building. The first is another commercial site to the southwest which is separated by a hedgerow. The development would not have a significant harmful impact on the amenities of the site as the uses are compatible and the development would not generate significant noise as the building will be used for storage. The other neighbouring site is the garden of Parkfields Farmhouse to the south. The building will be used for the storage of equipment and therefore there will be no significant noise generated that would otherwise adversely impact on the amenities of the occupants of the dwelling. There are also no occupied sites to the north and east.

- 4.9. The second criterion is that '*the scale of the proposal is proportionate to the existing size of the building*'. This criteria is written in a way that is more applicable for replacement buildings or extensions for buildings, rather than a new building. This is therefore not an appropriate requirement in this case.
- 4.10. The third criterion is that '*the scale and nature of the proposals would not have unacceptable conflicts with agriculture and other land-use activities*'. The land where the proposed building would be situated on is not used for agriculture or other land-use activities. The development would therefore not conflict with any existing land-use activity.
- 4.11. The final criterion is that '*the proposal would not have unacceptable impact on the local road network*'. The proposed development is not anticipated to significantly increase the number of vehicle movements into and out of the site post-construction and once the equipment is stored in the building. The development will also not impact the access in any way, therefore it would not have an unacceptable impact on the local road network.
- 4.12. The proposed development therefore meets the criteria set out in Policy CDNP07. It also accords with policies DP1 and DP14 and is therefore '*supported by a specific policy reference*' in accordance with Policy DP12. As the development complies with these policies, it is acceptable in principle.

## Amenity

- 4.13. As discussed, to the southwest of the site are commercial and agricultural sites, and to the north and east are undeveloped fields. Parkfields Farmhouse is the only dwelling that will be affected by the development, and this is owned by the landowner of the Croydon Fireplaces site. Following construction, there will be no noise generated by the proposed development as the building will only be used for the storage of equipment and there will not be any significant increase in vehicle numbers accessing the site. The proposed development would therefore avoid any adverse impacts relating to noise and disruption above existing levels.
- 4.14. Regarding overlooking, there will be no windows on the proposed building facing towards the curtilage of the dwelling. Given that the proposed building is to the northwest of the dwelling, given the sun's path from sunrise to sunset, there will be no loss of natural sunlight.
- 4.15. The proposed development therefore '*does not cause significant harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants of new dwelling*' in accordance with Policy DP26.

## Design and impact on the character of the area

- 4.16. The site is just outside of the built up area of Crawley Down and the area is semi-rural comprising agricultural fields to the northwest and southeast beyond which are large area of ancient woodland. Most of the denser development nearby is situated in Crawley Down to the west with density decreasing east along Hophurst Lane. There are 3 commercial/agricultural sites along Hophurst Lane which include the application site itself, Falcon Park immediately to the west, and Clearview Farm beyond that.
- 4.17. The proposed development would be typical of a commercial building used for the storage of goods. It would be constructed of metal sheeting for the walls and the dual-pitched roof which respects the

character of the site and the immediate surroundings which also comprises similar buildings on the two sites to the south and the other commercial buildings to the northeast along Hophurst Hill and Floran Farm.

- 4.18. Whilst the proposed building will be taller than the existing buildings on site, it will be of a comparable height to the non-residential buildings at Falcon Park to the southwest which have a maximum height of 6.93m and the buildings at Clearview Farm beyond that. The proposed building will also be of a comparable length and width to that of the main existing building and the buildings on the two sites to the south. It would also have a very similar footprint.
- 4.19. The proposed development also consists of a general 'tidy' of the site, by reducing the chicken runs/dog kennels, racking and a concrete wall, and relocating a mobile home and two containers to the existing yard to the north. Overall, this will improve the visual appearance of the site by removing clutter, and will create sufficient space for vehicles to manoeuvre to and from the proposed building.
- 4.20. The proposed development will therefore be '*of high quality design and layout and includes appropriate landscaping and greenspace*' and '*optimises the potential of the site to accommodate development*' in accordance with Policy DP26. It will also '*respond positively to the character and architectural traditions of the District in terms of scale, mass, form, materials and detailing*' in particular it responds to the other commercial and agricultural buildings in the area in accordance with Principle DG44 of the Design Guide

## Access, Highways & Parking

- 4.21. Regarding accessibility, the Falcon Park bus stop is situated just outside of the site and provides links to Crawley Down, Copthorne, Three Bridges Station, Crawley, East Grinstead, Dormansland, Lingfield Railway Station, Ashurst Wood, Forest Row, Groombridge and Tunbridge Wells.
- 4.22. The nearest train stations are Kingscote Station which is a heritage railway circa 3.02km to the south which provides links north to East Grinstead and south to Sheffield Park. The next nearest station is East Grinstead train station which is 3.56km east and is on the Oxted Line providing links north to South Croydon and links south to Uckfield by changing at Hurst Green. The site is therefore highly accessible by public transport.
- 4.23. The access will remain the same as existing and is suitable to serve the site in its present and future state. The site is therefore served by '*safely located vehicular and pedestrian access with adequate visibility*' in accordance with Policy CDNP10.
- 4.24. Regarding impacts on the highways network, it is not anticipated that trip generations would significantly increase as part of the development as the proposed building would only be used for storage. The proposed development would therefore have no impact on the highway network and '*avoids severe additional traffic congestion, individually or cumulatively, taking account of any proposed mitigation*' in accordance with Policy DP21.
- 4.25. Regarding parking, there are 21 car parking spaces within the formal car park and there is further informal parking scattered around the site. The parking standards are set out in West Sussex County Council's Guidance on Parking at New Developments. For B8 non-residential development, the standards require 1 car parking space per 100m<sup>2</sup> of floorspace. The combined floorspace of the existing buildings on site and the proposed building is 1,597.05m<sup>2</sup> which provides an overall

requirement to provide 16 spaces. The site will therefore continue to exceed these requirements in accordance with the parking standards and the scheme '*provides adequate car parking for the proposed development*' in accordance with Policy DP21.

- 4.26. As shown in the submitted vehicle tracking document, appropriate vehicles would be able to access the proposed building and exit in the forward gear. The manoeuvring shown is currently how delivery vehicles access the northern section of the site.

## Arboriculture

- 4.27. The Ash Partnership have surveyed the site and noted that no trees will be removed to facilitate the development, and no trees lie within proximity of the proposed development. The nearest tree is an Irish Yew situated to the northeast of the dwelling, but its root protection area does not extend as far as the development area.
- 4.28. The nearest stand of ancient woodland is situated immediately adjacent to the northeastern boundary of the site. The impact of the development has been assessed in the Ecological Report by Coyne Environmental. It highlights that there would be no adverse impact on the Ancient Woodland or its required 15m buffer as a result of the proposed development.
- 4.29. The proposed development therefore complies with Policy DP37 which states that '*The District Council will support the protect and enhancement of trees, woodland and hedgerows*'. It will also achieve '*The protection of trees of arboricultural or amenity value*' in accordance with Policy CDNP09.

## Ecology

- 4.30. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been prepared, and reviewed by Coyne Environmental Ltd in an Ecological Report. The site lies adjacent to ancient woodland and there is hedgerow which could provide habitat for hazel dormice. There are three EPSM Licence applications for great crested newts and there are waterbodies in proximity which could support great crested newts. The woodland edge of the northeast, the hedgerows and conifer tree screens, combined with numerous mature trees provide bird breeding opportunities around the site.
- 4.31. Regarding the impacts of the development, the Ecological Report highlights that it would not impact on protected sites or habitats. Regarding impacts on protected species, the wood boundary and habitats would not be impacted by the development therefore impacts on hazel dormice are unlikely. The woody boundaries to the site will be retained but it is good practice for new buildings that there is no exterior light that could affect bats. For great crested newts (GCN), the Ecology Report notes that there are ponds near the site but no evidence of GCV. It recommends that an eDNA pond inspection is carried out and from the results of the laboratory inspection, only then should a GCN licence be applied for if the results are positive. If negative, the site can be assessed as a habitat unsuitable for GCN and no further surveys would be necessary. Regarding breeding birds, it is recommended that construction works commence outside of the bird breeding season, otherwise the vegetation will need to be surveyed by an ecologist prior to commencement of the development.
- 4.32. So long as the recommended measures are implemented, the proposed development '*Protects existing biodiversity, so that there is no net loss of biodiversity*' and '*Contributes and takes opportunities to improve, enhance, manage and restore biodiversity and green infrastructure, so that*

*there is a net gain in biodiversity*’ in accordance with Policy DP38. The proposed development will also achieve the *‘safeguarding or protection of designated sites, protected species, antient or species rich hedgerows, shaws, grasslands and woodlands’* in accordance with Policy CDNP09.

## Biodiversity Net Gain

- 4.33. A Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment has been prepared by Coyne Environmental Ltd. It calculates that the development, and Landscape Design scheme, would achieve a 23.46% net gain in biodiversity which exceeds the 10% mandatory requirement.

## Sustainability

- 4.34. A note has been prepared by MES Building Solutions which explains that *‘Policy DP39 requires that development minimise energy use through the design and layout of the scheme’*. The building will not be heated as it is not intended to be an occupied space. The use of electricity will be minimised through high-efficiency LED fittings.
- 4.35. As such, *‘It is not considered that it is possible to produce a more detailed Energy Statement due to the unheated nature of the development. Approved Document L2 2021 is clear that building such as this with a low energy demand for fixed heating & cooling systems lie outside of the scope of Part L of the Building Regulations. As a result modelling the energy consumption using software such as SBEM or IES is not possible... As a result of the above it can be seen that the intrinsic low-energy nature of the development complies with the intention of policy DP39’*.
- 4.36. The proposed development will therefore *‘Minimise energy use through the design and layout of the scheme including through the use of natural light and ventilation’* as a result of the use of low-LED lighting in accordance with Policy DP39.

## Landscape

- 4.37. The site is situated within the High Weald Landscape Character Area (LCA 6). The Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex for the LCA states that *‘Numerous gill streams have carved out a landscape of twisting ridges and secluded valleys. The ancient, densely-wooded landscape of the High Weald is seen to perfection in the area. Includes the township of East Grinstead’*.
- 4.38. Key characteristics include a wooded, confined rural landscape, sandstone and clay hills, long views over the Low Weald to the downs, significant woodland cover, pattern of small irregular-shaped assart fields, pockets of rich biodiversity, network of twisting, deep lands, driveways, tracks and footpaths, varied traditional rural buildings and designated landscapes and exotic treescapes associated with large country houses.
- 4.39. The proposed development would have no impact on the key characteristics of the landscape that contribute to its visual quality. The proposed development therefore *‘maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District’* in accordance with Policy DP12.

- 4.40. The only publicly accessible viewpoints of the site are from Hophurst Lane. There are no other public rights of way in proximity to the site. The site is very well screened from Hophurst Lane by a timber fence and a tall boundary hedge. There is one gap in the hedge where the access to the farmhouse is situated, however the proposed commercial building will not be visible from this point as the existing commercial building blocks any views. The proposed development would therefore not impact on long distance views across the landscape, in particular views over the Low Weald to the west, identified as a key characteristic of the LCA.
- 4.41. The proposed commercial building will be situated between the existing commercial building on the site, and the neighbouring agricultural buildings to the west. This is in an area of Crawley Down where most of the village's agricultural and commercial sites are situated. The development would not remove an important visual gap between Crawley Down and Felbridge / East Grinstead. The development would therefore '*not result in the coalescence of settlements which harms the separate identity and amenity of settlements, and would not have a unacceptably urbanising effect on the area between settlements*' in accordance with Policy DP13 and will not '*detract significantly from the openness and character of the landscape*', it would not contribute to ribbon development along Hophurst Hill and would not '*significantly reduce the gaps between the village and neighbouring settlements of Copthorne, Felbridge, Turners Hill and Crawley*' in accordance with Policy CDNP08.

## 5. Conclusion

- 5.1. The proposed development seeks the '*Erection of commercial building, reconfiguration of yard and associated works*'.
- 5.2. The proposed development will support an existing business and more broadly the rural economy in accordance with policies DP1, DP12, DP14 and CDNP07 and so is acceptable in principle.
- 5.3. The proposal would not have any adverse impact on the amenities of the occupants of nearby dwellings, and the proposed development is compatible with other adjacent land uses in accordance with Policy DP26.
- 5.4. It will be of a scale and massing, and use materials that respect the character and appearance of the other non-residential buildings in the area and the 'tidying up' of the site will reduce visual clutter and improve the appearance of the site in accordance with Policy DP26 and Principle DG44 of the Design Guide.
- 5.5. The site is situated in an accessible area with regard to public transport, there will be no significant increase in vehicle numbers accessing the site and so no adverse impacts on the highways network, and the development will comply with the parking standards in accordance with policies DP21 and CDNP10.
- 5.6. The proposed development would avoid any adverse impacts on the nearby ancient woodland or any individual trees and their root protection areas in accordance with policies DP37 and CDNP09. It would also conserve and enhance protected sites and species in accordance with policies DP38 and CDNP09.
- 5.7. The proposed development would achieve a 23.46% net gain in biodiversity which exceeds the 10% mandatory requirement.
- 5.8. The building will not be heated and will minimise energy consumption through the use of low-LED fittings. As such a full Energy Statement is not required and the proposed development will minimise energy use through design in accordance with Policy DP39.
- 5.9. The proposal would have no impact on the key characteristics of the local landscape character and will not impact on any public views across the landscape in accordance with Policy DP12 and would not result in coalescence of settlements in accordance with policies DP13 and CDNP08.
- 5.10. Consequently, the proposal complies with the NPPF and Development Plan, and therefore, it is requested that planning permission be granted.



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