

Delegated Decision

Sign off Sheet

Ref. No:	DM/25/2781	Case Officer:	Jessica Szollosi
Application Type:	Full Application		
Proposal:	Retrospective application for conversion of an old commercial garage into an office space.		
Site:	91 - 93 Lingfield Road, East Grinstead, West Sussex, RH19 2EL, , , ,		
Validation Date	9 Mar 2026	Overall Expiry Date:	13 May 2026
Pre-Commencement Conditions Required:		Pre-Com Conditions Date Agreed:	
Recommendation:	Permission	Recommendation Date:	19 May 2026
Target Date:	4 May 2026	Recommending Officer Signature:	Jessica Szollosi

Date Legal Agreement Completed: (if applicable)		No of Representations:	0
---	--	------------------------	---

Signed and Agreed By:	Steven King	Date:	20 May 2026
Comments:			

MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL

DM/25/2781

**91 - 93 Lingfield Road, East Grinstead, West Sussex, RH19 2EL, , ,
Retrospective application for conversion of an old commercial garage into an office space.
Mr Mark Chandler**

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

None received

SUMMARY OF CONSULTEES

MSDC Environmental Protection

'Environmental Protection have no concerns. Office use is not inherently noisy and the hours of use are likely to be limited. On this basis, we have no specific comments to make.'

WSCC Highways Authority

'This is a retrospective application for conversion of an old commercial garage into an office space. The application form states that the work was completed on 30/11/2024. The site is located on Lingfield Road, a C-classified road subject to a speed restriction of 30 mph.

The existing garage is accessed from Dormans Park Road, there are no alterations proposed to the existing access arrangement. The proposed development is not anticipated to give rise to a material intensification of use of the existing access point.

As part of the proposals a double-bay garage will be lost. As such, the potential displacement of one car would have to be accommodated on-street. Whilst this would not be anticipated to give rise to a highway safety concern or parking capacity issue in this location, the LPA may wish to consider the potential impacts on on-street parking from an amenity point of view.

The LHA does not consider that this proposal would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety or result in 'severe' cumulative impacts on the operation of the highway network, therefore is not contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 116), and that there are no transport grounds to resist the proposal.'

EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL OBSERVATIONS

No comment.

INTRODUCTION

The application seeks retrospective planning permission pursuant to S.73a of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, for the conversion of an old commercial garage into an office space.

The retrospective planning application does not seek to change the footprint of the building, but does seek to make external alterations including the removal of the wooden garage door; replacing it with part brick and timber studwork frame with grey painted marine ply on the external south facing façade and the installation of a grey aluminium four pane window.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

GR/183/94 - Change of shop front - Permitted 08/09/1994

GR/170/91/AP1 - Amended plans: First floor storage room above existing storage room. Amended plans showing alterations to roof and east elevations - Permitted 15/10/1991

GR/170/91 - First floor storage room above existing storage room - Permitted 23/08/1991

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The proposed site, 91-93 Lingfield Road comprises a variety of attached mixed use buildings located on a C-Classified Road within the built-up area of East Grinstead. The site lies within the Ashdown Forest SPA/SAC 7km sphere of influence. The proposed development is located to the south of the site with entrance on Dormans Park Road via the existing offices.

The retrospective application for the conversion of the garage into office space seeks to extend the existing office space into the garage with access via an internal door through the existing offices.

The buildings on site are constructed with range of materials, including brick, tile hung and natural wood cladding façades, white uPVC fenestration and roofs comprising plain roof tiles, slate and corrugated metal. The site does not offer any off-street parking.

The surrounding locality is characterised by a variety of retail, commercial and residential properties. To the south of the site at 89 Lingfield Road is a mixed-use property containing a butchers with an entrance on Lingfield Road and a residential flat to the rear located behind a brick wall and not visible from the street scene. To the southeast of the site at 8 and 10 Dormans Park Road are two semi-detached residential dwellings with off street parking to the front. These dwellings comprise brick, screened and tile hung facades with plain tile roofs and uPVC fenestration. To the northeast of the site, the roundhouse occupies a variety of small offices and businesses with a large construction yard to the rear of the property and to the west, a hairdresser is located at ground floor with a residential flat above. This property forms part of the wider site.

APPLICATION DETAILS

The application is made pursuant to s.73a of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 for the conversion of an old commercial garage into an office space.

The proposal does not seek to change the footprint of the building. The proposed external alterations associated with the conversion of the garage into office space include the removal of the wooden garage door; replacing it with part brick and timber studwork frame with grey painted marine ply and a grey aluminium four pane window on the south facing elevation of the proposed office.

An internal door leads from the existing offices into the proposed office.

The proposal does not offer any off-street parking.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND LIST OF POLICIES

Planning legislation states that the determination of a planning application shall be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Using this as the starting point the development plan for this part of Mid Sussex consists of the District Plan, Site Allocation Development Plan Document (DPD) and East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan.

National policy (which is contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Policy Guidance) does not form part of the development plan, but it is an important material consideration.

Mid Sussex District Plan

The District Plan was adopted at Full Council on 28th March 2018.

Relevant Policies:

DP1 - Sustainable Economic Development

DP17 - Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation

DP21 - Transport

DP26 - Character and design

DP38 - Biodiversity

Site Allocations DPD

The SADPD was adopted on 29th June 2022. It allocates sufficient housing and employment land to meet identified needs to 2031.

There are no relevant policies.

Neighbourhood Plan

East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan (made 2016)

Relevant policies:

Policy EG3 - Promoting Good Design

Policy EG10 - Employment Provision

Policy EG12 - Car Parking

Policy EG16 - Ashdown Forest Protection

Other Material Considerations

Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2039 Consultation Draft

The District Council is reviewing and updating the District Plan. Upon adoption, the new District Plan 2021 - 2039 will replace the current District Plan 2014-2031 and its policies will have full weight. In accordance with the NPPF, Local Planning Authorities may give weight to relevant policies of the emerging plan according to the stage of preparation; the extent to which there are unresolved objections to the relevant policies; and the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the NPPF. The draft District Plan 2021-2039 (Regulation 19) is currently at Examination and hearings were concluded on the 19th March 2026. The District Plan remains at Examination until the Inspector has published his report, until that time only minimal weight can be given to the Plan and this planning application has been assessed against the policies of the adopted District Plan.

Relevant policies:

DPE1 - Sustainable Economic Development

DPC6 - Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC

DPN2 - Biodiversity Net Gain

DPS1 - Climate Change

Mid Sussex Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

The Council has adopted a 'Mid Sussex Design Guide' 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 planning applications.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is also a material consideration and paragraphs 8, 11, 116, 131 and 135 are considered to be relevant to this application.

ASSESSMENT

It is considered that the main issues that need to be considered in the determination of this application are as follows:

- Sustainable Economic Development
- Transport and Parking
- Design and Character
- Impact on Neighbouring Amenity
- Ashdown Forest
- Biodiversity Net Gain
- Planning Balance and Conclusion

Sustainable Economic Development

Policy DP1 of the Mid Sussex District Plan seeks to support sustainable economic development in appropriate locations with objectives including:

'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'

Policy EG10 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan states that:

'Planning permission will be granted for the redevelopment, extension or alteration of existing B use category business premises. Applications will be granted where they:

- (1) Are on a site defined as previously developed land;*
- (2) Meet the parking requirements of the adopted Development Plan;*
- (3) Provide a high quality landscape setting;*
- (4) Demonstrate that the residual cumulative impacts of development on the transport network are not severe;*
- (5) Meet their own infrastructure needs; and*
- (6) Are in a location and of a scale, form and design which is in character with its surroundings.'*

The retrospective application represents the expansion of existing commercial development by converting the existing garage into office space enabling the growth of the business, thereby providing employment and local services to the surrounding area. The surrounding area is mixed-use in nature and the expansion of the existing offices would not be considered inappropriate in this location.

The site is located within the defined built-up area boundary of East Grinstead. This is considered to be a sustainable location, with access to local services in the town centre and public transport links, including bus stops on nearby Lingfield Road and East Grinstead Railway Station located 0.9 miles from the site.

The retrospective application does not seek to increase the existing footprint of the garage and due to the limited floorspace the level of use could not easily be intensified. The retrospective application is therefore considered to comply with policy DP1 of the Mid Sussex District Plan and policy EG10 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan.

Transport and Parking

Policy DP21 of the Mid Sussex District Plan in part states:

'The scheme provides adequate car parking for the proposed development, taking into account the accessibility of the development, the type, mix and use of the development and the availability and opportunities for public transport; and with the relevant Neighbourhood Plan where applicable;'

Policy EG12 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan states that:

'Planning permission will only be granted where vehicle-parking provision, including cycle parking, is in accordance with West Sussex County Council adopted parking standards and it does not dominate the street scene.'

WSCC Highways Authority have responded to the application, concluding that:

'The LHA does not consider that this proposal would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety or result in 'severe' cumulative impacts on the operation of the highway network, therefore is not contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 116), and that there are no transport grounds to resist the proposal.'

Paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework 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.'

The retrospective application seeks to convert an old garage into an office space which would result in the loss of a parking. The site is located on Lingfield Road, a C-classified road subject to a speed restriction of 30mph.

The site is accessed via Dormans Park Road and the proposal would not be considered to materially intensify the existing access point or give rise to highway safety concerns or the increase in on-street parking dominating the street scene, given the size of the development.

The site is sustainably located within the built-up area of East Grinstead and is within walking distance to public transport links, including bus stops and the East Grinstead Railway Station. Furthermore, on-street parking is available on Lingfield Road and Dorman Park Road.

Given the availability of on-street parking and public transport links, and the modest scale of the development, the parking arrangement would be considered acceptable as the proposal is unlikely to give rise to a significant increase in movement to or from the site.

Taking into account the above, the application is considered to comply with policy DP21 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, policy EG12 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan and paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Design and Character

Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan states:

'All development and surrounding spaces, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings and replacement dwellings, will be well designed and reflect the distinctive character of the towns and villages while being sensitive to the countryside. All applicants will be required to demonstrate that development:

- is of high quality design and layout and includes appropriate landscaping and greenspace;*
- contributes positively to, and clearly defines, public and private realms and should normally be designed with active building frontages facing streets and public open spaces to animate and provide natural surveillance;*
- creates a sense of place while addressing the character and scale of the surrounding buildings and landscape;*
- protects open spaces, trees and gardens that contribute to the character of the area;*
- protects valued townscapes and the separate identity and character of towns and villages;*
- does not cause significant harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants of new dwellings, including taking account of the impact on privacy, outlook, daylight and sunlight, and noise, air and light pollution (see Policy DP29);*
- creates a pedestrian-friendly layout that is safe, well connected, legible and accessible;*

- incorporates well integrated parking that does not dominate the street environment, particularly where high density housing is proposed;
- positively addresses sustainability considerations in the layout and the building design; o take the opportunity to encourage community interaction by creating layouts with a strong neighbourhood focus/centre; larger (300+ unit) schemes will also normally be expected to incorporate a mixed use element;
- optimises the potential of the site to accommodate development.'

Policy EG3 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan contains a similar ethos and states:

'Planning permission will normally be granted where development proposals meet the following criteria:

- a) The form of the proposed development is proportionate and in keeping with the scale, height, materials and site coverage of the surrounding area;*
- b) The layout of the proposed development respects the topography and character of the site, protects important landscape features and does not harm adjoining amenity;*
- c) The proposal does not result in the loss of buildings or spaces that would have an unacceptable impact on the character of the area;*
- d) The proposal ensures satisfactory means of access for vehicles and pedestrians and provides adequate parking, cycle storage and refuse facilities on site;*
- e) The design of new buildings and the layout of spaces, including footways, car and cycle parking areas, should be permeable and provide connectivity with neighbouring areas;*
- f) New development must be inclusive and where appropriate make satisfactory provision for the safe and easy access for those with mobility impairment; and*
- g) The design of new developments must result in the creation of a safe and secure environment and incorporate adequate security measures and features to deter crime, fear of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour; and*
- h) Proposals make provision for green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancement. Due to infrastructure constraints within the town, all new development proposals, which generate a net increase in traffic (excluding householder applications), will be required to contribute towards improving the walking and cycle network related to the development and be of a recognised acceptable standard'.*

The proposed garage conversion to offices is a modest development and no alterations are made to the footprint of the building.

The wooden garage door has been removed and replaced with courses of bricks and a treated timber studwork frame with insulation between the studwork and grey painted marine ply on the south elevation with the installation of a grey aluminium four pane window.

In terms of the proposed materials, the grey aluminium window would not be considered to match the existing white uPVC windows and the grey marine ply does not match the existing variety of materials used on the façade which include brick, tile hung and natural wood cladding. These materials would not be considered to integrate seamlessly into the existing building and whilst this is regrettable, the proposal would be considered to have a neutral impact on the design and character of the existing building.

The application relates to an established area of East Grinstead, where properties are characterised by a variety of materials, designs, scale and use. The proposal would not be considered to detract from or cause harm to the character and design of the surrounding properties on Lingfield Road and Dormans Park Road.

Taking into account the above, whilst the materials used may not integrate seamlessly into the existing building, the proposed development would not be considered harmful from a design and character perspective when considering its impact on the existing building and the surrounding area, and as such, the proposal is deemed to comply with the above part of policy DP26 of the District Plan and policy EG3 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan.

Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

In terms of impact on neighbouring amenities, Policy DP26 of the District Plan states proposals should *'not cause significant harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants of new*

dwelling, including taking account of the impact on privacy, outlook, daylight and sunlight, and noise, air and light pollution'.

A similar ethos is contained within the Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD.

The application for the conversion of the garage into offices does not include any change to the existing footprint of the building and as such, it is not considered that the proposal will have a negative impact on outlook, daylight and sunlight and air and light pollution.

The converted office would not be considered to cause any overlooking and privacy concerns given that the occupants/employees at the site will be entering the offices via the existing premises door. Moreover, the installed window at ground level on the south elevation looks out onto the pavement and road and not directly into any neighbouring properties.

The property to the south of the site is not visible as it is screened by a brick wall and given the separation of distance between the site and the residential dwellings set back from the road behind driveways to the southeast of the site, it is unlikely that these properties would experience any privacy or overlooking concerns. Moreover, the proposed use is considered to be relatively modest in its nature and due to the limited floor space, the proposed level of use could not easily be intensified.

Further to the above, offices are not considered to be inherently noisy and the hours of operation proposed are limited to business hours and weekdays only.

With regards to parking amenity, given the availability of on-street parking in Dormans Park Road and Lingfield Road as well as public transport links, the Council would not consider the change of use from garage to office to give rise to a significant increase in on-street parking which would impact the street scene.

Taking the above into account, it is considered that the proposal would not cause significant harm to the amenities of nearby residents. The proposal is therefore, considered to comply with the above-mentioned part of policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan and the Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD.

Ashdown Forest

Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (the 'Habitats Regulations'), the competent authority - in this case, Mid Sussex District Council - has a duty to ensure that any plans or projects that they regulate (including plan making and determining planning applications) will have no adverse effect on the integrity of a European site of nature conservation importance. The European site of focus is the Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The potential effects of development on Ashdown Forest were assessed during the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) process for the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031. This process identified likely significant effects on the Ashdown Forest SPA from recreational disturbance and on the Ashdown Forest SAC from atmospheric pollution.

A Habitats Regulations Assessment has been undertaken for the proposed development in this planning application.

Recreational disturbance

Increased recreational activity arising from new residential development and related population growth is likely to disturb the protected near-ground and ground nesting birds on Ashdown Forest.

In accordance with advice from Natural England, the HRA for the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031, and as detailed in District Plan Policy DP17, mitigation measures are necessary to counteract the effects of a potential increase in recreational pressure and are required for developments resulting in a net increase in dwellings within a 7km zone of influence around the Ashdown Forest SPA. A Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM)

mitigation approach has been developed. This mitigation approach has been agreed with Natural England.

This planning application does not result in a net increase in dwellings within the 7km zone of influence and so mitigation is not required.

Atmospheric pollution

Increased traffic emissions as a consequence of new development may result in additional atmospheric pollution on Ashdown Forest. The main pollutant effects of interest are acid deposition and eutrophication by nitrogen deposition. High levels of nitrogen may detrimentally affect the composition of an ecosystem and lead to loss of species.

The potential effects of the proposed development are incorporated into the overall results of the transport model prepared for the Mid Sussex Transport Study, which indicates there would not be an overall impact on Ashdown Forest. This means that there is not considered to be a significant in combination effect on the Ashdown Forest SAC by this development proposal.

Conclusion of the Habitats Regulations Assessment

The Habitats Regulations Assessment concludes that there would be no likely significant effects, alone or in combination, on the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC from the proposed development.

No mitigation is required in relation to the Ashdown Forest SPA or SAC.

A full HRA (that is, the appropriate assessment stage that ascertains the effect on integrity of the European site) of the proposed development is not required.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity net gain is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

This planning permission is being granted retrospectively on an application made pursuant to S. 73a of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and is therefore exempt from the requirement to provide biodiversity net gain.

PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

Planning legislation requires the application to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. It is therefore necessary for the planning application to be assessed against the policies in the Development Plan and then to take account of other material planning considerations including the NPPF. The Development Plan in this instance consists of the Mid Sussex District Plan, the Site Allocations Development Plan Document and the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan.

For the reasons set out within the assessment section, it is considered that the proposal complies with policy DP1 of the Mid Sussex District Plan and policy EG10 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan as it promotes economic development and expansion within a sustainable location.

Furthermore, the proposal would not be considered to have a negative impact on highway safety or result in severe cumulative impacts on the operation of the highway network, thus according with policy DP21 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, policy EG12 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan and paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

In terms of design and character, the use of differentiating materials are noted, however, they would not be considered to cause substantial harm when judging the overall scale, form, use and character of the area within which the proposal is located and no substantial loss to neighbour amenity is identified.

Therefore, the proposal is considered to accord with policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan and policy EG3 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan.

The Habitats Regulations Assessment concludes that there would be no likely significant effects, alone or in combination, on the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC from the proposed development, thus complying with policy DP17 of the Mid Sussex District Plan and policy EG16 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan.

In light of the above, the development is acceptable in planning terms and planning permission should be granted.

Decision: Permission

Case Officer: Jessica Szollosi