

Design & Access Statement

Wishing Wells Farm, Old London Road, Hickstead, West Sussex, RH17 5LZ

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1.0

Introduction

The purpose of this Design and Access statement is to support the application for the consent sought on behalf of Mr & Mrs Robbins for the development of a new building designed to accommodate luxury horse lorries, associated offices and a valeting facility for high-end vehicles. In addition, the proposal includes the creation of a new retail premises with dedicated customer parking. The scheme also addresses access improvements, including the removal of the existing gates and installation of a new set positioned 16.3 metres from the back edge of the pedestrian path to safely accommodate a 12.5 -metre lorry.

The development will further incorporate renewable energy services, with proposed measures such as roof-mounted solar photovoltaic panels, high-efficiency air-source heat pumps to serve the building and electric-vehicle charging infrastructure to support both commercial operations and customer use. These features are intended to reduce the site's carbon footprint, improve energy performance and contribute to long-term sustainability goals.

This document addresses the design and access issues as well as relevant planning policy

Relevant Planning History

- DM/22/3130 - Demolition of existing commercial building and erection 4no. new buildings containing 10 units and 1no. replacement unit within Use Class E (a,c,g,) associated car parking, landscaping and outdoor retail display. All accessed from the existing cross-over location. (Amended plans received 24/02/23 and Transport Technical Note received 05/06/23) – Withdrawn January 2025

Pre-application advice has been sought for the proposed development and feedback received was generally supportive and provided some guidance areas to be mindful of during the design process.

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2.0

Site & Surrounding

The site comprises of a parcel of undeveloped land with no existing buildings, which has been purchased from the owners of Wishing Wells Farm shop. It is currently overgrown, with an area of hardstanding and is enclosed on several sides by metal shipping-container panels.

The site is located off the A2300, (Old London Road) in Hickstead, accessed via a slip road running parallel to the main A23. The wider area features a mix of residential and commercial buildings of various uses, to the south, north and west.

The traditional farm shop breeds and sell a range of poultry, lambs, emu's, and is one of the very few farm shops in the south that breed pygmy goats. In addition, the shop caters for farmers/smallholders, stocking animal feeds, bedding, housing and rearing equipment as well as firewood and coal.

The existing site also houses a fishing shop, offering both sales and advice to new and established fishing enthusiasts along with a dog grooming service. All of these services will continue.

Further to the South is a residential dwelling with a large metal barn to the side and beyond that a cattery.

To the North of the site is a commercial premises occupied by a company providing equipment to the construction industry.

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Amount

The proposal consists of the construction of 2No. new commercial buildings, comprising of:

- Large building to the rear to accommodate luxury horse lorries and associated offices
- Covered area to the side for valeting high end vehicles
- Smaller building to the front providing retail premises and associated customer parking
- Incorporating renewable energy services, roof-mounted solar photovoltaic panels, electric-vehicle charging infrastructure for both employee and customer use and rainwater attenuation and filtration to be used for the vehicle valeting

3.0

Use

The proposed use is for the sales and valeting of high-end luxury horse boxes, associated valeting. In addition, a retail premises selling equestrian equipment and accessories, with associated parking.

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4.0

Relevant Planning Policy

Planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The following policies have been considered:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied.

2. Achieving sustainable development

Paragraph 8 – Achieving sustainable development

- a) An economic objective
- b) A social objective
- c) An environmental objective

The proposals are mindful of all three core principals; social, economic and environmental factors.

4. Decision Making

Paragraph 39 Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

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6. Building a strong competitive economy

Supporting a prosperous rural economy, paragraph 88:

- a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well- designed new buildings.
- b) The development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses.

The proposal will enable three businesses to grow and create new employment opportunities on a parcel of land that has previously been unused. The site is conveniently located just a 20 minute cycle ride from Twineham village, five minutes from the Hickstead All England Jumping Course and within easy reach of several local bus routes with the nearest stop at the Castle Inn, Hickstead approximately a 5 minute walk away.

The proposal also supports the expansion of the equestrian businesses while the acquisition of the parcel of the land has allowed the farm shop to develop further and operate on a more sustainable basis.

12. Achieving well-designed places

Paragraph 135

- a. Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development
- b. Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping
- c. Are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)
- d. establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e. optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f. create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users⁵¹; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

The proposals are mindful, and adhere, to this policy.

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14. meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

Planning and Flood Risk

According to the Mid Sussex District Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, the site is at low risk of fluvial and pluvial flooding.

15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment

The proposals are mindful, and adhere, to this policy.

Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 – 2031 (Mar 2018) & Twineham Neighbourhood Plan (Mar 2016)

DP1 – Sustainable Economic Development (in part)

‘The total number of additional jobs required within the district over the plan is estimated to be an average of 543 jobs per year. This will be achieved by:

- Encouraging high quality development of land and premises to meet the needs of 21st century businesses;
- Supporting existing businesses, and allowing them room to expand;
- Encouraging inward investment, especially the location, promotion and expansion of clusters or networks of knowledge, creative or high technology industries; and
- Seeking the provision of appropriate infrastructure to support business growth – in particular high speed broadband connections.

Effective use of employment land and premises will be made by:

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

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TNP3 of the Neighbourhood Plan states:

1. Diversification of established agricultural businesses and buildings where it complements the existing farming enterprise and is suitable and appropriate to the existing character of the parish
2. Live-work development in the Parish will be encouraged where suitable and appropriate to the rural setting of the parish

The proposed development will directly contribute to the policy supporting the potential expansion of established rural businesses.

The bespoke equestrian lorry sales facility will employ approximately 10 staff providing high-quality workspace designed to meet the needs of this specialist business.

The new equestrian retail unit will employ 2 individuals enabling the relocation and expansion of the existing Bolney based business into a larger, more functional premises, supporting long term business viability and potential growth,

The existing farm shop which currently supports 5 live-in/work staff – will continue to operate, ensuring the retention of established rural employment.

The proposed will facilitate the growth of high-end equestrian enterprises in close proximity to Hickstead All England Jumping Course and within walking distance of Hickstead and cycling distance of Twineham.

DP12 – Protection and Enhancement of Countryside

'The countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty. Development will be permitted in the countryside, defined as the area outside built-up area boundaries on the Policies Map, provided it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural landscape character of the District, and:

- It is necessary for the purposes of agriculture; or
- It is supported by a specific policy reference either elsewhere in the Plan, a Development Plan Document or relevant neighbourhood.

The site is located in designated countryside and the proposal is not necessary for agricultural purposes, however policies DP1 and DP 14 of the District Plan and Policy TNP3 of the Neighbourhood Plan are relevant.

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DP14 – Sustainable rural development and the rural economy

- 7. To promote a place which is attractive to a full range of businesses, and where local enterprise thrives
- 8. To provide opportunities for people to live and work within their communities, reducing the need for commuting
- 10. To support a strong and diverse rural economy in the villages and the countryside
- 11. To support and enhance the attractiveness of Mid Sussex as a visitor destination

As previously mentioned, the cash injection from the sale of the undeveloped parcel of land will enable the business to enhance its facilities and secure long-term sustainability.

The proposed two new buildings housing the bespoke equestrian horse lorry business and the equestrian retail unit together with the existing traditional farm shop, fishing supplies outlet and dog grooming service, will provide a comprehensive one-stop destination for all smallholding and equestrian needs.

The recent DPS change Premises-Licence under LI/25/0463 LI23/0464 for the Castle Inn London Road Hickstead issued 15/05/25 is for the old restaurant to be replaced with a café 7am – 6pm, used as an overflow for the restaurant during busy periods. Public bar to be redefined as 'pub' and 'restaurant'. In addition, there will be seven hotel rooms upstairs. The old barn will be a 'farm shop'.

The proposals are synergistic with the Castle Inn and existing business and will further enhance the attractiveness of the local area as a visitor destination and complement the proposed rural enterprises site.

DP21 – Sustainable rural development and the rural economy

- The scheme is sustainably located to minimise the need for travel noting there might be circumstances where development needs to be located in the countryside, such as rural economic uses (see policy DP14: Sustainable Rural Development and the Rural Economy);
- Appropriate opportunities to facilitate and promote the increased use of alternative means of transport to the private car, such as the provision of, and access to, safe and convenient routes for walking, cycling and public transport, including suitable facilities for secure and safe cycle parking, have been fully explored and taken up;

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- 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;
- The scheme protects the safety of road users and pedestrians; and
- The scheme does not harm the special qualities of the South Downs National Park or the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty through its transport impacts.

Where practical and viable, developments should be located and designed to incorporate facilities for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles.

The proposals include the creation of a new, separate gated entrance from the highway, incorporating sufficient turning circle space within the site to accommodate the large equestrian lorries, during delivery and collection. A dedicated covered loading area will serve the retail unit, ensuring safe and efficient loading operations away from customer and staff parking.

A total of 11 staff parking spaces will be provided, six of which will be equipped with EV fast-charging points. Two staff spaces will be designated for disabled parking. The retail unit will also have four dedicated customer parking bays, including one disabled-accessible space. In addition, secure cycle parking facilities will be installed to encourage sustainable travel.

As noted previously, the site is conveniently located within easy reach of several local bus routes with the nearest stop at the Castle Inn, Hickstead approximately a 5 minute walk away.

A strong synergy is anticipated between the retail unit, equestrian lorry operations, and the existing farm shop. Whilst proposals may result in more vehicle movements overall, many visitors are expected to make combined trips to both the new retail unit and the established farm shop, reducing the need for separate journeys

The commercial unit will accommodate an existing business relocating from the more rural location of Small Dole, which will help reduce traffic along narrow country lanes. Furthermore, the number of large equestrian lorries entering and exiting the site is expected to be very low-typically no more than one movement per week.

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DP29 – Noise, Air and Light Pollution

The environment, including nationally designated environmental sites, nationally protected landscapes, areas of nature conservation or geological interest, wildlife habitats, and the quality of people's life will be protected from unacceptable levels of noise, light and air pollution by only permitting development where:

Noise pollution:

- It is designed, located and controlled to minimise the impact of noise on health and quality of life, neighbouring properties and the surrounding area;
- If it is likely to generate significant levels of noise it incorporates appropriate noise attenuation measures;

Light pollution:

- The impact on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation areas of artificial lighting proposals (including floodlighting) is minimised in terms of intensity and light fittings;
- The applicant can demonstrate good design including fittings to restrict emissions from proposed schemes;

The proposals are mindful of this policy. All external lighting will be limited to operational business hours, with no illumination during evening or night time periods. As a result, the development will not introduce light spill or skyglow after dusk and therefore, have no adverse impact on dark night skies.

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DP37 – Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

3. To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities;
4. To protect valued characteristics of the built environment for their historical and visual qualities
5. Create and maintain easily accessible green infrastructure, green corridors and spaces around and within the towns and villages to act as wildlife corridors, sustainable transport links and leisure recreational routes.

TNP4: New development will be supported which is in accordance with other policies of the plan and:

1. Respects local landscape quality ensuring that views and vistas wherever possible
2. Takes every opportunity, where practicable and viable, to incorporate features that improve its environmental performance thereby reducing carbon emissions.
3. All development schemes submitted must be accompanied by a landscaping scheme which aims to retain amenity and historic trees and hedges. New tree and hedge planting of native species will be encouraged throughout Twineham Parish.

The existing hedgerow will be retained wherever possible with a 2metre security fence in dark green metal security fence will be installed immediately behind it to secure the site from the public highway when closed. Additional landscaping measures will be incorporated to soften the visual impact of the proposed development and ensure it integrates sympathetically with its rural surroundings, using native species wherever possible.

DP41 Drainage

Proposals for development will need to follow a sequential risk-based approach, ensure development is safe across its lifetime and not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere. The District Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) should be used to identify areas at present and future flood risk from a range of sources including fluvial (rivers and streams), surface water (pluvial), groundwater, infrastructure and reservoirs.

Particular attention will be paid to those areas of the District that have experienced flooding in the past and proposals for development should seek to reduce the risk of flooding by achieving a reduction from existing run-off rates.

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Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) should be implemented in all new developments of 10 dwellings or more, or equivalent non-residential or mixed development unless demonstrated to be inappropriate, to avoid any increase in flood risk and protect surface and ground water quality. Arrangements for the long-term maintenance and management of SuDS should also be identified.

For the redevelopment of brownfield sites, any surface water draining to the foul sewer must be disconnected and managed through SuDS following the remediation of any previously contaminated land.

SuDS should be sensitively designed and located to promote improved biodiversity, an enhanced landscape and good quality spaces that improve public amenities in the area, where possible.

The preferred hierarchy of managing surface water drainage from any development is:

1. Infiltration Measures
2. Attenuation and discharge to watercourses; and if these cannot be met,
3. Discharge to surface water only sewers.

Land that is considered to be required for current and future flood management will be safeguarded from development and proposals will have regard to relevant flood risk plans and strategies.

According to the Mid Sussex District Strategic Flood map the site is located in an area classified as low risk for both fluvial and pluvial flood risk.

A full drainage assessment will be undertaken as part of the drainage strategy. Surface water will be managed through on site attenuation measures, with stored water subsequently recycled for use within the lorry valeting facility.

DP38 - Biodiversity

Biodiversity will be protected and enhanced by ensuring development:

- Contributes and takes opportunities to improve, enhance, manage and restore biodiversity and green infrastructure, so that there is a net gain in biodiversity, including through creating new designated sites and locally relevant habitats, and incorporating biodiversity features within developments; and

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- Protects existing biodiversity, so that there is no net loss of biodiversity. Appropriate measures should be taken to avoid and reduce disturbance to sensitive habitats and species. Unavoidable damage to biodiversity must be offset through ecological enhancements and mitigation measures (or compensation measures in exceptional circumstances); and
- Minimises habitat and species fragmentation and maximises opportunities to enhance and restore ecological corridors to connect natural habitats and increase coherence and resilience; and
- Promotes the restoration, management and expansion of priority habitats in the District; and
- Avoids damage to, protects and enhances the special characteristics of internationally designated Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation; nationally designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and locally designated Sites of Nature Conservation Importance, Local Nature Reserves and Ancient Woodland or to other areas identified as being of nature conservation or geological interest, including wildlife corridors, aged or veteran trees, Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, and Nature Improvement Areas.

Designated sites will be given protection and appropriate weight according to their importance and the contribution they make to wider ecological networks.

Valued soils will be protected and enhanced, including the best and most versatile agricultural land, and development should not contribute to unacceptable levels of soil pollution.

Geodiversity will be protected by ensuring development prevents harm to geological conservation interests, and where possible, enhances such interests. Geological conservation interests include Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites.

Please refer to Wychwood Environmental Ltd, Biodiversity Net Gain and Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Reports issued January 2026

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5.0

Scale of Development

The proposal comprises of the construction of a new purpose-built facility designed to accommodate high-end horse lorries, together with associated with office space and a valeting unit. The development also includes the provision of a new retail unit with dedicated customer parking, creating a synergetic mixed-use commercial site.

The development includes essential upgrades to site access. The existing gates will be removed and replaced with a new set positioned 12.5 metres back from highway to allow safe waiting and entry for a 12-metre lorry without obstructing traffic. The access point will be widened to facilitate improved manoeuvrability for larger vehicles and ensure operational safety.

The scale of development also incorporates a range of renewable and low-carbon technologies. Roof-mounted solar photovoltaic panels, high efficiency air-source heat pumps and 6no electric-vehicle charging points will be installed to support the commercial activities. These measures collectively seek to reduce the carbon footprint, improve energy efficiency and contribute to long-term sustainability.

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6.0

Layout, Landscaping, Design and Appearance

Layout

The proposed site layout is shown on drawing 304.PL.04. The larger commercial building is positioned towards the rear of the site, providing sufficient space for the accommodation of the high-end horse lorries and associated offices together with a valeting facility for high-end vehicles. The proposed layout ensures the operational activities are within a dedicated area, maintaining efficient flow of vehicles.

The smaller retail unit is located to the front of the site, providing direct access for customers, with dedicated parking to the front of the unit, providing safe and convenient parking for both vehicles and pedestrians.

The layout has been considered to ensure smooth operations between both commercial and retail elements while maintaining a coherent overall site plan. Access has been designed to accommodate larger vehicles safely, including the repositioned gates, without impeding customer movement or traffic flow.

The design also incorporates areas for landscaping and sustainable drainage measures, which contribute to the sustainability. The arrangement of the buildings and circulation space has been considered taking into account both practicality and safety.

Landscaping

The existing hedge along the frontage will be maintained and enhance if required, with new native species planting envisaged. Further hard and soft landscaping will be incorporated within the proposals. Notwithstanding this all the existing trees along the north boundary and vegetation towards the north will be maintained

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Design & Appearance

Retail Unit – Materials

Walls:	Brick plinth with Millboard Burnt cedar cladding to front elevation; Face brickwork to side and rear elevations using Freshfield Lane Bricks
Roof:	Clay tiles – Sandtoft 2020
Window:	Black powder coated aluminium
Doors:	Black Powder coated aluminium
Guttering:	Black pvc-u



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Offices and Vehicle building – Materials

Walls:	Black Grey
Roof:	
Window:	Black powder coated aluminium
Doors:	Black powder coated aluminium Dark grey roller shutters
Guttering:	Black pvc-u



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7.0

Access and Parking

The access point to the site has been designed to safely accommodate large vehicles, including 12.5metres. As part of the proposed, scheme, the existing gates will be removed and replaced with a new set positioned 16.3 metres from the back edge of the pedestrian path, allowing vehicles to enter and exit the site safely without obstructing the public road.

Within the site, circulation routes have been carefully arranged to provide clear and safe access for both commercial and customer cars. Dedicated parking is provided for the retail unit ensuring convenient spaces for customers and dedicated parking spaces including 6 spaces with fast charging points.

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8.0 Conclusion

The proposed development has been carefully designed to provide a high-quality, functional, and sustainable mixed use facility. The layout ensures efficient of the commercial and retail elements while maintaining safe and convenient access for vehicles and pedestrians. The choice of materials, incorporation of renewable energy measures and sustainable drainage solutions demonstrate a commitment to long-term environmental performance.

Overall, the scheme responds positively to the character and context of the surrounding area, providing a well-considered development.

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