

Delegated Decision

Sign off Sheet

Ref. No:	DM/25/2993	Case Officer:	Katherine Williams
Application Type:	Full Application		
Proposal:	Removal of two existing shipping containers and construction of a new timber structure measuring 4m x 6m.		
Site:	Worth Forest Glamping, Worth Lodge Cottage, High Street, Balcombe, West Sussex, RH17 6QG, ,		
Validation Date	24 Nov 2025	Overall Expiry Date:	19 Dec 2025
Pre-Commencement Conditions Required:		Pre-Com Conditions Date Agreed:	
Recommendation:	Permission	Recommendation Date:	22 Dec 2025
Target Date:	19 Jan 2026	Recommending Officer Signature:	Katherine Williams

Date Legal Agreement Completed: (if applicable)		No of Representations:	0
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Signed and Agreed By:	Stephen Ashdown	Date:	23 Dec 2025
Comments:			

MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL

DM/25/2993

**Worth Forest Glamping, Worth Lodge Cottage, High Street, Balcombe, West Sussex, RH17 6QG,
Removal of two existing shipping containers and construction of a new timber structure
measuring 4m x 6m.
Mr And Mrs Whittingham**

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATION

None received

SUMMARY OF CONSULTEES

None received

PARISH COUNCIL OBSERVATIONS

Balcombe Parish Council has no objection as long as the new proposed timber structure remains for storage usage and not for residential use.

INTRODUCTION

The application seeks planning permission for the removal of two existing shipping containers and construction of a new timber structure measuring 4m x 6m.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

DM/25/2433 - Variation of Condition 2 relating to planning reference DM/24/2404. Granted
DM/24/3124 - Demolition of existing porch, construction of new porch and two-storey rear extension, together with associated internal and external alterations. Granted
DM/24/2404 - Proposed erection of a detached garage, workshop and store/office over for the use of Worth Glamping Ltd (Amended description 15/11/2024). Granted
DM/23/2749 - Construction of detached garage with adjacent workshop and storage over. Granted
DM/21/0240 - Permission to add two camping pods to the existing private camping facility. Granted
DM/16/3532 - Change of use of part of the land within the curtilage of Worth Lodge Cottage to enable the provision of a private camping facility for six months of the year. Granted
11/02474/FUL - Two storey side extension and alterations to existing house. Granted
11/02089/FUL - Relocation of vehicle access and drive off a public highway. Granted

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The application property is located off the southern side of High Street, with the glamping site further to the south. The site is located within the countryside and the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The locality is characterised by largely areas of woodland with residential properties positioned sporadically along the highway. The properties are generally positioned close to the highway and contribute to the character of the area and the streetscene. The application property consists of a large two storey detached dwellinghouse which is positioned centrally within the plot with the existing access and parking area located to the western side. The glamping site utilises the same access as the dwellinghouse with the access continuing to the south which is positioned within an area of woodland. The property is partly obscured from the highway with perimeter close boarded fencing and mature hedging. The dwellinghouse has a traditional form and appearance with pitched gable roof forms with a central chimney stack, and is constructed in brick, hanging tiles, plain roof tiles and timber fenestration.

APPLICATION DETAILS

The proposed store building would replace two existing shipping containers on the site. The containers have been placed on the land without consent, however, appear to have been in place for some time.

The proposed building would have a width and depth of 4 metres and 6 metres, with a pitched roof form which would have an eaves height and overall height of some 2.1 metres and 2.5 metres. The building would be constructed in timber weatherboarding and fenestration with red shingle roofing.

The proposed building would be positioned in a similar location to one of the existing shipping containers it would replace and would be used for storage in association with the existing glamping and wedding business.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND LIST OF POLICIES

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

Specifically Section 70 (2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 states:

'In dealing with such an application the authority shall have regard to:

- a) The provisions of the development plan, so far as material to application,*
- b) And local finance considerations, so far as material to the application, and*
- c) Any other material considerations.'*

Section 38(6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 provides:

'If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.'

The requirement to determine applications "in accordance with the plan" does not mean applications must comply with each and every policy, but is to be approached on the basis of the plan taken as a whole. This reflects the fact, acknowledged by the Courts, that development plans can have broad statements of policy, many of which may be mutually irreconcilable so that in a particular case one must give way to another.

Under section 38(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 if a policy contained in a development plan for an area conflicts with another policy in the development plan, the conflict must be resolved in favour of the policy which is contained in the last document to be adopted, approved or published.

Using this as the starting point the development plan for this part of Mid Sussex consists of the District Plan, Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan and Site Allocation DPD.

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 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
- DP12 - Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside
- DP16 - High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- DP26 - Character and Design

Site Allocations DPD

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

No relevant policies.

Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan (made September 2016)

Relevant policies:

Policy 3 - Design

Other Legislation

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 the stage 1 hearings were concluded on the 31st October 2024. There are unresolved objections to some of the Policies in the draft District Plan and as such, 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:

DPS1 - Climate Change
DPS2 - Sustainable Design and Construction
DPN2 - Biodiversity Net Gain
DPC1 - Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside
DPC4 - High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
DPB1 - Character and Design
DPE1 - Sustainable Economic Development

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)

Paragraph 12 of the NPPF states *'The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood plans that form part of the development plan), permission should not usually be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed.'*

Paragraph 39 of the NPPF states *'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.'*

With specific reference to decision-taking paragraph 48 states that planning decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

National Planning Policy Guidance

National Design Guide

Ministerial Statement and Design Guide

On 1 October 2019 the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government made a statement relating to design. The thrust of the statement was that the Government was seeking to improve the quality of design and drive up the quality of new homes. The Government also published a National Design Guide, which is a material planning consideration.

The National Design Guide provides guidance on what the Government considers to be good design and provides examples of good practice. It notes that social, economic and environmental change will influence the planning, design and construction of new homes and places.

Other Planning Guidance

High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029

ASSESSMENT

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

- Principle of Development
- Design and Character
- Impact on the High Weald AONB
- Impact on neighbour amenities
- Impact on parking provision
- Biodiversity Net Gain

Principle of Development

Planning legislation holds 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 in Mid Sussex consists of the Mid Sussex District Plan (2018), together with the Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan and the Site Allocation DPD.

Policy DP12 of the Mid Sussex District Plan states:

'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 of built-up area boundaries on the Policies Map, provided it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and 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 Plan.'*

Policy DP16 of the Mid Sussex District Plan states that *'small scale proposals which support the economy and social well-being of the AONB that are compatible with the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty will be supported.'*

Paragraph 88 of the NPPF states:

'Planning policies and decisions should enable:

- 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;*
- c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and*
- d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.'*

The proposal relates to the erection of a storage building and would be positioned within the residential curtilage of Worth Lodge Cottage to be used in association with the existing glamping business to the south. The proposal would facilitate the existing employment contribution it makes to the rural economy. The proposal would be visible from the access of the property onto the highway, and would be seen within the context of the curtilage of the property from the streetscene.

It is therefore considered that although the proposal would not be used for an agricultural purpose it would support an existing business within the countryside which would protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. It is therefore considered that the proposal would comply with policies DP12 and DP16, and acceptable in principle.

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 DP27);*
- 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;*
- 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 3 of the Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan echoes the ethos of this policy.

The Mid Sussex Design Guide requires all development to be of a high standard of design.

The proposal is considered to be of a form, scale and design which is in proportion and appropriate to the character of the property. The building would be located to the west of the dwellinghouse and to the south of the existing parking area. A garage building has also been granted adjacent to the proposed

building, should this building be constructed the proposal would be seen alongside this building. It is noted that the building would be some 26 metres from dwellinghouse, and therefore visually separate when viewed from the highway. However, due to the size and scale of the proposed building is considered appropriate to the size of the curtilage of the property and would be ancillary to the existing glamping business operated at the property. It is therefore considered that the proposal would reflect the character and scale of the existing property and the character of the locality.

Impact on the AONB

The legal framework for AONBs in England and Wales is provided by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000 which at Section 82 reaffirms the primary purpose of AONBs: to conserve and enhance natural beauty. Section 84 of the CRoW requires Local Planning Authorities to 'take all such action as appears to them expedient for accomplishment of the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB'.

Mid Sussex District Plan policy DP16 states:

'Development within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), as shown on the Policies Maps, will only be permitted where it conserves or enhances natural beauty and has regard to the High Weald AONB Management Plan, in particular;

- *the identified landscape features or components of natural beauty and to their setting;*
- *the traditional interaction of people with nature, and appropriate land management;*
- *character and local distinctiveness, settlement pattern, sense of place and setting of the AONB;*
- and*
- *the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage.*

Small scale proposals which support the economy and social well-being of the AONB that are compatible with the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty will be supported.

Development on land that contributes to the setting of the AONB will only be permitted where it does not detract from the visual qualities and essential characteristics of the AONB, and in particular'

Paragraphs 189 of the NPPF states that

'Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

A similar ethos is found within policy 3 of the Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan, and the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan requiring proposals to conserve and enhance the AONB.

Given the design, form and scale of the proposal in relation to the existing property and materials within the locality it is considered that the proposal would not have an impact on the AONB and would conserve it.

Impact on neighbouring properties

DP26 states:

"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);"

The closest neighbouring property is Monks Garden Cottage, which is some 250 metres from the application site. Given the significant separation distance, it is considered that the proposal would not cause harm to the amenities of neighbouring properties.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity net gain is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain this application is comprises development below the de-minimis threshold meaning that this development is exempt from providing biodiversity net gain.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in principle, appropriate in terms of design, size and scale to the surrounding buildings and would not impact on the AONB, and would not cause harm to the amenities of neighbouring properties. Therefore, the proposal complies with Mid Sussex District Plan policies DP12, DP16, and DP26, policy 3 of the Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan and the relevant provisions of the NPPF. The application therefore accords with the Development Plan and is considered acceptable.

Decision: Permission

Case Officer: Katherine Williams