

Delegated Decision

Sign off Sheet

Ref. No:	DM/25/3199	Case Officer:	Andrew Watt
Application Type:	Full Application		
Proposal:	Erection of a two-storey gym and dining building with associated kitchen, plant, and external works, within the existing educational use of the site.		
Site:	Hurstpierpoint College, College Lane, Hurstpierpoint, Hassocks, West Sussex, BN6 9JS, ,		
Validation Date	17 Dec 2025	Overall Expiry Date:	6 Feb 2026
Pre-Commencement Conditions Required:	Yes	Pre-Com Conditions Date Agreed:	20 Mar 2026
Recommendation:	Permission	Recommendation Date:	20 Mar 2026
Target Date:	18 Mar 2026	Recommending Officer Signature:	Andrew Watt

Date Legal Agreement Completed: (if applicable)		No of Representations:	0
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Signed and Agreed By:	Joanne Fisher	Date:	23 Mar 2026
Comments:			

MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL

DM/25/3199

**Hurstpierpoint College, College Lane, Hurstpierpoint, Hassocks, West Sussex, BN6 9JS,
Erection of a two-storey gym and dining building with associated kitchen, plant, and external
works, within the existing educational use of the site.**

Mr Dan Higgins

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

None.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTEES

MSDC Conservation Officer

No objection, subject to conditions.

MSDC Consultant Ecologist

No objection, subject to conditions.

MSDC Contaminated Land Officer

No objection.

MSDC Drainage Engineer

No objection, subject to condition.

MSDC Tree Officer

No objection, subject to condition.

WSCC Highways

No objection.

NatureSpace Partnership - West Sussex Newt Officer

Informative requested.

Southern Water

Informative and condition requested.

TOWN / PARISH COUNCIL OBSERVATIONS

The committee recommends that MSDC grant permission.

INTRODUCTION

Full planning permission is sought for the erection of a two-storey gym and dining building with associated kitchen, plant, and external works, within the existing educational use of the site.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

There is a substantial history to the College site as a whole but of most relevance:

In February 2015, planning permission was granted for a 10m x 15m insulated clear span temporary building for use as a gym for the duration of 10 years (14/04696/FUL).

In October 2018, planning permission was granted for the proposed relocation of existing temporary gym building (DM/18/2250). The permission was implemented and expired on 1 October 2021.

In January 2019, planning permission was granted for the demolition of the existing theatre building and single-storey extensions and the construction of a new swimming pool building and associated landscape works (DM/18/4015). In May 2025, planning permission was granted for the construction of a first floor extension and access stair at the northern end of the new swimming pool building, accommodating two classrooms, staff office and ancillary accommodation (part retrospective) (DM/25/0063). Both permissions (immediately adjoining the application site to the east) have been implemented.

In November 2024, a temporary 3-year permission was granted for structures including a 30 x 50m dining and sports hall, a 15m x 10m gym, a 15m x 10m golf simulator, and four containers related to transportation operations (DM/23/2848). This permission runs until 22 November 2027.

In May 2025, prior approval was granted for the demolition of the redundant swimming pool to enable future development (DM/25/1068). The demolition has been carried out.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The site refers to a former swimming pool building (now demolished), which is located to the south of the Hurstpierpoint College campus. It fronts onto a quadrangle enclosed by several buildings of varying ages, including a large sports centre immediately behind (to the south), a theatre adjacent to the west and a new swimming pool building immediately to the east. Further to the north-east, at the heart of the campus, are Grade II listed buildings - the main quadrangle of College buildings and Star House. The site (and the wider College campus) is located within the countryside to the north of Hurstpierpoint.

The site lies within an area at risk of surface water and inland watercourse flooding. It is designated as a Great Crested Newt - Impact Risk Zone (Red).

APPLICATION DETAILS

Full planning permission is sought for the erection of a two-storey gym and dining building with associated kitchen, plant, and external works, within the existing educational use of the site.

In detail, the new building will be sited on the recently demolished former swimming pool building, immediately in front of the larger sports hall to the south and immediately adjacent to the recently completed swimming pool building to the east. The plans make clear that the elevations to the sports hall and swimming pool buildings are fully abutted and therefore no external elevations are formed (i.e. on the southern and eastern sides). Its staggered front elevation will face directly onto the modern campus quadrangle and aligned with the geometry of the swimming pool building extension (DM/25/0063) to retain views of the Performing Arts Centre building to the south-west of the quadrangle. Maximum dimensions of this irregular-shaped building will be approximately 17m to the front (width) and 4.2m to the side (depth) and heights ranging from 8.1m at the entrance, 8.7m facing onto the remainder of the quadrangle and 10.4m on the majority of the western elevation with part of it sunken into the ground.

An existing store to the side of the sports hall has been removed to enable construction access, but will be re-instated once complete.

Internally the building will contain a gym, circulation and breakout areas and sanitary provision on the ground floor; with dining hall (for 200 students at one sitting), kitchen and servery and ancillary plant and

storage on the first floor, totalling 1,242 sq m. Both floors will be aligned with the floors for the swimming pool building, enabling direct movement between them internally. This means that the western elevation will have a semi-basement level appearance, merely reflecting the lower internal ground floor levels matching those of the existing sports hall to the south.

Elevationally, the building will read as a seamless extension to the new swimming pool building to the east, being of the same height, with consistent parapet and cornice lines. The stepped massing is intended to reduce the apparent bulk and its recessed entrance will be located almost adjacent (in close proximity) to the swimming pool entrance. Materials will be similar to this adjoining building throughout (i.e. buff coloured bricks, grey perforated aluminium panels and glazing frames. There will be a semi-basement area on the western elevation

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.

Using this as the starting point, the development plan for this part of Mid Sussex consists of the Mid Sussex District Plan, Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) and the Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Neighbourhood Plan.

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

Mid Sussex District Plan (Mar 2018)

The Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 was adopted at Full Council on 28 March 2018.

Relevant policies:

Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside
Policy DP17: Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
Policy DP21: Transport
Policy DP24: Leisure and Cultural Facilities and Activities
Policy DP25: Community Facilities and Local Services
Policy DP26: Character and Design
Policy DP34: Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets
Policy DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
Policy DP38: Biodiversity
Policy DP39: Sustainable Design and Construction
Policy DP41: Flood Risk and Drainage

Site Allocations DPD

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

There are no relevant policies.

Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Neighbourhood Plan (Mar 2015)

Mid Sussex District Council formally 'made' the Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Neighbourhood Plan part of the Local Development Plan for the Parish of Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common as of 18 March 2015. The policies contained therein carry full weight as part of the Development Plan for planning decisions within Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common.

Relevant policies:

Policy HurstC1: Conserving and Enhancing Character
Policy HurstC5: Hurstpierpoint College

Other Legislation

Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Other Material Considerations

Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2039 - Submission Draft (Regulation 19)

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 31 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
DPS4: Flood Risk and Sustainable Drainage
DPS6: Health and Wellbeing
DPN1: Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Nature Recovery
DPN2: Biodiversity Net Gain
DPN4: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
DPN10: Land Stability and Contaminated Land
DPC1: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside
DPC6: Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC
DPB1: Character and Design
DPB2: Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets
DPI6: Community and Cultural Facilities and Local Services

Mid Sussex Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (Nov 2020)

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 4 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.

Relevant design principles include:

Principle DG11: Respond to the existing townscape, heritage assets and historic landscape
Principle DG37: Deliver high quality buildings that minimise their environmental impact
Principle DG38: Design buildings with architectural integrity and a sense of place
Principle DG39: Deliver appropriately scaled buildings

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Dec 2024)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024 is a material consideration and paragraphs 8 (overarching objectives), 11 (presumption in favour of sustainable development), 12 (status of development plan), 39 (decision-making), 48 (determining applications), 96 (achieving healthy, inclusive

and safe places and beautiful buildings), 98 (social, recreational and cultural facilities and services), 131 and 135 (design), 136 (trees), 166, 167 and 168 (sustainability), 181, 182 (flood risk), 187 (conserving and enhancing the natural environment), 193 (biodiversity and ancient woodland), 196 and 197 (land instability and contamination) and 202-221 (heritage assets) are considered to be relevant to this application.

National Planning Practice Guidance

National Design Guide

Published in 2021, the National Design Guide illustrates how the government considers well-designed places that are beautiful, healthy, greener, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice.

Paragraph 134 of the NPPF sets out that this national document, along with the National Model Design Code, should be used to guide decisions on application in the absence of locally design guides or design codes.

ASSESSMENT

Design and visual impact on the character and appearance of the area

Policy DP12 of the Mid Sussex District Plan states (in part):

'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 HurstC1 of the Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Neighbourhood Plan is similar in intent:

'Development, including formal sports and recreation areas, will be permitted in the countryside, where:

- It comprises an appropriate countryside use;*
- It maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the Parish area;*

In the South Downs National Park, policy HurstC2 will take precedent.'

The application does not comply with the first criteria of DP12, but in relation to the second, Policies DP24, DP25 and DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan and Policy HurstC5 of the Neighbourhood Plan are relevant.

Policy DP24 of the Mid Sussex District Plan states (in part):

'Development that provides new and/or enhanced leisure and cultural activities and facilities, including allotments, in accordance with the strategic aims of the Leisure and Cultural Strategy for Mid Sussex will be supported.'

Policy DP25 of the Mid Sussex District Plan includes education facilities and states (in part):

'The provision or improvement of community facilities and local services that contribute to creating sustainable communities will be supported.'

Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan states (in part):

'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;'

Policy HurstC5 of the Neighbourhood Plan states:

'Development will be permitted within the environs of Hurstpierpoint College where:

- It does not detract from the special architectural character and appearance of the existing collection of buildings and their setting in the landscape;*
- It conserves or enhances the character and appearance of Listed Buildings;*
- It complies with the requirements of Policy C1;*
- It enhances the role of the College as a school and local employer.'*

In principle, the enhancement of existing facilities is supported by the above policies.

It is considered that the design, scale and layout of the proposed building will be acceptable and sympathetic to its immediate context, being prominent as part of the southern frontage to the modern campus quadrangle. It would not, however, be visible from the street scene, either along College Lane to the east, Chalkers Lane to the north or the public footpath to the west, being screened by intervening buildings. In any case, the building would be viewed in context with existing buildings, including the larger and taller sports hall adjoining the site to the south.

Accordingly, it is considered that the development would comply with Policies DP12, DP24, DP25 and DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, Policies HurstC1 and HurstC5 of the Neighbourhood Plan and the Mid Sussex Design Guide, in particular Chapter 6.

Impact on the setting of the Listed Buildings

Hurstpierpoint College contains two designated heritage assets, being Grade II listed buildings.

Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that:

'In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.'

Policy DP34 of the Mid Sussex District Plan states (in part):

'Development will be required to protect listed buildings and their settings. This will be achieved by ensuring that:

- A thorough understanding of the significance of the listed building and its setting has been demonstrated. This will be proportionate to the importance of the building and potential impact of the proposal;*
- Alterations or extensions to a listed building respect its historic form, scale, setting, significance and fabric. Proposals for the conversion or change of use of a listed building retain its significance and character whilst ensuring that the building remains in a viable use;*
- Traditional building materials and construction techniques are normally used. The installation of uPVC windows and doors will not be acceptable;*
- Satellite antennae, solar panels or other renewable energy installations are not sited in a prominent location, and where possible within the curtilage rather than on the building itself;*
- Special regard is given to protecting the setting of a listed building;*
- Where the historic fabric of a building may be affected by alterations or other proposals, the applicant is expected to fund the recording or exploratory opening up of historic fabric.'*

Design Principle DG11 of the Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD seeks to ensure that heritage assets are enhanced and preserved where appropriate.

Paragraphs 207, 208, 210, 212 and 215 of the NPPF are relevant, as follows:

207. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

208. Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

210. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

212. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

215. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

The Council's Conservation Officer has made comments as follows:

'The application site, Hurstpierpoint College, is an extensive college campus with at its heart a linked pair of Grade II listed buildings- the original quadrangle dating from 1853, and Star House to the east, built as the headmaster's house and dating from 1873. The College campus has developed significantly since its foundation, by incremental additions to the built form around the quadrangle, particularly to the west, northwest, and east. The College sits in a rural setting to the north of Hurstpierpoint- this surviving rural setting contributes positively to the historical illustrative value of the listed buildings as a 19th century school deliberately established in a semi-isolated rural position, and to their aesthetic value.

The current proposal relates to the modern campus to the southwest of the main quad, and is for the second phase of a redevelopment of the College's sports provision, comprising construction of a new block housing gym and dining facilities, on the site of the previously removed swimming pool. The new block would sit adjacent to the western side of the newly constructed replacement pool building which constituted the first phase of the scheme.

The previously existing pool building on the site was relatively modern and was not of architectural or historical interest. Its removal was not considered contentious. The proposed replacement building appears to be of slightly greater height and bulk, and is on an amended, stepped footprint which is intended to create a better relationship with the surrounding buildings including the listed quad, and with the courtyard space directly to the north. The building is shown as flat-roofed, with elevations largely of buff brick with large aluminium framed areas of glazing, punctuated by smaller areas of perforated

aluminium panels. A lift overrun and plant enclosure are shown to the rear southeast corner of the roof, although the detail provided of the treatment of these areas is slight.

In the context of the existing modern buildings to this part of the campus, including the adjacent new swimming pool, and of the removal of the redundant pool building, the scale, form, massing and elevational treatment of the new block are not considered contentious. Subject to detail the proposal will, in my opinion, preserve the setting of the listed buildings, meeting the requirements of District Plan Policy DP34 and the relevant paragraphs of the NPPF.

I would suggest the following conditions:

- *Details of roofing and facing materials, including of the lift overrun and plant enclosure at roof level*
- *Detailed drawings, at an appropriate large scale, including sections and annotated to show materials and finishes, of the following aspects of the scheme:*
 - *typical examples of new windows/glazing and external doors*
 - *typical eaves detail*
- *Rainwater goods and other external pipework to be of painted metal*
- *Detailed hard and soft landscaping scheme to the surrounding area, to include details of materials*
- *Details of construction, planting and maintenance programme to the green wall'*

These comments are agreed with, and it is therefore considered that the proposal will comply with Policy DP34 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, Policy HurstC5 of the Neighbourhood Plan, Design Principle DG11 of the Mid Sussex Design Guide and paragraph 210 of the NPPF.

Impact on neighbouring amenity

Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan seeks to ensure that development does not cause significant harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants.

It is not considered that the proposal would have any harmful impact on neighbouring residential amenity, due to being located centrally within an educational campus at significant distance from any independent dwellings.

Accordingly, the scheme would comply with Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan.

Highways

Policy DP21 of the Mid Sussex District Plan seeks to ensure that developments are sustainably located and safely designed.

The Highway Authority has concluded that the proposals are not anticipated to give rise to a significant material intensification of use of the existing access and do not consider that it would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety or result in 'severe' cumulative impacts on the operation of the highway network. As such, there would be no transport grounds to resist this proposal and hence the scheme would comply with Policy DP21 of the Mid Sussex District Plan.

Flood Risk and Drainage

Policy DP41 of the Mid Sussex District Plan aims to ensure that developments are adequately drained and not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.

The Council's Drainage Engineer has raised no objection the development, subject to a condition specifying the detailed design.

As such, the proposal would comply with Policy DP41 of the Mid Sussex District Plan.

Land contamination

Paragraphs 196 and 197 of the NPPF strive to ensure that sites are suitable for the proposed use taking into account any risks from land instability and contamination.

The Council's Contaminated Land Officer has raised no objection to the proposal and so there would be no conflict with the above NPPF requirements.

Sustainability

Policy DP39 of the Mid Sussex District Plan seeks to improve the sustainability of development.

The applicant's Sustainability and Energy Strategy outlines the following key features:

- All-electric building services, removing the need for fossil-fuel infrastructure;
- Monodraught natural ventilation to reduce energy demand and provide a comfortable internal environment;
- enhanced thermal envelope with optimised glazing ratios and improved airtightness;
- integration of air source heat pumps for heating, cooling and hot water;
- life-cycle carbon reduction of approx. 20 percent over 60 years, supported by efficient massing and structural design;
- design for disassembly principles where practicable, enabling future adaptation and reducing whole-life impacts.

Paragraph 164 of the NPPF seeks to ensure new development helps *'to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as through its location, orientation and design.'* In determining planning applications, paragraph 166 expects new development to *'take account of landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping to minimise energy consumption.'*

These measures are therefore considered acceptable in meeting the terms of the above policies and guidance. It should be noted that in respect of Policy DP39 of the District Plan, the wording of this policy is supportive of improving the sustainability of developments, but there are no prescriptive standards for developments to achieve in respect of carbon emission reductions. Similarly, the wording of Principle DG37 of the Council's Design Guide seeks applicants to demonstrate and consider sustainable matters as part of their design approach, including the use of renewable technologies, but does not require their use.

Having regard for all the above, and given the context of the application, it is considered that the application complies with Policies DP26 and DP39 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, the Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD and paragraphs 161, 164 and 166 of the NPPF.

Impact on trees

Policy DP37 of the Mid Sussex District Plan supports the protection and enhancement of trees, woodland and hedgerows, and encourages new planting. In particular, ancient woodland and aged or veteran trees will be protected.

There will be no trees removed to facilitate this proposal and one tree will be transplanted. The council's Tree Officer has raised no objection to the proposal, subject to adherence to the arboricultural supporting documents, which can be secured by condition. Accordingly it is considered that the proposal would comply with Policy DP37 of the Mid Sussex District Plan.

Ecology

Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) lists species of animal (other than birds) which are provided special protection under the Act. Under Section 13 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), all wild plants are protected from being uprooted without the consent of the landowner. In addition to the protection afforded by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), certain species are also covered by European legislation. These species are listed in Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, 7c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended).

Policy DP38 of the Mid Sussex District Plan seeks to ensure that developments protect and enhance biodiversity. Chapter 15 of the NPPF advises that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance

the natural and local environment by minimizing impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity. Paragraph 193, advises that applications should be refused if significant harm to biodiversity or loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats will be caused.

The Council's Ecological consultant has considered that sufficient information is available to support determination of the application and recommends a condition be imposed in relation to external lighting. Accordingly, it is considered that the proposal would comply with Policy DP38 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, Chapter 15 of the NPPF (including paragraph 193) and the legislation outlined above.

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 deemed to have been granted subject to the biodiversity net gain condition for development to deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat.

The biodiversity net gain condition is set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Schedule 7A, Part 2, 13(2). It states:

*'The condition is that the development may not be begun unless—
(a) a biodiversity gain plan has been submitted to the planning authority (see paragraph 14), and
(b) the planning authority has approved the plan (see paragraph 15).'*

The Council's Ecological consultant supports the submitted BNG Plan, BNG Statement and Small Sites Metric, which provides sufficient information at application stage. Accordingly, subject to condition, the proposal would comply with the above biodiversity legislation, guidance and policy.

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 process for the Mid Sussex District Plan. This process identified likely significant effects on the Ashdown Forest SPA from recreational disturbance and on the Ashdown Forest SAC from atmospheric pollution.

An overall Habitats Regulations Assessment screening report has been undertaken which includes the type of development proposed.

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, and as detailed in the 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.

It is considered that the proposed development will not lead to an increase in traffic across Ashdown Forest. 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 screening report

The screening assessment concludes that there would be no likely significant effects, alone or in combination, on the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC from the types of development identified which includes this 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.

Other matters

The site is located within a designated Great Crested Newt - Impact Risk Zone (Red). Accordingly the West Sussex Newt Officer has made comments recommending that this matter can be dealt with by way of an informative on any permission. This would advise the applicant of their duty in respect of Great Crested Newts and accordingly there would be no conflict with biodiversity legislation, policy and guidance.

PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

The application is deemed to be of an appropriate scale, layout and design in relation to the surrounding buildings and would not cause harm to the setting of the listed buildings or cause detriment to residential occupants. There would be no harm to biodiversity. There would no adverse land contamination matters arising, and landscaping, drainage and sustainability can be secured by condition.

Accordingly it is considered that the proposed development would comply with Policies DP12, DP17, DP21, DP24, DP25, DP26, DP34, DP37, DP38, DP39 and DP41 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, Policies HurstC1 and HurstC5 of the Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Neighbourhood Plan, the Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD and the NPPF and is therefore considered acceptable.

Decision: Permission

Case Officer: Andrew Watt