

Planning Statement

(incorporating Sustainability Statement)

Proposed extension of former car repair workshop to provide a separate area for a MOT lane and relocation of the existing office building

at:

Timing Chain Gatwick Ltd (formerly Armstrong Bodyshop Ltd), Cottage Place, Copthorne Common, Copthorne, West Sussex, RH10 3LF

1. Introduction

This statement accompanies a full planning application for the proposed extension of a former car repair bodyshop to provide a separate area for a MOT testing lane and the relocation of the existing office/reception building at Timing Chain Gatwick Ltd (formerly Armstrong Bodyshop Ltd).

The previous use as a car repair bodyshop is being discontinued by the new tenant, Timing Chain Gatwick Ltd, who will undertake mechanical repairs and maintenance. They are proposing to construct a dedicated MOT testing lane which is compliant with Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) requirements.

The additional former use as a van rental business operated by the Armstrong family has now ceased.

2. The Application

Location:

The site lies east of Cottage Place (also known as Bye Lane) and south of the A264 Copthorne Common Road, on the south-east edge of Copthorne village and has the following adjacent uses:

- North: Esso filling station with car wash, convenience store, and food outlets.
- East: Residential properties (Tamarind and Foley Place).
- South: Larger residential properties (Star Place and Evergreen).
- West: Older detached and semi-detached residential properties.

Application Site:

The site comprises:

- A single-storey steel-clad portal frame building, previously used as a car repair bodyshop.

- A freestanding 'Portacabin' office/reception building.
- A gravel forecourt used for customer parking and the previous van rental business.

The site area has an area of 794m² and is generally flat, sitting approximately 1m below the level of the Esso filling station, with a retaining wall on the northern boundary at the change in level.

Mature conifers on southern and eastern boundaries provide screening between the site and 'Star Place' and 'Foley Place'.

Proposed Development:

- Extension of the main building towards the northern boundary to create a separate MOT testing lane.
- Relocating the office 3.4m closer to the main building to create more forecourt space for parking and circulation.

The existing main building has a GFA of 189m² and the proposed extension has a GFA of 48m² representing an increase of approximately 25%.

A plan has been prepared by Snap On to demonstrate the equipment required in a DVSA compliant MOT testing lane can be accommodated in the internal space available within the extension. Specialist advice has been taken to ensure the fire escape routes from the entire building are compliant with Part B of the Building Regulations.

The extension will be clad in dark green powder coated cladding to match the existing main building. A shallow pitch roof will be concealed behind a level parapet which will resonate with the form of the adjacent Esso filling station canopy that is at a higher level. The front of the extension will be set back from the front wall of the main building and when read with the height of the level parapet in relation to the existing ridge will result in the extension being subservient to the main building.

3. Context and Need

The MOT testing lane will enable Timing Chain Gatwick Ltd to offer an additional complementary service to customers. It will reduce the need for local residents to travel further afield for MOT testing due to the limited number of service providers in the Copthorne and Crawley Down area which is believed to be just Tubby Tyres on Copthorne Road and Rowfant Garage at Rowfant Business Centre.

Relocating the office improves operational efficiency, customer safety, and forecourt usability.

The proposal represents a modest extension within an established commercial site, supporting local employment and economic activity.

4. Planning History

Ref. No: WP/165/99

Replacement workshops.

Received: Thu 21 Oct 1999 | Validated: Thu 21 Oct 1999 | Status: Approved

Ref. No: WP/165/99/AP1

Amended plans: Replacement workshops.

Received: Thu 27 Apr 2000 | Validated: Thu 27 Apr 2000 | Status: Approved

Ref. No: WP/165/99/AP2

Amended plans: Replacement workshops. Amended plans received showing relocation of office, amended parking layout and gas storage cylinders.

Received: Fri 09 Mar 2001 | Validated: Fri 09 Mar 2001 | Status: Approved

Ref. No: 01/02327/FUL

Extension of existing car repair workshop to provide parts storage area.

Received: Tue 20 Nov 2001 | Validated: Tue 20 Nov 2001 | Status: Approved

Ref. No: 12/01922/FUL

Proposed additional use to allow the operation of a vehicle hire franchise (Sui generis use) in addition to existing vehicle repair bodyshop (class B2 use).

Received: Fri 01 Jun 2012 | Validated: Fri 01 Jun 2012 | Status: Approved

Ref. No: DM/19/2639

Remove existing double entrance gates and adjacent fencing for the erection of new 2.4m high green powder coated steel palisade double entrance gates and adjacent fencing.

Received: Mon 01 Jul 2019 | Validated: Mon 01 Jul 2019 | Status: Approved

5. Planning Policy

National Policy – NPPF (2024):

- Para 8: Presumption in favour of sustainable development balancing economic, social, and environmental objectives.
- Para 85: Significant weight should be placed on supporting economic growth and productivity taking into account local business needs.
- Para 124: Making effective use of land and reusing previously developed sites.

Local Policy – Mid Sussex District Plan:

- DP1 Sustainable Economic Development – Supporting existing businesses and allowing them room to expand.
- DP26 Character and Design – Site optimisation and avoiding harm to residential amenity.
- DP29 Noise, Air and Light Pollution

- DP39 Sustainable Design and Construction – Promotes energy efficiency and resource conservation.

Copthorne Neighbourhood Plan:

Relevant policies focus on maintaining local character, managing traffic and parking, and supporting local economic activity.

6. Assessment Against Policy

The proposed development accords with national and local planning policy for the following reasons:

Economic Growth (NPPF Para 85; DP1):

Significant weight is given to supporting economic growth and productivity. The proposal enables a local business to expand its services by introducing MOT testing, improving operational efficiency, supporting the local economy and providing employment opportunities.

Effective Use of Land (NPPF para 124):

The scheme makes efficient use of previously developed land without encroaching on open countryside. The extension is modest in scale and takes only the minimum amount of space required for the MOT testing lane. It respects the existing site layout, optimises the use of the forecourt and improves circulation.

Design and Character (DP26):

The extension is subservient to the main building, uses matching materials, and incorporates a parapet detail that complements the adjacent Esso filling station canopy. Existing boundary vegetation provides effective screening, ensuring no adverse impact on local character or residential amenity.

Environmental Protection and Sustainability (DP29, DP39):

The proposal will not result in an increase in noise. Sustainable design measures include insulated cladding, energy-efficient lighting and responsible waste management during construction. Existing trees and screening will be retained.

- Flooding:

The site is not in an area which is the subject of flooding and will not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.

- BNG+:

The proposal does not impact on any habitat of any type and is therefore the subject of the de-minimus exemption.

- Trees:

The conifers on the southern and eastern boundaries are on adjacent land. The conifers on the southern boundary are remote from the area of the proposed extension. An

arboricultural report has not been prepared in respect of the trees on the eastern boundary as it is not believed they will be impacted by the proposal. The footprint of the proposed extension is currently covered with compacted hardcore and planings and a concrete slab. The Root Protection Areas of the trees would therefore not be regarded as being affected by the construction of new foundations.

Transport and Accessibility

Relocating the office improves forecourt safety and parking arrangements. MOT testing is appointment-based, so trip generation will be on par with the van rental business use that has been ceased and within the capacity of the existing access.

7. Sustainability Statement

The proposed development incorporates measures to ensure environmental responsibility and compliance with sustainable design principles:

Energy Efficiency:

The extension will use insulated cladding and energy-efficient LED lighting to reduce energy consumption.

Materials and Waste Management:

Construction materials will be sourced responsibly where possible, and waste will be segregated and recycled during the construction phase.

Water and Drainage:

Surface water will be managed through appropriate drainage solutions and compliant with SuDS principles.

Biodiversity:

Existing conifer screening will be retained, and the proposal qualifies for the biodiversity net gain de minimis exemption as no habitat will be impacted.

Climate Resilience:

The design is resilient to extreme weather events, with durable materials and proper drainage to mitigate flood risk.

Transport and Accessibility:

The proposal will provide a local MOT testing service resulting in shorter car trips for Copthorne residents to drop cars off and shorter journeys if they are picked up and dropped back to collect their vehicles. In the alternate the site is within a realistic walking distance of a significant area of Copthorne and Newlands Park and accessible by public transport.

8. Conclusion

The proposed extension and office relocation represent a sustainable, policy-compliant development that:

- Supports local economic growth and employment opportunities.
- Makes effective use of previously developed land.
- Improves site functionality, safety, and customer experience.
- Minimises environmental impact and respects local character.

The scheme aligns with the NPPF (2024), the Mid Sussex District Plan, and the Copthorne Neighbourhood Plan, delivering economic and operational benefits without harm to residential amenity or the environment. For these reasons, the application should be supported.

PBA PLANNING
5TH DECEMBER 2025