

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

Conversion and extension of the existing garage into additional living accommodation to accommodate for multigenerational living; construction of a new glass link extension; and demolition of the existing porch extension with a proposed replacement extension.

*Red Oaks
Weald Chase
Staplefield Road
Cuckfield
West Sussex
RH17 5HY*

December 2025

Mrs Susan Orpen & Mr John Orpen

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1. BACKGROUND

Red Oaks forms one half of the former twelve-bedroom country house built for B. F. Bevan in the 1920s, known as Weald Chase. The approximately twelve-acre estate associated with Weald Chase was broken up over time into separate private residential dwellings, and the main house referred to as Weald Chase was separated in the early 1980s into two individual dwellings, now known as Downsview and Red Oaks.

The Bevan family was closely associated with Cuckfield after the Brighton-born banker and philanthropist Richard Alexander Bevan (1834–1918) moved there in 1862 and built Horsgate House as a family home in 1865. The entire estate extended to just over one hundred acres. For more than 50 years, Richard Alexander Bevan was deeply involved in village life and became known as “the father of Cuckfield.”

Their legacy runs through both the village and the arts. Robert Polhill Bevan painted the Sussex landscape around his home village many times, capturing its character in a style that feels analogous, slightly impressionist, and yet unmistakably expressionist. *Maples at Cuckfield* was painted within the Horsgate estate, situated east of the village, and radiates the spirit of country life around Cuckfield.

Although Weald Chase is located west of Cuckfield on Staplefield Road, it benefits from similar views overlooking the southwestern corner of the High Weald. The Bevan family continued to live at Weald Chase until the 1950s, after which the house changed hands a few more times before the current owners purchased Red Oaks in the late 1980s and have lived there ever since. There have been a few minor additions added to the property such as the construction of a garage, porch extension and conservatory.

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Googlemaps satellite image - Screenshot taken August 2025

Red - Site boundary

Blue- Ownership boundary

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Maples at Cuckfield - *Robert Polhill Bevan*

2. EXISTING SITE CONTEXT

Flood Risk Zone 1

The property lies within Flood Risk Zone 1, which has a low probability of flooding from rivers and the sea.

Tree Preservation Order (TPO)

There are no TPO's associated with this site.

Conservation Area

The proposal site lies outside of the conservation area.

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The site lies within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Listing

The property isn't listed.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

App. No CD/047/78

Proposal: Change of use to permit the main house to be used as a rest home for persons of both sexes.
The existing flat over the garage to be used as staff accommodation.

Status: **Withdrawn, 10.03.79**

App. No CD/070/89

Proposal: Conservatory to the rear of private dwelling

Status: **Approved, 26.09.89**

App. No CD/046/81

Proposal: Division of Weald Chase house and flat into three residential units. New porch and garage.

Status: **Approved, 03.12.81**

5. PROPOSAL

Since Sue and John first purchased Red Oaks in the late 1980s, it has become a loved and cherished family home, one that has undoubtedly provided them with a strong sense of belonging and continuity while navigating different chapters of life. As Jun'ichirō Tanizaki outlines so beautifully in *In Praise of Shadows*, a “sense of belonging” is a fundamentally sensory experience, one that is deeply personal to the individual.

In recent years, their son George—who was raised at Red Oaks—has come to recognise that the various houses he has lived in since moving out have not offered the same sense of belonging or the same feeling of being deeply rooted. Ultimately, *In Praise of Shadows* argues that a true sense of belonging arises from an authentic connection to one's environment and cultural legacy, experienced through the subtle and enveloping qualities of traditional architecture embedded within its surrounding landscape. This is the very atmosphere that Robert Polhill Bevan depicted in *Maples at Cuckfield* a little over a decade earlier.

This enduring sense of belonging has drawn George, his fiancée, and her daughter back to Red Oaks, and the Orpens have been living in a multigenerational household ever since. Although multigenerational households rarely form out of environmental concern, they actually offer important and inherent opportunities to reduce resource use and consumption. On a per-capita basis, household size is inversely related to resource consumption and waste production. By housing more family members under one roof, multigenerational living presents unheralded opportunities to save energy, water, building materials, and land.

Having lived within a multigenerational household for some time now, they have come to appreciate the house's architectural opportunities and limitations in equal measure, which they are looking to address in the proposal associated with this planning application. Since Weald Chase was converted into two separate family dwellings, the ground-floor living spaces have become slightly disproportionate to the comparatively top-heavy first and second floors. This proposal seeks to address that issue, along with the need to upgrade the home's wheelchair accessibility for John, who has been diagnosed with peripheral neuropathy and is experiencing declining mobility.

We are therefore proposing the conversion and extension of the existing garage, referred to as the ‘Coach House,’ into additional living accommodation, including a ground-floor wheelchair-accessible bedroom and bathroom, which would be linked back to the main house via a glass link extension. The glass link would also provide an accessible entrance to the main house.

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Furthermore, we are proposing the demolition of the existing porch and the construction of a new replacement extension accommodating a well-sized utility room. The existing utility room would then become a boot room. While there is a large drawing room, the current ground-floor arrangement lacks a small snug, and the dining room is currently being used as such. We are looking to reinstate this room as a dining room and, instead, are looking to incorporate a snug within the Coach House.

Lastly, the client is seeking to accommodate an artist's studio within the eastern extension of the Coach House, taking advantage of the views overlooking the garden—views that currently cannot be appreciated from anywhere inside the house. The artist's studio benefits from a high-level window that brings north light into the space, making it an ideal working environment. The studio is not intended for commercial use.

Amount, Gross Internal Area

Existing

Main house ground floor	171.20	sqm
Porch extension	7.32	sqm
Main house first floor	122.76	sqm
Main house second floor	51.60	sqm
Garage	32.55	sqm

385.43 sqm

Proposed

Main house ground floor	171.20	sqm
Glass link	3.24	sqm
Utility room extension	10.78	sqm
Main house first floor	122.76	sqm
Main house second floor	51.60	sqm
Coach house	82.63	sqm

442.21 sqm

6. SCALE AND APPEARANCE

The Existing Arts and Crafts Architectural Context

Weald Chase is an Arts and Crafts country house built in the 1920s. It was originally designed to accommodate twelve bedrooms, with a central entrance hall and grand staircase. The estate also contained a coach house with the chauffeur's flat above, a worker's cottage, and a gate house. The outbuildings, of course, no longer belong to Weald Chase and have since been separated.

The portion of Weald Chase that now forms Red Oaks includes several of the more formal spaces, such as the former dining room—now used as the drawing room—and the grand master bedroom. It also contains many of the original service rooms, including the kitchen, larder, and scullery, along with the back tradesman's entrance, all of which were historically part of the service wing. Weald Chase illustrates well the Arts and Crafts idea that plans and elevations should express utility, rejecting excessive ornamentation and creating comfortable, well-proportioned spaces. The house had well-formed rooms that were honest in scale relative to the size of the building. There was no spurious ornament; the construction and furnishing themselves formed the foundation of the architecture.

The elevations drew inspiration from the local Sussex vernacular, using locally sourced clay tiles, timber, and stone. Furthermore, the form of the building—with its hipped and long sloping roof, hipped dormers, and chimneys—reinforces its vernacular character, while the asymmetry and irregularity give the impression that the building evolved over time. The window placement was carefully considered, with leaded windows and timber mullions that are modest in size, and larger windows positioned on the south-facing elevation.

The Current configuration

When Weald Chase was divided into two separate dwellings, much emphasis was placed on separating the two halves in a way that retained the original room sizes as well as possible. Since the original design from the 1920s was completed, a few additions were made to Redoaks—partly during the conversion and separation of the two dwellings, and partly later on.

To the east of the house stands a 1980s-built double garage constructed in brown stretcher bond brick with red clay tiles, mortar-embedded verges, and concrete lintels over the garage doors. It is a mass-produced-looking structure that

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visually detracts from the intricate detailing and craftsmanship of the main house. While it serves a simple functional purpose, we believe it does not make a positive contribution to the site in its current form.

A lightweight timber conservatory was also added to the south of the property, providing a sheltered space to enjoy the south-facing views of the garden during the spring and autumn months. In addition, a practical flat-roofed, single-brick porch extension was built, serving as a boot room and back entrance to the house. Over the years, the client feels this area has become underutilised and no longer fit for purpose, as it is a damp and unheated space.

The Proposed

The central issue for Arts and Crafts architects who sought to move beyond stylistic imitation was the vitality of the craftsmanship itself. This holds just as true for architecture today as it did a hundred years ago, and it is precisely why the philosophy behind Arts and Crafts architecture feels more relevant than ever. We believe that in order to achieve timeless architecture—neither pastiche nor overly imposing—one must study old buildings carefully, for they offer not only excellence of technique but also a wealth of inventiveness and creativity in every detail.

We believe the proposed extensions have been designed in a way that is architecturally respectful in form and shape towards the main house and in keeping with its surroundings, while fulfilling the contemporary needs of a multigenerational household. While the design aspires to be timeless, we also feel it is important to avoid pastiche by allowing subtle hints of its own time, which can be seen, for example, in the use of the crittall french doors.

Proposed Coach House

We felt that the key to ensuring the design remained proportionate and subservient to the main house was to take inspiration from old mews buildings, coach houses, and garages, which by their very nature are subordinate structures to country houses. By keeping the form and shape simple—extending the garage modestly with a hipped roof on either side—we achieve an architectural character that feels subservient and appears as though it has always been there. The success of following a simplified form and shape relies on intricate, high-quality detailing and craftsmanship, achieved through features such as exposed rafter feet, overhanging rooflines to create depth, mortar-bedded verges and ridgelines, as well as high-quality materials that sit appropriately within the surrounding context. We are proposing a small cupola positioned centrally on the gable roof, which not only adds architectural interest but also allows natural light to enter the otherwise dark hall.

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On both the south-facing and eastern elevations we are proposing full-height crittall windows that frame views of the garden, emphasising the Arts and Crafts philosophy of creating a continuity with the landscape. To the northern side of the coach house we propose small, high-level dormer steel windows. We are also proposing to extend the existing garage to the north by 2.3 metres and to rebuild the gable in Wealden stone with brick quoins, incorporating two tall central steel windows.

A defining success of Arts and Crafts design was that each room was clearly conceived for its function, yet this did not mean that the servants' rooms lacked craftsmanship or detail. Their beauty lies in well-made, practical joinery and simple vertical timber panelling. These rooms were designed to last and to be truly fit for purpose. While the glass link between the coach house and the main house provides visual connectivity externally, it is equally important that the interior design allows the coach house to feel part of the wider home, while ensuring that the formal rooms—such as the drawing room in the main house—retain their prominence. The interior design for the house has been strongly inspired by the subordinate spaces of Arts and Crafts country homes, such as the boot room at Standen House, designed by Philip Webb.



Standen House

Window and Arch detailing reference



Standen House

Bootroom reference

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Utility room extension

The existing porch extension currently feels like a boxy addition to the main house, visually clashing with the long, sloping roof of the west elevation. We believe the eastern elevation would read more successfully with a lightweight timber-frame replacement extension, tied architecturally to the main house through the use of leaded casement windows and timber mullions. To add further architectural interest, while emphasising high-quality detailing and craftsmanship, we are proposing a wood-cored flat roof.



Leaded window and timber mullion reference



Church Rate Corner - Baillie Scott

Timber bay window and core leaded roof

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Glass link

We wanted to create a simple, non-intrusive link from the coach house back to the main house without giving the illusion of sprawl or creating an imbalance in the architectural form of the main house. We believe that a simple glass link with crittall French doors on either side achieves a timeless feel that works visually with the existing main house, the contemporary conservatory, and the proposed coach house.



Crittall door reference

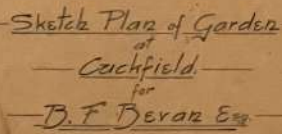
7. LANDSCAPING AND ACCESS

The Original Arts and Crafts Garden

When the house was built, B.F. Bevan also commissioned the design of the surrounding gardens. As the original landscape plan below highlights, the philosophy behind the garden was very much that of an Arts and Crafts garden, as one might expect. The intention was for the garden to be a continuum of the main house—a seamless extension. As with Gertrude Jekyll’s iconic gardens, it emphasised natural materials, traditional craftsmanship, and harmony with the surrounding landscape.

The garden design included different themed “rooms,” such as the rock garden and rose garden, with wilder, more naturalistic plantings inspired by vernacular cottage gardens, such as the herbaceous borders shown on the plan to the south of the terrace around Weald Chase and further to the east. Intimate and separate spaces were created by distinct areas divided by hedges or tree lines.

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Heather - Brachia etc.

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The Current Garden

While the garden has adapted over time and the herbaceous borders to the east have been lost, the philosophy of an Arts and Crafts garden very much remains. The rose garden no longer exists, as this is where the existing garage is now positioned. The client has carefully considered and reutilised the existing axis of the former rose garden, creating a new interpretation of an external “room”. It now contains beautiful, overgrown steel pergolas and naturalistic planting beds, referred to by us as the *pergola garden*. The herbaceous borders to the south of the terrace at Red Oaks contain a vast variety of flowers. The garden has been meticulously maintained and cared for by the current owner.



Main house, pergola garden and garage in the background

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Main house standing south and looking north

The Proposed

It was important for us that the proposed design would be bedded well within the existing well established landscaping and cause minimal intervention or disrupting the views and themes of the different ‘garden rooms’. We therefore felt that extending the coach house to the north, east and west would cause minimal disruption and in fact create the perfect picturesque backdrop framing the pergola garden. The light flooded artist studio with its critical french doors emphasises on Gertrude Jekyll’s philosophy of connecting the interior and exterior seamlessly. There are few minor hard landscaping additions proposed such as the walkway to the eastern corner of the coach house, which is tiled in natural lime stone. This will require the cutting back of some of the conifer hedge. The majority of the hedge is to be retained. We deem this to not be seen as a contentious intrusion to the garden’s ecosystem. A few brick steps lead down to the *pergola garden*.

The site already benefits of extensive resources for the local wildlife, however we are keen to add further to this by installing naturalistic borders to the northern elevation of the coach house. We believe establishing herbaceous borders with perennials such as allium, lavender and salvia are a great way to enhance the natural habitat.

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Plants for pollinators

Seed producing plants need to be pollinated in order to reproduce, maintain genetic diversity, and develop fruits and seeds. Nearly all food crops rely on pollination by beneficial insects and other animals. Plants and pollinators have evolved to create a symbiotic relationship and pollinators depend on flower nectar and pollen as their food source. Plants are fertilised when pollinators transfer pollen between flowers. Naturally some plants are more attractive to pollinators than others. Simply, because they are either more accessible or else produce more food. Over time pollinators have evolved to seek out plants that are naturally a rich source of nectar and pollen.

Here are a few examples of plants, which have certain traits that entice pollinators due to the colour of the flower, shape or scent.

- Bees prefer purple, blue, orange or yellow flowers with short tubes or no tubes that are easily accessible
- Butterflies favour white, pink, red, yellow or purple flowers with a place to perch while they sip on nectar.

We believe establishing herbaceous borders with perennials such as allium, lavender and salvia are a great way to enhance the natural habitat.

Access

There are no changes proposed to the access to the property.

Refuse

We are proposing to move the existing oil tank and refuse to the eastern corner of the coach house, as shown on the site plan 2506-01-01 and proposed elevations 2506-01-25 and 2506-01-26 . We propose that the oil tank and bin store be discreetly concealed by trellis fencing painted in sage, at a height of 1.8 m, as shown in the reference image below. This will allow them to blend in with the existing landscaping, and the trellis can be overgrown with climbing roses or hydrangea over time.

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Trellis fencing

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