

Householder Planning Application – Retention of Garage Conversion

Site Address: 11 Barnfield, Balcombe, RH17 6FW

Original Planning Permission Ref: DM/18/4541

1. Introduction

This application seeks planning permission for the retention of the conversion of the existing garage to ancillary residential accommodation, comprising a snug and utility space.

The proposal enables more effective and flexible use of residential floorspace, while maintaining appropriate off-street parking provision and ensuring no adverse impact on the surrounding area.

The application demonstrates that the development has been operating successfully for 4.5 years, with no material harm arising in respect of parking, highway safety, neighbouring amenity, or the character of the area.

2. Background and Planning Context

The original planning permission (Ref: **DM/18/4541**) included Condition 23, which restricts the use of garages to the parking of vehicles only.

This condition was imposed on a precautionary basis to ensure that adequate parking provision was available at the time of the development.

The site has now been occupied for nearly five years, providing clear evidence of how the development functions in practice, including the way in which parking demand is accommodated within the site and the wider development.

This application therefore considers the acceptability of the garage conversion having regard to actual parking demand, observed site conditions, and the established characteristics of the development.

This provides a robust and reliable basis for assessing the development in planning terms.

3. Description of Development

The development comprises the internal conversion of the existing attached garage to ancillary residential accommodation.

The space is used as:

- A snug
- A utility area

External alterations include:

- Installation of a rooflight (Velux)
- Installation of a rear access door
- Installation of a rear-facing window

The rooflight and door were granted planning permission under Ref: **DM/26/0216**.

The rear-facing window was installed 3 years ago and forms part of the existing arrangement. This application seeks to regularise this alteration as part of the overall development.

The garage door remains in situ (**Appendix 6**), ensuring the external appearance of the dwelling and street scene is preserved.

The use remains ancillary to the main residential use of the dwelling.

The proposal reflects the way in which modern residential properties are used in practice, where garages are frequently adapted for ancillary domestic purposes without giving rise to adverse impacts.

4. Planning Policy Context

Paragraph 57 of the NPPF sets out the tests for planning conditions. In this case, Condition 23 was imposed to ensure that adequate parking provision is retained within the site.

While the current use of the garage is not in accordance with this condition, this application demonstrates that sufficient off-street parking continues to be available within the curtilage and that no adverse impact on highway safety or the surrounding parking environment has arisen.

Mid Sussex District Plan – Policy DP21 (Transport)

Policy DP21 requires:

- Appropriate parking provision
- Safe and suitable access

As demonstrated within this application, adequate off-street parking provision is retained within the curtilage, with capacity to accommodate two vehicles if required. The surrounding highway network continues to operate without obstruction or capacity issues, and there is no evidence of parking stress within the development.

The proposal therefore complies with the requirements of Policy DP21.

5. Parking Provision and Capacity

On-site Provision

- Off-street parking for 2 vehicles within the curtilage
- The household operates with a single vehicle

The driveway space measures approximately:

- 7.2–7.5 metres in depth
- Approximately 5.0 metres in width

This provides sufficient space to accommodate two vehicles within the driveway if required.

Existing soft landscaping around the driveway does not constrain the functional use of the driveway and could be adjusted if required to maximise usable parking width.

An indicative layout demonstrating this capacity is provided at **Appendix 8**.

Development-Wide Parking Provision

The wider development benefits from a high level of parking provision. Properties with double garages typically provide two internal spaces in addition to at least two driveway spaces, while dwellings served by parking barns benefit from 2–3 allocated spaces. Properties with single garages generally provide one garage space alongside 1–3 driveway spaces.

In addition, five shared parking bays provide capacity for approximately 10–12 vehicles, with further informal on-street parking available where required.

As a result, most dwellings within the development benefit from between 2 and 4 off-street parking spaces. This level of provision exceeds typical requirements and demonstrates that the development is not reliant on garages being used for day-to-day vehicle parking.

Observed Parking Conditions

In practice, vehicles within the development are predominantly accommodated on driveways, with garages frequently used for ancillary purposes rather than for vehicle parking (**Appendices 3, 4 & 5**).

Despite this, there is no evidence of parking stress within the development, and the surrounding highway network continues to operate safely and without obstruction.

The development therefore functions effectively without reliance on garage parking.

This reflects an established pattern of parking across the development.

6. Evidence of No Harm

The garage has never been used for vehicle parking, which is approximately 4.5 years.

During this time, there have been no recorded parking issues or complaints, and the surrounding highway network continues to operate safely and without obstruction.

This provides clear and demonstrable evidence that the development operates successfully in practice and does not give rise to any adverse impact.

Appendices 1, 2 (Google imagery) and 9 further support the absence of parking stress within the development.

7. Character and Appearance

The proposal has no material impact on the character or appearance of the dwelling or the wider street scene.

The existing garage door is retained in situ, ensuring that the external appearance of the property remains largely unchanged. External alterations are limited in scale and include the installation of a

Velux rooflight and rear access door, which have been approved under Ref: DM/26/0216 and are in keeping with the design and appearance of the dwelling.

The conversion relates primarily to internal alterations and does not introduce any incongruous or visually intrusive features.

Within the wider development, vehicles are commonly parked within front curtilages rather than within garages, forming part of the established character of the area. The proposal reflects this prevailing pattern and does not result in any visual harm to the street scene.

The proposal therefore preserves the character and appearance of both the host dwelling and the wider street scene.

8. Neighbouring Amenity

The proposal has no adverse impact on neighbouring amenity.

The use of the converted space remains ancillary to the main residential use of the dwelling and does not give rise to any additional noise, activity, or disturbance beyond that of a typical family home.

The rear-facing window is modest in scale and located on the rear elevation. It does not result in any material overlooking or loss of privacy and is consistent with typical domestic alterations.

There are no impacts in terms of overlooking, loss of light, or overbearing effects, and the proposal maintains an appropriate relationship with neighbouring properties.

The proposal is therefore fully acceptable in terms of residential amenity.

9. Precedent and Consistency

Local Approval (DM/25/2870)

A recent garage conversion within a comparable residential development (Ref: DM/25/2870) was approved, supported by a parking assessment.

This demonstrates that garage conversion is acceptable in principle where adequate off-street parking can be maintained without reliance on garage spaces. It also indicates that a pragmatic approach is applied by the Local Planning Authority in circumstances where no material harm arises.

Rectory Gardens (DM/21/4235)

The Rectory Gardens development (Ref: DM/21/4235) is larger in scale and more centrally located, with a higher level of activity and associated parking demand. Despite this, it does not appear to be subject to equivalent restrictive garage-use conditions.

This indicates that a more flexible approach to parking provision can be acceptable, even in locations where parking pressures may be greater. The application site, located within a lower-pressure residential environment, is therefore well suited to a similarly proportionate approach.

10. Site-Specific Characteristics

The application property benefits from a number of site-specific characteristics which support the acceptability of the development.

The garage is attached to the main dwelling, making it well suited to integration into the residential accommodation and for use as ancillary domestic space. This differs from other properties within the development where garages may be detached or less conveniently related to the host dwelling.

The property also benefits from a relatively generous plot, with clear and demonstrable capacity to accommodate two vehicles within the existing driveway.

These factors distinguish the site from others within the development and support a proportionate, site-specific approval without giving rise to a wider or harmful precedent.

11. Consideration of Condition 23 (DM/18/4541)

Condition 23 was imposed to ensure that adequate parking provision is retained within the site.

While the garage is no longer used for vehicle parking, this application demonstrates that sufficient off-street parking continues to be available within the curtilage, with capacity to accommodate two vehicles if required.

There is no evidence of parking stress within the development, and the surrounding highway network continues to operate safely and without obstruction.

The underlying objective of the condition, namely to safeguard adequate parking provision and highway safety, is therefore not undermined.

12. External Impact and Reversibility

The external appearance of the dwelling remains largely unchanged, with the existing garage door retained in situ (**Appendix 6**), ensuring that the character of the building and the wider street scene is preserved.

The conversion relates primarily to internal alterations, and the use remains ancillary to the main residential function of the property.

Importantly, the development is readily reversible, with no structural alterations that would prevent the garage from being returned to vehicle parking in the future if required.

As such, the proposal does not result in any permanent loss of garage function.

13. Conclusion

The application seeks permission for the retention of the conversion of the existing garage to ancillary residential accommodation.

The development has been in place for approximately 4.5 years and has operated without giving rise to any adverse impacts. There is no evidence of parking stress within the development, and the surrounding highway network continues to operate safely and without obstruction.

Adequate off-street parking provision is retained within the site, and the proposal complies with the requirements of Policy DP21 of the Mid Sussex District Plan.

The development results in no adverse impact on the character or appearance of the dwelling or the wider area, and there is no harm to neighbouring amenity. The proposal is also supported by local precedent and reflects the way in which residential properties are commonly used in practice.

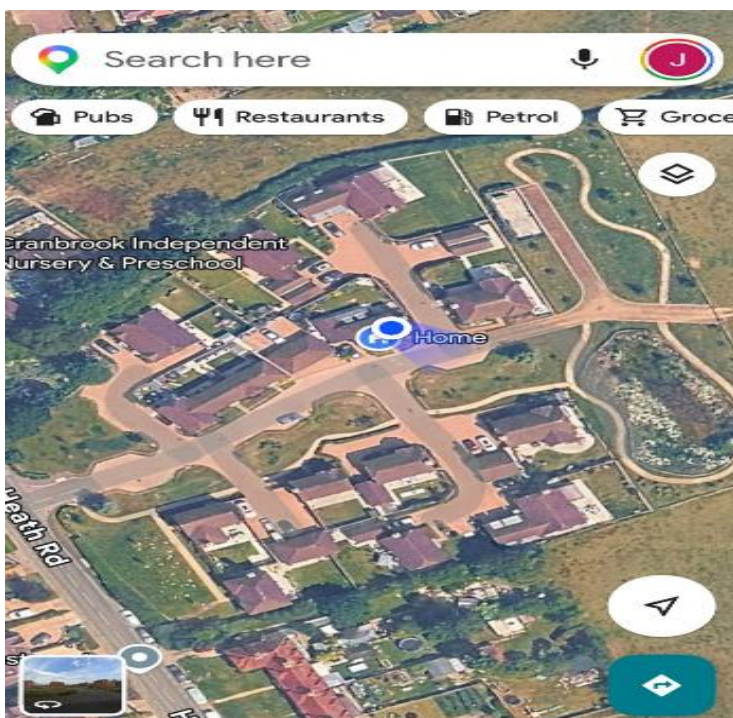
The objectives of Condition 23 are not undermined by the development.

Overall, the development represents a proportionate, site-specific and acceptable form of development. Planning permission should therefore be granted for the retention of the development.

Appendices



Appendix 1 – Google street view of the development on a typical day. Limited on-street parking activity observed.



Appendix 2 – Google Map view of the development on a typical day. Limited on-street parking activity observed.



Appendix 3 – Typical driveway parking arrangements within the development, showing vehicles accommodated on driveways



Appendix 4 - Typical driveway parking arrangements within the development, showing vehicles accommodated on driveways



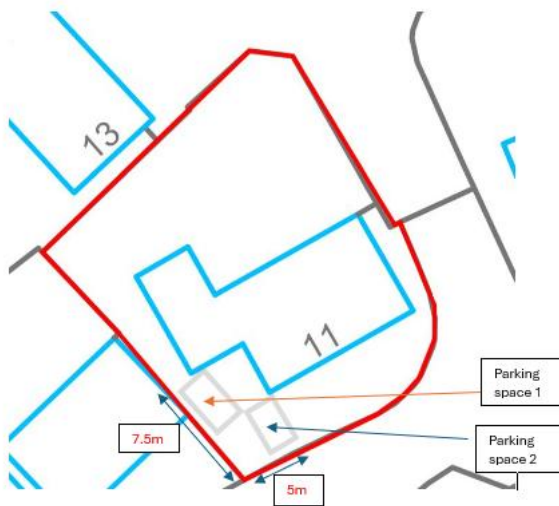
Appendix 5 - Typical driveway parking arrangements within the development, showing vehicles accommodated on driveways



Appendix 6 – Development garage door remains in situ and street scene remains unchanged



Appendix 7 – Existing driveway illustrating available parking space and capacity to accommodate two vehicles within the site if required (approximately 7.2–7.5m in depth and approximately 5.0m in width), including areas of soft landscaping which may be readily adjusted if required



Appendix 8 - Indicative parking arrangement demonstrating capacity for two vehicles within the existing driveway



Appendix 9 – Evidence demonstrating the absence of parking stress within the development.