



Planning Statement

Change of use of Stable Building to Residential Dwelling

Southgate Stables, Cuckfield Lane, Warninglid

prepared by

WPS Planning

Planning Statement
Southgate



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 WPS Planning has been instructed by Mrs Allen to submit a full planning application for the change of use of the existing stable building to an independent residential dwelling with associated parking. The application is a resubmission of the previously approved application DM/20/4322.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1 The application site is located on the southern side of Cuckfield Lane and is positioned at the end of the access track, which serves a number of other dwellings.
- 2.2 The existing building consists of 7 stables along with storage room, kitchen area and toilet. The wider site consists of a sand school and fields for grazing.
- 2.3 The site lies to the east of the village of Warninglid and as such outside of any defined built up area.

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 The application site has the following relevant planning history:
- DM.25/2579 - Re-use, alteration and extension of existing store to create a 5 bay stable block - Approved
 - DM/20/4322 - Conversion of stable building to single residential dwelling - Approved

4.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The proposal would seek full planning permission for the change of use of the existing building to an independent residential unit, which includes a parking

area.

- 4.2 The proposal would utilise the existing access off Cuckfield Lane, which currently serves the application site.
- 4.3 The application is a resubmission of the previously approved application. The proposal and the site remain the same.

5.0 PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy

- 5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and that this should run through both plan making and decision taking. In terms of the determination of planning applications this should mean the approval of developments that accord with the development plan without delay, and that where the development plan is silent or relevant policies are out of date, that permission be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, or policies of the NPPF indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 Sustainable development is seen within the NPPF as having three roles, namely an economic, social and environmental role.
- 5.3 The following sections within the NPPF (2019) are important factors in the assessment of the proposal:
- Section 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
 - Section 9 - Promoting sustainable transport
 - Section 11 – Making effective use of land
 - Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places

Local Plan

5.4 In terms of the local planning policy context for the Application Site, the adopted Development Plan for the Mid Sussex District is composed of the following relevant documents:

- Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031
 - DP4: Housing
 - DP5: Planning to Meet Future Housing Need
 - DP6: Settlement Hierarchy
 - DP13: Preventing Coalescence
 - DP14: Sustainable Rural Development and the Rural Economy
 - DP15: New Homes in the Countryside
 - DP21: Transport
 - DP22: Rights of Way and other Recreational Routes

The District Council is reviewing and updating the District Plan. The District Plan remains at Examination until the Inspector has published his report, until that time only minimal weight can be given to the Plan and the planning application would be assessed against the policies of the adopted District Plan.

6.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

6.1 The application site lies outside the defined Built-Up Area Boundary and is therefore located within the countryside for the purposes of the Mid Sussex District Plan. Whilst this is acknowledged, the proposal should not be viewed simply by reference to its countryside location. The site forms part of an established group of buildings, including Southgate Farm, the converted dwelling known as Steps Meadow and other residential properties immediately surrounding the site. Consequently, the proposal should be assessed in the context of this existing built cluster rather than as isolated development within the open countryside.

6.2 Policy DP12 seeks to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside whilst allowing development where supported by specific policies within the

Development Plan. In this regard, Policy DP15 specifically supports the re-use and adaptation of rural buildings for residential purposes where the proposal maintains the quality of the rural landscape and results in an enhancement of its immediate setting. The proposal directly accords with these objectives by securing the long-term beneficial use of an existing permanent building without introducing additional built form into the countryside.

- 6.3 National planning policy similarly encourages the effective use of existing buildings and recognises that the re-use of previously constructed buildings represents an inherently sustainable form of development. Rather than constructing a new dwelling within an undeveloped site, the proposal re-purposes an existing building, reducing construction impacts whilst making efficient use of existing infrastructure, access arrangements and services.
- 6.4 The Court of Appeal judgment in *Braintree District Council v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government & Greyread Ltd* [2018] confirmed that the term "isolated homes" should be given its ordinary meaning. A dwelling cannot reasonably be regarded as isolated where it forms part of a group of existing buildings or lies in close proximity to other residential development. Given the relationship of the application site with Southgate Farm, Steps Meadow and surrounding dwellings, the proposal clearly cannot be described as isolated.
- 6.5 A significant material consideration is the planning history of the site. Planning permission 14/02870/FUL granted the conversion of the adjacent rural building into residential use, with the Local Planning Authority concluding that residential conversion represented an appropriate form of development which enhanced the character of the surrounding countryside. This established an important planning precedent for the residential re-use of existing rural buildings within this cluster.
- 6.6 More significantly, planning permission DM/20/4322 was granted in July 2021 for the conversion of this very stable building into a single residential dwelling. In assessing that application, the Council accepted that the proposal complied with Policies DP12 and DP15, concluding that the principle of converting the existing

rural building to residential use was acceptable. The Officer specifically recognised that proposals of this nature are supported by the Development Plan where they secure the re-use of an existing rural building whilst maintaining the quality of the surrounding landscape.

- 6.7 The Officer further concluded that the conversion would preserve the character of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, improve the appearance of the site through the removal of ancillary structures, preserve the setting of nearby heritage assets, provide satisfactory living accommodation, generate no unacceptable impact upon neighbouring amenity or highway safety and deliver a modest but positive contribution towards the District's housing supply. Ultimately, the Council concluded that the planning balance fell significantly in favour of granting planning permission. These conclusions remain highly relevant material considerations in the determination of the current application.
- 6.8 The current proposal follows the same fundamental principle previously accepted by the Local Planning Authority, namely the beneficial re-use of an existing stable building as a residential dwelling. The proposal continues to utilise the existing footprint and built form, resulting in a sustainable form of development that avoids unnecessary new construction whilst securing the long-term future of the building.
- 6.9 Having regard to the established planning history, the previous grant of planning permission under application DM/20/4322, the earlier approval for the adjacent residential conversion, the judgment in *Braintree*, together with Policies DP12 and DP15 of the Mid Sussex District Plan and the wider objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework, it is considered that the principle of development is clearly established and acceptable. The proposal represents a logical, sustainable and policy-compliant re-use of an existing rural building that would preserve the character of the countryside whilst making a positive contribution towards the District's housing supply.

Design & Impact upon the Character of the Area

- 6.10 Paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework confirms that planning decisions should ensure developments are visually attractive, sympathetic to local character and establish a strong sense of place. Likewise, Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan requires development to respond positively to its surroundings whilst remaining sensitive to the countryside.
- 6.11 The proposal seeks the conversion of an existing stable building rather than the construction of a new dwelling. As such, the proposal makes effective use of an existing permanent structure and retains the established built form of the site. The external alterations are intentionally limited and comprise only those necessary to facilitate the residential use, including the insertion of windows and doors within the existing elevations whilst retaining the building's overall scale, footprint, ridge height and proportions.
- 6.12 This approach is entirely consistent with the conclusions reached by the Local Planning Authority under planning permission DM/20/4322, where the Council concluded that the proposed alterations were not excessive, would regularise the appearance of the building, remove ancillary structures and ultimately preserve the character of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Officer specifically concluded that the proposal represented an improvement over the existing appearance of the site.
- 6.13 The existing building is functional in appearance, having been altered over time with a mixture of materials and finishes. The proposal provides an opportunity to improve the visual quality of the building through a coherent architectural treatment whilst maintaining its simple agricultural form. Importantly, no extensions or additional built mass are proposed and therefore the existing relationship between the building and the surrounding countryside remains unchanged.
- 6.14 Given the varied character of development along Cuckfield Lane, together with the presence of several converted rural buildings in the immediate vicinity, the

proposal would sit comfortably within its context and would preserve the rural character and appearance of the area.

- 6.15 Accordingly, the proposal complies with Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, the Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD and the design objectives contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Neighbour Amenity

- 6.16 Policy DP26 requires development to safeguard the amenities of neighbouring occupiers through consideration of privacy, outlook, daylight, sunlight and noise.
- 6.17 The proposal relates solely to the change of use of an existing single-storey building. No increase in height, footprint or built mass is proposed and therefore there would be no additional overbearing impact when compared to the existing lawful building.
- 6.18 The building is well separated from neighbouring dwellings, including Southgate Farm and Steps Meadow, with substantial intervening distances together with mature planting and established boundary vegetation providing effective screening.
- 6.19 These conclusions mirror those reached by the Local Planning Authority under application DM/20/4322, where the Officer concluded that, owing to the single-storey nature of the building, its separation from neighbouring properties and the absence of significant external alterations, the proposal would not result in unacceptable overlooking, loss of privacy, loss of outlook or reductions in daylight or sunlight.
- 6.20 The current proposal similarly introduces no material change to the external envelope of the building and therefore there is no justification to conclude that neighbouring residential amenity would be adversely affected.
- 6.21 The proposal therefore accords with Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan and the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Quality of Residential Environment

- 6.22 Policy DP27 requires all new dwellings to meet the Nationally Described Space Standards to ensure a high standard of accommodation for future occupiers.
- 6.23 The proposed dwelling provides approximately 145m² of internal accommodation arranged around a spacious open-plan living area together with four bedrooms and associated bathrooms. Although two bedrooms are appropriately treated as single bedrooms, the overall accommodation significantly exceeds the minimum Nationally Described Space Standards for a four-bedroom five-person dwelling.
- 6.24 This conclusion is consistent with the previous assessment undertaken by Mid Sussex District Council under planning permission DM/20/4322, where the Officer concluded that the dwelling comfortably exceeded the nationally prescribed minimum floor area and would provide satisfactory living accommodation for future residents.
- 6.25 Externally, the proposal benefits from a generous private garden positioned to the west of the dwelling together with sufficient parking and turning areas. The private amenity space is entirely proportionate to the scale of the dwelling and reflects the spacious character of surrounding residential plots.
- 6.26 Future occupiers would therefore benefit from an excellent standard of accommodation, both internally and externally, fully complying with Policy DP27 and the Nationally Described Space Standards.

Access & Parking

- 6.27 Policy DP21 seeks to ensure development provides safe access and sufficient parking whilst avoiding unacceptable impacts upon highway safety.
- 6.28 The proposal utilises the existing vehicular access serving the site. No alterations to the access arrangement are proposed and the existing parking courtyard to the north of the building provides sufficient space for at least three vehicles together with turning space enabling vehicles to enter and leave the site in a forward gear.

- 6.29 The Local Highway Authority previously considered this exact access arrangement under application DM/20/4322 and raised no objection, concluding that the proposal would not result in an unacceptable impact upon highway safety nor generate severe cumulative impacts on the local highway network.
- 6.30 Those circumstances remain unchanged. The proposal continues to utilise the existing access and parking arrangements, with no material increase in vehicle movements beyond those previously considered acceptable by both the Highway Authority and the Local Planning Authority.
- 6.31 Whilst the site is located within the countryside, the previous Officer's Report correctly recognised that this is an inherent characteristic of rural building conversions and should not, in itself, weigh against an otherwise acceptable proposal.
- 6.32 Accordingly, the proposal fully complies with Policy DP21 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, West Sussex County Council Parking Standards and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Public Right of Way

- 6.33 A Public Right of Way runs adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site. The proposed development would not alter its alignment, width or accessibility.
- 6.34 The proposal involves the conversion of an existing building without extending its footprint towards the Public Right of Way. Existing and proposed boundary treatments ensure an appropriate degree of separation between private residential curtilage and the public footpath whilst maintaining uninterrupted public access.
- 6.35 The proposal therefore preserves the continued operation of the Public Right of Way without conflict between public and private uses.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The proposal seeks planning permission for the change of use of an existing stable building to a single residential dwelling through the sensitive conversion and re-use of an existing permanent structure. The proposal represents an appropriate and sustainable form of development that makes efficient use of an existing building, secures its long-term beneficial use and avoids the need for unnecessary new built development within the countryside.
- 7.2 Whilst the site lies outside a defined Built-Up Area Boundary, the proposal is fully supported by the provisions of Policies DP12 and DP15 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, which specifically allow for the residential re-use of rural buildings where the quality of the rural landscape is maintained or enhanced. The application also reflects the wider objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework by promoting the effective re-use of existing buildings and delivering an additional dwelling without causing material harm to the surrounding environment.
- 7.3 The planning history is a significant material consideration. In particular, planning permission DM/20/4322 established the principle of converting this stable building into a single dwelling, with the Local Planning Authority concluding that the proposal complied with the Development Plan and that the overall planning balance fell significantly in favour of granting planning permission. The Officer further concluded that the development would preserve the character of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, safeguard neighbouring residential amenity, provide satisfactory living accommodation, maintain highway safety and make a positive contribution towards the District's housing supply. Those conclusions remain directly relevant to the determination of the current application and carry substantial weight.
- 7.4 The current proposal follows the same established principles previously accepted by the Council. It retains the existing footprint, scale and form of the building, requires only modest external alterations and integrates sympathetically within the established cluster of surrounding development. The proposal would preserve

the character and appearance of the countryside, respect the setting of nearby heritage assets, provide a high-quality residential environment for future occupiers and have no unacceptable impact upon neighbouring amenity, highway safety, ecology, drainage or the adjacent Public Right of Way.

- 7.5 When assessed against the Development Plan as a whole, together with the National Planning Policy Framework and the site's planning history, it is evident that the proposal represents sustainable development. It delivers the beneficial re-use of an existing rural building, secures environmental improvements, contributes towards the District's housing supply and results in no material planning harm.
- 7.6 Accordingly, having regard to the previous planning permissions at the site, the positive conclusions reached under application DM/20/4322, the relevant provisions of the Mid Sussex District Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework, it is respectfully submitted that the proposal accords with the statutory Development Plan and that there are no material considerations which indicate that planning permission should be withheld. The Local Planning Authority is therefore respectfully requested to grant planning permission.