

PLANNING STATEMENT

IN RELATION TO:

'Planning Application for Conversion and change of use of the existing former school into two dwellings with associated garaging/car ports, removal of existing flat roofs, portacabin and other playground structures. Construction of two detached dwellings with associated garaging within the existing former school field. New entrance onto highway and associated hard and soft landscaping'

**Warninglid Primary School, Slaugham Lane, Warninglid,
RH17 5TJ**

September 2025

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Planning permission is sought on behalf of the Applicant for the conversion of a former school building to 2 No. dwellings and the erection of 2 No. dwellings at Warninglid Primary School, Slaugham Lane, Warninglid.
- 1.2 This Planning Statement is submitted in support of the above planning application. The statement describes the site, its surroundings and the proposal itself. The Planning Policy background is considered along with an assessment of the proposal considering the relevant policy and all other material planning considerations.
- 1.3 This Planning Application should be read in conjunction with the detailed drawing package that has been prepared by the scheme's architects and the following supporting statements:-
 - Design and Access Statement, prepared by Gould Baxter;
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, prepared by Arborweald;
 - Ecology Bat Emergence Report, prepared by Arborweald;
 - Heritage Statement, prepared by Manorwood;
 - Landscape and Visual Appraisal, prepared by Huskisson Brown Associates;
 - Transport Statement, prepared by Reeves Transport Planning;
 - Visibility Assessment, prepared by Gould Baxter;
 - Tree Survey Report, prepared by Arborweald;
 - Tree Constraints Plan, prepared by Arborweald; and
 - Tree Protection Plan, prepared by Arborweald.

2. SITE CONTEXT

2.1 The application site comprises a former school, Warninglid Primary School and associated grounds. The site is 0.46 hectares in area and located on the eastern side of Slaugham Lane at the southern end of a line of residential properties.

2.2 Warninglid Primary School was formerly owned by West Sussex County Council. The school closed in 2021 and has remained vacant since. The site currently comprises the former school buildings located in the northern part of the site and an external playground and play space to the south. The former school had a roll of just under 60 pupils and is estimated to have employed circa 10 to 12 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff.



Fig 1. Aerial map showing the site and its surroundings
(image courtesy of Google Maps – red line is for indicative purposes only)

2.3 Warninglid Primary School dates back to the 19th century and is a good example of a Victorian village school. The building is not Listed and nor is it located within a

Conservation Area; however the Council have confirmed that the school is a non-designated heritage asset.

- 2.4 The road and a line of mature trees and hedging flank the western boundary providing good screening of the site, with grazing fields and a boundary hedge flanking the eastern boundary.
- 2.5 The closest Listed Building is Old Park House, a Grade II Listed building, which is located north-east of the site.
- 2.6 Habitats on site include buildings, hardstanding, semi-improved grassland, hedgerow, scrub, individual trees and woodland. The habitats in the wider landscape comprise predominantly rural features including grassland, woodland, and arable fields, with occasional scattered residential properties and road networks.
- 2.7 In terms of site designations, the site is located outside of the defined built-up area boundary within designated countryside. The site is also located within the High Weald National Landscape (formerly referred to as the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

3. THE PROPOSAL

3.1 This application proposal is for the conversion and change of use of the existing former school building into two dwellings, with associated garaging/ car ports and construction of two detached dwellings with associated garaging within the existing former school field.

3.2 The full proposed works are as follows: -

- Conversion of the existing former school building into two dwellings;
- Construction of two new single garages with integrated car port;
- Construction of two detached dwellings with associated garaging;
- Removal of the existing pergola, portacabin and shed located in the playgrounds;
- Removal of the flat roofs from the existing 'modern' additions to the school;
- New and reinstated entrances onto highway; and
- Associated soft and hard landscaping.

3.3 The development proposals seek to ensure the long-term preservation of the historic school building by converting it into two dwellings. The proposals would involve the removal of the existing flats roofs and replacement with pitched roofs to mimic the school building gable roofs.

3.4 Each of the dwellings would have private amenity space to the east and rear of the building. Detached garaging and ample parking for a minimum of 2 spaces will be provided per dwelling.

3.5 The new detached dwellings will be 2-storeys with gable ends, and a flat roofed garage to the side. They have been designed in a modern style, whilst still reflecting elements of the original school buildings. Our client would be satisfied for external finishes and materials to be controlled via a condition.

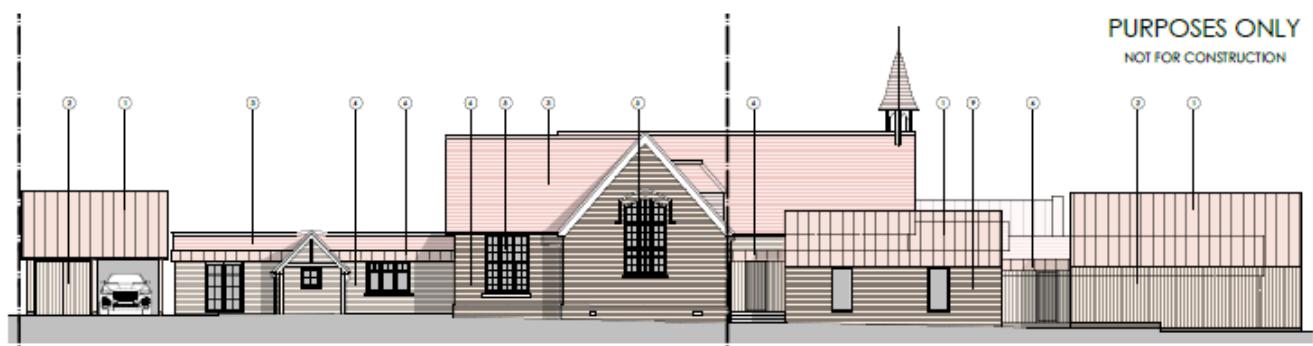


Fig 2. Plot 1 and 2 – Proposed front elevation (west)



Fig 3. Plot 3 & 4 – Proposed front elevation

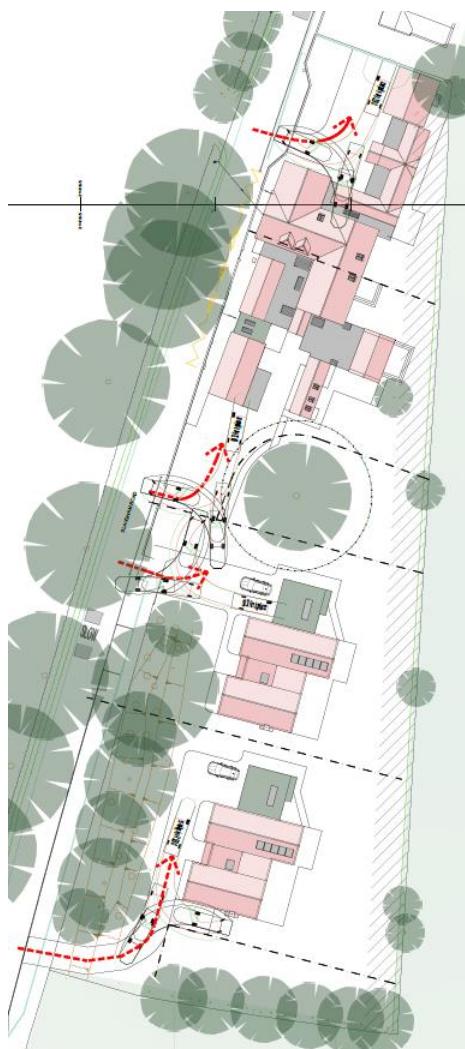


Fig 4. Proposed Site Plan

- 3.6 The new garaging/car ports for the dwellings within the school, will be built on the existing playground. The two new dwellings are proposed within the adjacent school playing field, to the south of the school and parallel with the road, therefore aligning with other dwellings in the local area.
- 3.7 Access to the school dwellings will be via an existing, reinstated highways access. Access to the two new dwellings will be via an existing access (Plot 3) and via a new highway access in the southern corner of the site (Plot 4) (refer to **Fig 4**).
- 3.8 As will be discussed in further detail below, Ecology/ View buffer zones will be created, which will allow building to take place a sufficient distance from the field, to retain as much openness as possible and to allow views from the northern most property to be uninterrupted by any structure.

4. POLICY CONTEXT

a. NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (THE NPPF)

4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was originally published in 2012 and has been subject to a number of revisions subsequently, with the most recent version being published on 12th December 2024.

4.2 The NPPF confirms that planning law, as set out at Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.3 The focus of the revised NPPF continues to be achieving sustainable development. The NPPF clarifies that *“at a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”* (taken from Resolution 42/187 of the United Nations). However, at paragraph 8 the Framework sets out that in planning terms, and to achieve sustainable development there are *“three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives)”*. These objectives are economic, social and environmental, which *“should be delivered through the preparation and implementation of plans and the application of the policies in this Framework; they are not criteria against which every decision can or should be judged. Planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area”* (paragraph 9).

4.4 Paragraph 11 is an important element of the NPPF. It states that: *“Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development... For decision-taking this means: c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*

- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination”.*

4.5 Paragraph 12 confirms that “*the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision-making. Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood plans that form part of the development plan), permission should not usually be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed*”.

4.6 Paragraph 14 is relevant in this case. It states “*In situations where the presumption (at paragraph 11d) applies to applications involving the provision of housing, the adverse impact of allowing development that conflicts with the neighbourhood plan is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, provided the following apply:*

- a) the neighbourhood plan became part of the development plan five years or less before the date on which the decision is made; and*
- b) the neighbourhood plan contains policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement (see paragraphs 69-70);*

4.7 Section 4 of the Plan refers to Decision Making. At paragraph 39 of the Framework, it sets out that “*Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible*”.

4.8 The Framework also sets out that there are only limited circumstances where decision-makers should give weight to policies in emerging plans, and generally “*refusal of planning permission on grounds of prematurity will seldom be justified where a draft plan has yet to be submitted for examination; or – in the case of a neighbourhood plan – before the end of the local planning authority publicity period on the draft plan*” (paragraph 51).

4.9 Section 5 relates to delivering a sufficient supply of homes. It reiterates at paragraph 61 that the Government’s objective is to significantly boost the supply of new homes. Paragraph 65 confirms that the provision of affordable housing should not be sought for residential developments that are not major developments, other than in designated rural areas (where policies may set out a lower threshold of 5 units or fewer). To support the re-use of brownfield land, where vacant buildings are being reused or redeveloped, any affordable housing contribution due should be reduced by a proportionate amount.

4.10 Paragraph 72 states that “*strategic policy-making authorities should have a clear understanding of the land available in their area through the preparation of a strategic housing land availability assessment. From this, planning policies should identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites, taking into account their availability, suitability and likely economic viability. Planning policies should identify a supply of: a) specific, deliverable sites for five years following the intended date of adoption; and b) specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for the subsequent years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15 of the remaining plan period*”.

4.11 Paragraph 73 continues “*Small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, are essential for Small and Medium Enterprise housebuilders to deliver new homes, and are often built-out relatively quickly. To promote the development of a good mix of sites local planning authorities should:*

- a) identify, through the development plan and brownfield registers, land to accommodate at least 10% of their housing requirement on sites no larger than one hectare; unless it can be shown, through the preparation of relevant plan policies, that there are strong reasons why this 10% target cannot be achieved;*
- b) seek opportunities, through policies and decisions, to support small sites to come forward for community-led development for housing and self-build and custom-build housing;*
- c) use tools such as area-wide design assessments, permission in principle and Local Development Orders to help bring small and medium sized sites forward;*
- d) support the development of windfall sites through their policies and decisions – giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes; and*
- e) work with developers to encourage the sub-division of large sites where this could help to speed up the delivery of homes*”.

4.12 Paragraph 74-75 note that “*neighbourhood planning groups should also give particular consideration to the opportunities for allocating small and medium-sized sites (of a size consistent with paragraph 73a) suitable for housing in their area....Where an allowance is to be made for windfall sites as part of anticipated supply, there should be compelling evidence that they will provide a reliable source of supply. Any allowance should be realistic having regard to the strategic housing land availability assessment, historic windfall delivery rates and expected future trends. Plans should consider the case for setting out policies to resist inappropriate development of residential gardens, for example where development would cause harm to the local area*”.

4.13 With regard to housing supply, paragraph 78 states that “*Strategic policies should include a trajectory illustrating the expected rate of housing delivery over the plan period, and all plans should consider whether it is appropriate to set out the*

anticipated rate of development for specific sites. Local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies, or against their local housing need where the strategic policies are more than five years old.³⁹ The supply of specific deliverable sites should in addition include a buffer (moved forward from later in the plan period) of:

- a) 5% to ensure choice and competition in the market for land; or*
- b) 20% where there has been significant under delivery⁴⁰ of housing over the previous three years, to improve the prospect of achieving the planned supply; or*
- c) From 1 July 2026, for the purposes of decision-making only, 20% where a local planning authority has a housing requirement adopted in the last five years examined against a previous version of this Framework⁴¹, and whose annual average housing requirement⁴² is 80% or less of the most up to date local housing need figure calculated using the standard method set out in national planning practice guidance".*

4.14 The NPPF refers to rural housing at paragraphs 82-84. Paragraph 83 states that “*to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby*”.

4.15 Paragraph 84 states that “*planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances apply:*

- a) there is an essential need for a rural worker, including those taking majority control of a farm business, to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside;*
- b) the development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets;*
- c) the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting;*
- d) the development would involve the subdivision of an existing residential building; or*
- e) the design is of exceptional quality, in that it:*
 - i. is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and*
 - ii. would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area*”.

4.16 Section 9 discusses promoting sustainable transport, including the need to support opportunities, and give priority to walking, cycling and public transport, in addition to creating places that are safe, accessible, address the needs of people with

disabilities, and are designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles.

- 4.17 At paragraph 110 the Framework confirms that “*Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health. However, opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making*”.
- 4.18 Paragraph 113 sets out that “*Maximum parking standards for residential and non-residential development should only be set where there is a clear and compelling justification that they are necessary for managing the local road network, or for optimising the density of development in city and town centres and other locations that are well served by public transport*”.
- 4.19 Paragraph 115 confirms that the main considerations in transport terms when determining specific planning applications is that proposals should provide:
 - “(a) sustainable transport modes are prioritised taking account of the vision for the site, the type of development and its location;
 - “(b) safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users;
 - “(c) the design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflects current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code⁴⁸; and
 - “(d) any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree through a vision-led approach”.
- 4.20 At paragraph 116, the framework also confirms that “*development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios*”.
- 4.21 Section 11 is entitled ‘Making effective use of land’. Paragraph 119 confirms that “*planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions*”.
- 4.22 Paragraph 125 sets out that decision makers are required to give regard to benefits of development, including environmental gains, and should “*(c) give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes ...[and] (d) promote and support the development of under-utilised land and*

buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively...".

4.23 Paragraph 127 states that *"decisions need to reflect changes in the demand for land.... applications for alternative uses on the land should be supported, where the proposed use would contribute to meeting an unmet need for development in the area".*

4.24 Paragraph 129 discusses the need to achieve appropriate densities. Account needs to be given to the identified need for different types of housing and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it, local market conditions, sustainability, existing character and setting, and *"the importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places."*

4.25 Paragraph 130 states that *"Area-based character assessments, design guides and codes and masterplans can be used to help ensure that land is used efficiently while also creating beautiful and sustainable places. Where there is an existing or anticipated shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs, it is especially important that planning policies and decisions avoid homes being built at low densities, and ensure that developments make optimal use of the potential of each site...local planning authorities should refuse applications which they consider fail to make efficient use of land, taking into account the policies in this Framework. In this context, when considering applications for housing, authorities should take a flexible approach in applying policies or guidance relating to daylight and sunlight, where they would otherwise inhibit making efficient use of a site (as long as the resulting scheme would provide acceptable living standards)".*

4.26 Section 12 refers to achieving well-designed and beautiful places. Paragraph 131 states *"the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development..."*

4.27 Paragraph 135 sets out that *"decisions should ensure that developments:*

- (a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- (b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- (c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
- (d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*

(e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and

(f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users ⁵¹; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience".

4.28 Paragraph 136 notes that "trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible. Applicants and local planning authorities should work with highways officers and tree officers to ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places, and solutions are found that are compatible with highways standards and the needs of different users".

4.29 Paragraph 139 confirms that "development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents which use visual tools such as design guides and codes".

4.30 Section 15 relates to Conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Paragraph 187 notes that "planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland...".

4.31 Paragraph 189 notes that "great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads⁶⁶. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas".

4.32 Section 16 relates to Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment. Paragraph 207 states that *“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”*.

4.33 Paragraph 212 states that *“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”*.

4.34 Paragraph 215 states that *“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”*.

b. LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

4.35 On 28th March 2018 Mid Sussex District Council adopted the Mid Sussex District Plan (MSDP). This plan replaces the saved policies contained within the Mid Sussex Local Plan, 2004. The District Plan sets out the planning strategy for the years up to 2031 to deliver the social, economic and environmental needs for the District.

4.36 The Council’s Proposals Map shows the Application site is located outside of the built-up area boundary for Warninglid, within designated countryside (the site is located north of the inset map). The site is also located within the High Weald National Landscape (formerly referred to as the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

4.37 **Policy DP4** is the Council’s general housing policy. It states that *“the District’s OAN is 14,892 dwellings over the Plan period. Provision is also made of 1,498 dwellings to ensure unmet need is addressed in the Northern West Sussex Housing Market Area. There is a minimum District housing requirement of 16,390 dwellings between 2014 – 2031...The Plan will deliver an average of 876 dwellings per annum (dpa) until 2023/24. Thereafter an average of 1,090 dpa will be delivered between 2024/25 and 2030/31, subject to there being no further harm to the integrity of European Habitat Sites in Ashdown Forest...The Council commits to commencing preparation of a Site Allocations DPD in 2017 to be adopted in 2020. The DPD will identify further sites which have capacity of 5 or more residential units. The Council will review the District Plan, starting in 2021, with submission to the Secretary of State in 2023”*.

4.38 **Policy DP6** refers to Settlement Hierarchy. This policy states that *“Development will be permitted within towns and villages with defined built-up area boundaries”*.

Any infilling and redevelopment will be required to demonstrate that it is of an appropriate nature and scale (with particular regard to DP26: Character and Design), and not cause harm to the character and function of the settlement...The growth of settlements will be supported where this meets identified local housing, employment and community needs.

4.39 Warninglid is classified as being a Category 4 Settlement, which is described as “*Small villages with limited services often only serving the settlement itself*”.

4.40 **Policy DP12** relates to Protection and Enhancement of Countryside. This policy states that “*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*”.

4.41 **Policy DP15** relates to New Homes in the Countryside. This policy states that “*provided that they would not be in conflict with Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside, new homes in the countryside will be permitted where special justification exists. Special justification is defined as:*

- *Where accommodation is essential to enable agricultural, forestry and certain other full time rural workers to live at, or in the immediate vicinity of, their place of work; or*
- *In the case of new isolated homes in the countryside, where the design of the dwelling is of exceptional quality and it enhances its immediate setting and is sensitive to the character of the area; or*
- *Affordable housing in accordance with Policy DP32: Rural Exception Sites; or*
- *The proposed development meets the requirements of Policy DP6: Settlement Hierarchy...*

The re-use and adaptation of rural buildings for residential use in the countryside will be permitted

where it is not a recently constructed agricultural building which has not been or has been little used for its original purpose and:

- *the re-use would secure the future of a heritage asset; or*
- *the re-use would lead to an enhancement of the immediate setting and the quality of the rural and landscape character of the area is maintained.”*

4.42 **Policy DP16** relates to the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It states that “*development within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), as shown on the Policies Maps, will only be permitted where it conserves or enhances natural beauty and has regard to the High Weald AONB Management Plan, in particular;*

- the identified landscape features or components of natural beauty and to their setting;
- the traditional interaction of people with nature, and appropriate land management;
- the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage.
- character and local distinctiveness, settlement pattern, sense of place and setting of the AONB; and
- The conservation of wildlife and heritage.

Small scale proposals which support the economy and social well-being of the AONB that are compatible with the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty will be supported”.

Development on land that contributes to the setting of the AONB will only be permitted where it does not detract from the visual qualities and essential characteristics of the AONB, and in particular should not adversely affect the views into and out of the AONB by virtue of its location or design.

4.43 Policy DP26 relates to Character and Design states that “*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;*
- *contributes positively to, and clearly defines, public and private realms and should normally be designed with active building frontages facing streets and public open spaces to animate and provide natural surveillance;*
- *creates a sense of place while addressing the character and scale of the surrounding buildings and landscape;*
- *protects open spaces, trees and gardens that contribute to the character of the area;*
- *protects valued townscapes and the separate identity and character of towns and villages;*
- *does not cause significant harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants of new dwellings, including taking account of the impact on privacy, outlook, daylight and sunlight, and noise, air and light pollution (see Policy DP29);*
- *creates a pedestrian-friendly layout that is safe, well connected, legible and accessible;*
- *incorporates well integrated parking that does not dominate the street environment, particularly where high density housing is proposed;*
- *positively addresses sustainability considerations in the layout and the building design;*

- *take the opportunity to encourage community interaction by creating layouts with a strong neighbourhood focus/centre; larger (300+ unit) schemes will also normally be expected to incorporate a mixed use element;*
- *optimises the potential of the site to accommodate development".*

4.44 **Policy DP34** relates to Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets. The Other Heritage Assets section states that "*development that retains buildings which are not listed but are of architectural or historic merit, or which make a significant and positive contribution to the street scene will be permitted in preference to their demolition and redevelopment.*

The Council will seek to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the character and quality of life of the District. Significance can be defined as the special interest of a heritage asset, which may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic.

Proposals affecting such heritage assets will be considered in accordance with the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and current Government guidance".

4.45 The following policies are also considered to be of relevance to this planning application:

- **Policy DP13:** Preventing Coalescence
- **Policy DP21:** Transport;
- **Policy DP25:** Community Facilities and Local Services [*please Section 6 see below for details of this policy and its requirements*];
- **Policy DP27:** Dwelling Space Standards;
- **Policy DP35:** Conservation Areas;
- **Policy DP37:** Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows;
- **Policy DP38:** Biodiversity;
- **Policy DP39:** Sustainable Design and Construction;
- **Policy DP40:** Renewable Energy Schemes;
- **Policy DP41:** Flood Risk and Drainage.

C. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

4.46 The Slaugham Neighbourhood Plan was 'made' in September 2019 and covers the Plan period 2014-2031. The following policies are considered to be of relevance to this proposal-

- **Policy 1:** Protecting the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- **Policy 2:** Sustainable Development Measures;
- **Policy 4:** Conservation Areas;
- **Policy 6:** Community Facilities.

D. OTHER RELEVANT POLICY GUIDANCE

- 4.47 The District Council has adopted Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) relating to infrastructure provision, including affordable housing.
- 4.48 In addition, Mid Sussex District Council formally adopted a Design Guide on 4th November 2023 as an SPD for use in the consideration and determination of planning application and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications in the district.

E. EMERGING PLANNING POLICY

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

- 4.49 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.
- 4.50 The draft District Plan 2021-2039 (Regulation 19) is currently at Examination and stage 1 hearings were concluded on the 31st October 2024.
- 4.51 On 4th April 2025, the Inspector wrote to the Council with her Stage 1 findings, and concluded that the Council have failed the duty to cooperate, noting that *“the presence of constraints does not obviate the necessity for MSDC to explore the possibilities of doing more to help address the unmet needs of the wider sub- region. The failure here is that the Council has not adequately considered the requests of its neighbours – namely Crawley, Horsham and Brighton and Hove, in a constructive, active and ongoing way. The Council has, consequently, not maximised the effectiveness of plan preparation... there are two options open to the Council, either to withdraw the Plan from examination or to ask that I write a report of my conclusions. I should say that the latter would involve further expense, and that the contents of the report would likely be very similar to this letter.”*
- 4.52 We are aware that there has been subsequent correspondence between the Council, the Government and the Planning Inspectorate in respect of this matter, and most recently MSDC are understood to have now launched a legal challenge against the Government in respect of the Planning Inspector's findings and recommendation to withdraw the Plan from examination. Therefore, as it stands today, the draft Plan has not been withdrawn.
- 4.53 Given the above, we consider that no weight can currently be given to the draft Plan, and this Planning Application should therefore be assessed against the policies of the adopted District Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan, the NPPF, and other relevant planning guidance

5. PLANNING HISTORY AND PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

(i) Planning History

5.1 According to the Councils on-line planning records, Warninglid Primary School has the following planning history: -

Warninglid Primary School

- **Planning ref: 01/00183/FUL/**: Side extension to main range of the school to provide early years classroom. Approved 13th March 2001.
- **Planning ref: SV/040/75/**: Additional Classroom. Approved 27th November 1975.

Land adjoining Warninglid Primary School

- **Planning ref: SV/047/94/**: Regulation 3, Change of use of land from agricultural use to school playing field. No Objection 28th November 1994.

(II) Pre Application Advice

5.2 A pre application enquiry relating to the conversion, extension and alteration of the existing school into 2 No. dwellings along with 4 No. dwellings on the existing playfield of the school with a new shared access off the highway, was submitted to the Council for consideration. A formal response was received via email dated 28th March 2025. The case officer and Conservation Officer provided detailed design comments in relation to the proposal.

5.3 The current proposal has been directly informed by the Council Officer's comments in relation to the above pre-application advice. Most notably, the scheme has been reduced to the conversion of the former school buildings to 2 dwellings and the erection of 2 new dwellings (rather than the 4 previously proposed) due to the Councils concerns regarding overdevelopment.

6. PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

6.1 This application proposal is for the conversion and change of use of the existing former school building into two dwellings, with associated garaging/ car ports and construction of two detached dwellings with associated garaging within the existing former school field.

6.2 As set out above, the Mid Sussex District Plan proposals map identifies that the site lies outside the defined built-up area boundary, within designated countryside. The site is also located within the High Weald National Landscape (formerly referred to as the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

6.3 The buildings at Warninglid Primary School are not Listed and nor is it located within a Conservation Area, however the Council have confirmed that the school is a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA) for the following reason:

- *"The age and architectural character of the building, as a good example within the local context of a typical Victorian village school, which retains numerous original features;*
- *The communal value within the local context of the building as a focus of village life for over 140 years; and*
- *Potential group value with the adjacent former school master's house.*

The school is set within grounds which include hard surfaced play areas as well as a school field to the south. These grounds contribute positively to the setting of the building and to an understanding of its significance as set out above. The wider rural setting all around the building also contributes to the manner in which its character as a village school is appreciated".

6.4 This application follows a previous pre application enquiry on the site for a larger development of 6 No. dwellings (2 x conversion; 4 x new build). At that time, the Conservation Officer, Emily Wade was of the view that *"with respect to the change of use, subject to your agreement as Case Officer, I would assume that we accept that an educational use is no longer viable on the site. In this context, the residential conversion of the school building is not considered contentious in principle in heritage terms, as this has the potential to provide a beneficial long-term use for the NDHA".* Regarding the new building development of 4 No. houses, she raised some concerns over the scale of development; stating that *"in relation to the proposed development within the southern part of the site, this occupies part of the former playground to the south of the school, with the school field beyond this. As a rural village school, the presence of the playground, and the verdant school field, both contribute to the significance of the NDHA and how this is appreciated...As such the principle of new residential development within the southern part of the school playground and the field will be considered contentious in heritage terms, and will require careful justification in terms of both the principle and the quantum of*

development within the context of the enablement of the beneficial re-use of the main school building".

6.5 The above comments have been considered closely as part of the preparation of this proposal, and as set out in detail within the accompanying Heritage Statement, the scheme has been redesigned to positively address the Council's pre-application enquiry comments.

6.6 The former use of the site was a school and associated playing fields, which we understand to be classified as a community facility. This Planning Application proposes the change of use of the school buildings to 2 dwellings, plus the erection of 2 new houses to the south; thereby resulting in the loss of the community use. District Plan Policy DP25 ('Community Facilities and Local Services') states that "*Where proposals involve the loss of a community facility, (including those facilities where the loss would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs locally) evidence will need to be provided that demonstrates:*

- that the use is no longer viable; or*
- that there is an existing duplicate facility in the locality which can accommodate the impact of the loss of the facility; or*
- that a replacement facility will be provided in the locality."*

6.7 The Application proposals are not linked to any replacement educational facilities. The site was formerly owned by West Sussex County Council, and the educational ceased in 2021. Accompanying this Planning Application is a Viability Assessment, which states that "*A consultation on the future of the school was announced in October 2019, identified as one of five local schools as being "vulnerable". In June 2020 West Sussex County Council confirmed that Warninglid Primary School would be moved to a new site in Pease Pottage (Woodgate Primary School) by September 2021. In March 2021 the site was declared surplus to County Council operational requirements. Consent for a disposal for the site was given by the Department of Education in March 2024. We note Bruton Knowles was appointed to market the site and online data indicates marketing commenced in October 2023.*" Therefore WSCC as landowners and the education authority were clearly satisfied that the school was surplus to requirements, and the existing need could be met by other nearby schools, and in particular the new school at Woodgate Primary School (Pease Pottage). Therefore the second bullet point of Policy DP25 ('duplicate facility') is accorded with.

6.8 The accompanying Viability Assessment also confirms that there are other existing community uses in Warninglid, and WSCC (as landowners) confirmed in their report to the cabinet member for Finance and Property in June 2024 that "*Following the Primary School's move to the new School in Pease Pottage, the site was no longer required for educational use. An options appraisal of the asset was undertaken and the site was considered against a range of options including for possible social, community or environmental use, particularly where this could complement the*

Council's ambitions relating to climate change. No viable alternative uses were identified. The property was previously declared surplus to all operational service requirements after no alternative County Council service use was identified for the property."

6.9 The Viability Assessment also considers the marketing of the school, and sets out in some detail the marketing exercise that was undertaken on behalf of WSCC who were seeking to dispose of the site. The WSCC report on the freehold disposal set out the following: *"The property was offered for sale on the open market. Marketing commenced in Autumn 2023. In total 18 parties inspected the property. Eight bids were received by the initial deadline in November 2023. A further round of bidding was undertaken, and revised offers received. Following discussion with our agents, further conversations took place with the highest bidders and the marketing was brought to a close in January 2024."* The Viability Assessment confirms that *"The schedule of offers for the site is not a matter of public record, but we understand that there were no competitive bids for site to continue with an F1 (educational or F2 alternative community use."* Therefore the first limb of Policy DP25 (community use is no longer viable) is also satisfied.

6.10 Government Planning Policy supports effective and efficient use of land for sites such as this but also advises that new housing is well integrated with and complements neighbouring buildings and its local area in terms of scale, density, layout and access.

6.11 We are aware of a housing scheme recently determined at Appeal (Public Inquiry), for a site at Scamps Hill in Lindfield (**planning ref: DM/24/0446; appeal ref: APP/D3830/W/24/3350075**). At this time, the Inspector considered the issue of Housing Land Supply, noting that *"the Council suggest they have 3.38 years housing land supply, whereas the Appellant suggests it is 2.41 years. The variation is due to the differences in anticipated delivery of various large sites. However, as both parties agreed to describe the shortfall as significant, the issue was not contested at the Inquiry"*. It is therefore clear that currently, MSDC are unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply.

6.12 The accompanying Viability Assessment report also considers the financial viability of converting the school to a residential use. The report confirms that having taken all the usual financial parameters into account (e.g. land acquisition costs and related fees, build costs, finance costs etc.), and having regard to the accepted developers profit (the report confirms that *"The NPPF and RICS indicate that a reasonable profit market for developers is in the range of 15-20% of the Gross Development Value"*), only a scheme of 2 conversion dwellings and 2 new build dwellings would provide a viable gross development value ('GDV'). The Viability Assessment confirms that just converting the school buildings to 2 dwellings would generated a developer return of 9%, whilst conversion plus 1 new build dwelling would provide a profit on GDV of 12%. The proposals presented by this Planning Application (2 conversion and 2 new build dwellings) provide the only viable scheme

with a developer return of 15%. The Viability Assessment concludes that this *“demonstrates that a conversion of the school building is not viable. Even with the addition of a single new build dwelling on the adjacent land the scheme still falls short of target developers profit in the market... The 4no dwelling scheme is the only option that does meet the target developers profit set indicated by NPPF and RICS. The conversion of the school building into two dwellings, with the addition of two further dwellings on the adjacent land is only way a developer could make the site viable and prevent this non designated heritage asset from falling into disrepair.”*

6.13 As will be addressed in detail below, Warninglid Primary School is a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA). As part of this development, our client's intention is for funds from the development on the field to be released and to facilitate the conversion of the NDHA into a viable use for the future. This will allow the building to be maintained and bought back into use, in line with **Policy DP34**. This policy states that *“development that retains buildings which are not listed but are of architectural or historic merit, or which make a significant and positive contribution to the street scene will be permitted in preference to their demolition and redevelopment. The Council will seek to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the character and quality of life of the District. Significance can be defined as the special interest of a heritage asset, which may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Proposals affecting such heritage assets will be considered in accordance with the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and current Government guidance”*.

6.14 The conversion of the long vacant school buildings, which are situated in a rural area, complies with **Policy DP15** which allows the re-use of buildings in countryside locations where *“the re-use would secure the future of a heritage asset; or the re-use would lead to an enhancement of the immediate setting and the quality of the rural and landscape character of the area is maintained”*.

6.15 It is our opinion that the benefits of retaining this NDHA and bringing it back into a viable long term use as 2 No. dwellings, on a previously developed site in a relatively sustainable location, are significant. The additional 2 dwellings on the playfield fields will enable the beneficial re-use of the school buildings. Further, currently Mid Sussex District Council do not have a 5YHLS and there is therefore a heightened need for housing in the local area. It is our opinion that the principle of new development in this location is acceptable and fully compliant with government guidance and local level policies.

Sustainable Location

6.16 The site is located outside of the built-up area boundary for Warninglid, within designated countryside. The site is also located within the High Weald National Landscape.

6.17 The site is relatively sustainably located, within easy reach of a host of services and facilities. The closest railway station is Balcombe, which is 3.9 miles from the site. The larger stations of Horsham and Haywards Heath are both 5.1 miles away. There are also several bus stops within the immediate vicinity, the closest being along Slaugham Lane, south of the site.

6.18 The following services and facilities are also within easy reach of the site: -

Primary Schools

St. Mark's CofE Primary School	1.7 miles
Holy Trinity CofE Primary School	1.9 miles
Handcross Primary School	2.2 miles
Bolney CofE Primary School.	2.8 miles

Secondary Schools

Warden Park Secondary Academy	4.1 miles
The Forest School	4.4 miles
Millais School	4.6 miles
Thomas Bennett Community College	4.9 miles

Doctors

Ouse Valley Practice	2.1 miles
Cuckfield Medical Centre	3.8 miles
Cowfold Surgery	3.8 miles
Gillets Surgery	4.2 miles

Hospitals

Nuffield Health	5 miles
Horsham Hospital	5.4 miles
Crawley Hospital	6 miles
Chalkhill	6 miles
Princess Royal Hospital	6.1 miles

6.18 Although it is acknowledged that the site is outside and not adjoining the settlement boundary, residents of new dwellings in this location would not be reliant on the private car, and therefore we consider the site to be relatively sustainable (in rural village terms).

Character & Heritage

6.19 **Policy DP26** in the MSDP seeks for new development to be well designed and reflect the distinctive character of its surroundings. In addition, the NPPF is supportive of good design and making efficient use of land.

6.20 This proposal seeks permission for the conversion and change of use of the existing former school building into two dwellings, with associated garaging/ car ports and construction of two detached dwellings with associated garaging within the existing

former school field. The proposal would include the removal of the existing single-storey structure.

6.21 It is our opinion that provision of 4 No. dwellings at this site would result in an efficient use of the available land resource without leading to an overdevelopment or over-intensive use of the site. The scale of the development has been fully informed by previous pre-application discussions with the Council.

6.22 The application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement, which has been prepared by Gould Baxter. We are also aware that the former school is considered as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA) and as such a Heritage Statement, which has been prepared by Manorwood also accompanies this application.

6.23 The Design and Access Statement confirms the following regarding the design and scale of the proposals: -

"The school building scale will be generally unchanged with the proposals. The conversion will create two 4-bedroom dwellings.

The existing 'modern' flat roofs will be removed and replaced with (mostly) pitched roofs, to match the existing roof. To reduce the height of the replacement pitched roofs, some flat roof areas have been introduced but are discreetly located and not readily visible from the front or public elevations.

The new pitched roofs will be a mix of zinc standing seam in clay tile red, plain clay tile to match the existing. The flat roofs will be a mix of zinc and sedum.

The existing original fenestration and original doorways within the former school will be retained and repaired; as noted on the General Arrangement drawings.

Secondary glazing will be installed on the retained windows to improve thermal performance.

New fenestration will be in crittal style metal frames in anthracite to distinguish the old and new additions.

It is proposed to add a mezzanine floor, each accessed via a staircase, to create first floor accommodation within three of the four large volume spaces. This is reversible and will enhance the viability of the conversion to provide sufficient and modern-day living accommodation.

New dwellings

The proposed dwellings are two storeys high with an attached garage and bin store. The accommodation comprises 4 bedrooms (3 with en-suite bathrooms) at first floor but each house has the potential of a ground floor bedroom, if required.

The total GIA of the proposed dwellings is 312m² (Including the garage), which is considered commensurate with market housing of this type and the majority of dwellings nearby".

6.24 The DAS concludes that *"the principle of development is supported by the relevant planning policies and The National Policy Framework;*

The scale, form, height and massing of the proposed dwellings is sympathetic to its' surroundings in terms of scale and design, and will be entirely compatible with the

site's rural location and the surrounding form of development.

The design uses materials that are sympathetic to the character and quality of the existing building;

The proposal will incorporate a high level of sustainability within its construction; Owing to the isolated and secluded nature of the property, the proposals will not have any detrimental impact upon the amenity of the neighbouring properties".

6.25 The Heritage Statement outlines the site history, stating that “Warninglid Primary School is a former late Victorian Board School, dating from 1878, which served the villages of Warninglid and Slaugham until its closure in 2021 and the relocation of the school to Crawley. The building is situated on the east side of Slaugham Lane, approximately half a mile north of Warninglid and one mile south-west of Slaugham. The building is not statutorily designated, nor is it located within a conservation area. However, it has been considered by the Local Planning Authority to be a Non-Designated Heritage Asset (NDHA). The school ceased operation in 2021 and remained vacant until it was purchased by the applicants in 2024. As a result of prolonged lack of use and maintenance, the building has suffered from both external and internal decay and is in need of repair, as well as a viable use that will ensure its long-term preservation. Following the purchase of the property, the applicants submitted a pre-application enquiry in February 2025 under reference DM/24/3103, for the conversion, extension, and alteration of the existing school into two dwellings, along with four dwellings on the existing playfield, with a new shared access from the highway. In March 2025 the Local Planning Authority provided written advice, in which it was stated that the conversion of the school was not considered contentious in principle, subject to further information. The construction of the proposed four dwellings, however, was considered harmful in heritage terms as they were judged to “represent an overdevelopment of the site, having an overbearing relationship with the retained school building, and resulting in an unacceptable loss of the currently open and verdant character of this part of the site.”

6.26 The statement confirms that Warninglid Primary School is not a statutory Listed Building, nor it is curtilage listed to any neighbouring designated heritage assets. The building, however, has been considered by Mid Sussex District Council as a Non-Designated Heritage Asset (NDHA). The heritage statement states that “Non-Designated Heritage Assets (NDHA) are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas, or landscapes that hold significance meriting consideration in planning decisions due to their heritage interest, but do not meet the criteria for formal designation. Mid Sussex District Council has stated that the school building merits consideration as a Non-Designated Heritage Asset (NDHA) for the following reasons:

- The age and architectural character of the building, as a good example within the local context of a typical Victorian village school, which retains numerous original features;
- The communal value within the local context of the building as a focus of village life for over 140 years; and

- *Potential group value with the adjacent former school master's house".*

6.27 The statement carried out a detailed impact assessment. Regarding the conversion works, it noted the following: -

"National policy requires that change should seek the optimum viable use consistent with conservation. In reaching that position, a proportionate consideration of reasonable alternatives has been undertaken. For Warninglid School, those alternatives are constrained by location, access, the building's plan and volumes, and the need to avoid harm to the 1878 core and its setting.

Re-establishing a school at Slaugham Lane is not realistic given the formal relocation to Woodgate and the consolidation of roll numbers there. Alternative uses such as nursery, community hall or shared community hub, face material obstacles: safeguarding and access management at a constrained lane frontage; limited on-site parking and problematic drop-off arrangements; regulatory upgrades that would require intrusive alteration of the hall volume and principal elevations; and uncertain, grant-dependent revenue streams. Such a use would therefore be operationally fragile and would risk greater harm to significance for an outcome that is unlikely to be financially self-sustaining.

The rural edge location, limited public transport, and restricted parking render an office or co-working use marginal. Subdivision to create lettable units would completely erode the legibility of the hall, drive service penetrations through significant fabric, and necessitate acoustic compartmentalisation and intensive building-services interventions to meet modern standards. The amount of lettable floor space achievable without unacceptable harm would not support the level of investment needed for repair and ongoing management.

Leisure and commercial uses are fundamentally mismatched to context and fabric. They would introduce evening activity, lighting and extraction with a high likelihood of adverse impact on the principal elevation, the bellcote and the semi-rural character of Slaugham Lane. They would also demand car parking beyond a level compatible with the setting.

Although superficially compatible with the plan-form, seasonal occupancy as short-term holiday accommodation creates unreliable revenue for cyclical maintenance, and the operational model encourages high turnover, signage, servicing and external paraphernalia. It offers no conservation advantage over permanent residential use.

Based on the above, residential use is considered to be the current optimum viable use for the building. The building's extant arrangement (principal hall with flanking classrooms and ranges) lends itself to two dwellings with minimal disruption to the character and form of the 1878 core. It will also result in minimal traffic activity and domestic noise increase and is also considered to alight harmoniously with the wider setting of the property, which is formed by residential dwellings only.

On this basis, the conversion of the former Warninglid Primary School to two C3 dwellings represents the only realistic and optimum viable use consistent with the conservation of the 1878 core and the character of its setting and is therefore justified in heritage and planning terms.

The proposed change of use, however, bring with it a number of interventions and alterations that are considered necessary to make the building capable of being used for the proposed uses and, in turn, promote its long-term maintenance. Whilst now replaced, previous Planning Practice guidance stated, "the best way of securing the upkeep of historic buildings and areas is to keep them in active use, and for the great majority, some degree of adaptation is necessary. This recognises that to allow buildings to continue with a viable use there will be the need for some changes to the building".

6.28 It is our opinion that a permanent residential use on the site in the form of two units would be the current optimum viable use for the building and would conserve this NDHA in a manner appropriate to its significance, so that it can be enjoyed for its contribution to the character and quality of life of the District, in line with **Policy DP34** of the District Plan.

6.29 With regard to the impact on setting of introducing two additional dwellings within the former playground, the heritage statement concluded that *"the revised layout reduces the quantum from four dwellings to two, in direct response to the Council's concerns regarding scale, over-development and suburban character within the open, verdant part of the site. The new houses adopt a contemporary idiom aligned with the aesthetic of the remodelled modern ranges of the school, creating a coherent visual narrative without mimicking the 1878 core. The scheme retains generous green space, avoids the school field beyond, and maintains a buffer to trees and root protection areas indicated on the site plan.*

The proposed development has been carefully conceived to follow national policy and best practice guidance for the historic environment, as outlined in Historic England's The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition).

This guidance recommends a proportionate, step-by-step approach to assessing how development might affect heritage assets and their settings, ensuring that any change is based on a clear understanding of significance and is managed in a way that avoids or minimises harm".

6.30 The heritage statement draws the following conclusions: -

"The proposed scheme of works and alterations is based on a thorough understanding of the historic building, its historic development and significance and has been informed by desk-based research and on-site assessment of the surviving historic fabric.

The conversion, extension and alteration of the former school will enhance the building's character by improving roof profiles, retaining key fabric and volumes, and removing and altering unsympathetic addition.

The two dwellings within the south-eastern playground have been materially reduced in number and carefully designed to remain visually recessive in views of the school, to maintain verdancy, and to avoid harm to the settings of the adjacent heritage

asset. The overall impact on setting is neutral, with elements of enhancement arising from the removal of the modern portacabin structures.

The Council's pre-application concerns (over-development, suburban character, prominent garaging, and tree impacts) have been addressed in the revised scheme. Any potential harm on the character of the building and its setting is considered to be minimal and to be outweighed by the benefits from providing the site with the necessary investment and use to ensure its long-term preservation.

The proposals are compliant with respect to the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 insofar as the special interest of the historic asset will be preserved and enhanced.

The proposals are, therefore, considered to be compliant with respect to the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Mid Sussex Local Plan".

6.31 The development proposal has been fully informed by the Council's pre application comments, with great care and consideration being paid to the scale, form, design and layout of the proposal. Further, our client's intention is for funds from the new build development to be released in order to facilitate the conversion works of the NDHA into a viable use for the future, allowing the building to be maintained.

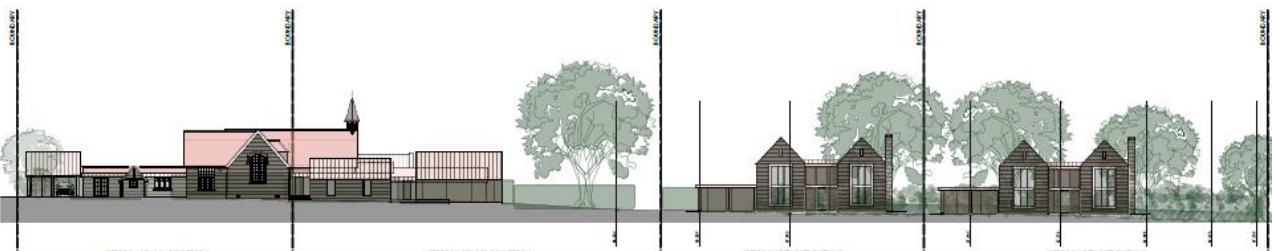


Fig 8. Proposed Street Scene Elevation

6.32 It is our opinion that the site is sufficient size to comfortably accommodate the level of development indicated, and the resultant low density would be entirely appropriate given the sites semi-rural character, allowing ample amenity areas to all the properties, as well sufficient separate distance between the properties to be maintained.

6.33 The proposal presented within this application submission would provide an efficient use of the available land resource in a sympathetic form via an appropriate density layout that would not jar with the established pattern of development in the area, nor would it introduce an obtrusive or visually harmful form of development that would affect the character of the immediate area. Two of the dwellings would bring the vacant school building back into a long term and viable use, whilst the additional new dwellings would respect its setting. The proposal is considered to accord with policy DP26 and DP34 of the District Plan.

6.34 It is considered that the proposed development would represent a high-quality development in this location, which would appear perfectly in keeping with existing housing in this locality, and would not detract from the semi-rural character of the surrounding locality. The erection of two sensitively designed dwellings within the grounds of the school would act as an enabling development, with the funds raised from the new build development helping to facilitating the conversion works and thus brining the school building back into use. Further, the proposal would contribute towards the Councils housing supply. For these reasons outlined above, it is our view that the proposal is fully compliant with **Policy DP26 and DP34** of the MSDP and the more general advice contained in the Government's NPPF.

Residential Amenity

6.35 **Policy DP26** of the MSDP requires that proposals for new development will not cause significant harm to the amenities of nearby residents and future occupants of new dwellings. Matters to consider include the impact on privacy, outlook, daylight, sunlight and noise, air and light pollution.

6.36 In terms of residential amenity, we can confirm that the proposed development has been appropriately laid out to ensure that the relationships with neighbouring dwellings will be acceptable. The closest property comprises a two-storey detached property to the north.

6.37 Window orientation and placement have been given due consideration. 1 No. first-floor window to a study/ library is proposed to the north elevation, which is closest to the closest neighbouring properties; however, there is a sizeable separation distance between this window and the shared boundary. Further, there is ample separation distance between the proposed dwelling and neighbouring properties to all other sides. It is considered that the relationship between the proposal and all neighbouring dwellings would be wholly acceptable, given the scale and height of the dwelling, window placement, orientation and distance between the proposal and neighbouring properties.

6.38 Each of the new houses will have appropriately sized areas of private amenity space. It is our opinion that the plot size and level of amenity space provided would be in keeping with the spatial pattern of development in this area generally.

6.39 Taking into consideration all the above, it is our opinion that the proposed development would not have a detrimental effect on the residential amenities of the occupiers of any neighbouring dwelling by way of noise impact, overbearing effect, loss of privacy or loss of light and would be fully compliant with **policy DP26** of the MSDP.

Space Standards

6.40 The proposal has been designed to be fully compliant with the National Space Standards, with respect to the internal floorspace of the proposed new house.

6.41 The Government's Technical Housing Standards - national described space standards set out minimum gross internal floor areas and storage. The proposed development would comprise 4 No. new dwellings, which would all comfortably meet the required standards for properties of this type. The proposal would be compliant with the Government's guidance, and **Policy D27** of the MSDP.

Access & Parking Arrangements

6.42 The application site is located on the eastern side of Slaugham Lane and was previously occupied by Warninglid Primary School. The school closed in 2021 and has remained vacant since. There is a lay-by circa 70 metres in length with wooden gates that provides access to the school, which is directly adjacent to Slaugham Lane. This provided adequate parking for staff and visitors. There are also additional pedestrian access points from Slaugham Lane.

6.43 The application is accompanied by a Transport Statement, which has been prepared by Reeves Transport Planning. The report draws the following conclusions: -

- *"The site is located next to Slaugham Lane, a typical rural road. Each new dwelling will have its own access point from the lane. A speed survey was carried out to assess the required visibility splays, showing design speeds of 33 mph northbound and 32 mph southbound.*
- *The TRICS data analysis informs that the potential four dwellings could generate circa two vehicle trips during both the traditional peak periods, and up to 19 trips during a typical day. This output is significantly lower than that of the site's previous use as a primary school. As such, the additional traffic from the proposed development is unlikely to cause any capacity or congestion issues on the surrounding highway network, especially when compared to the existing consented use.*
- *The proposal provides appropriate levels of on-plot parking with up to three spaces available per residential plot. There is also ample space to incorporate secure cycle parking spaces to accord with the council's adopted standards.*
- *On this basis, taking all relevant information into consideration including the significant reduction in daily traffic movements on the surrounding network compared to the existing use, availability of on-site parking and turning provision, it can be concluded that the proposed development will not have a severe impact on highway capacity or an unacceptable impact on highway safety.*
- *Our client would welcome planning conditions to manage the construction, including the delivery of the accesses and rescinding of the TRO, if deemed necessary".*

6.44 It is considered that the proposal will not give rise to highway safety or car parking concerns, and the proposal would accord with the NPPF, **Policies DP21 and DP28** of the MSDP and the intentions set out in the WSCC's document "Guidance for Parking

at New Developments, August 2019" - in that satisfactory access and on-site car parking will be provided as part of the development proposals.

Landscape & Visual Impact

6.45 The application is accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Appraisal, which has been prepared by Huskisson Brown Associates.

6.46 As detailed above, the site lies within the High Weald National Landscape, a statutory designation of national importance which recognises that the landscape of the area is generally of the highest quality. The primary purpose of the National Landscape designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape.

6.47 The report states that *"as a derelict part-brownfield site, the landscape value of the Site is mixed, with negative value arising predominantly from the redundant nature of the buildings and presence of extensive hardstanding and visual clutter, whilst positive value derives mostly from the character and aesthetic of the original school building architecture, the existing landscape structure of hedgerows, woodland / tree belt and mature specimen Oak and Beech trees and the combined contribution of these to the countryside setting to east and south-east and to the character of Slaugham Lane. It is also acknowledged that the Site lies within the High Weald National Landscape, statutorily designated on account of its natural beauty and therefore valued at a national level".*

6.48 The report draws the following conclusions: -

- *The Proposed Development would change the use of and introduce additional built form onto a derelict Site within the High Weald National Landscape where there is existing built form. New buildings, hard surfacing and gardens would replace an area of existing grassed playing field. The proposed buildings would be set within an established landscape structure that is characteristic of the local area and contributes to the local landscape pattern, notably providing enclosure and containment to the Site and reading as part of the overall tree and woodland cover that contributes to the perception of the landscape of the High Weald when viewed from the wider landscape. The removal of modern extensions to the existing school building, chain link fences, a portacabin, sheds/structures and asphalt surfacing would improve the aesthetic quality of the Site and its relationship with the adjacent Slaugham Lane, a historic drove and 'Routeway' within the National Landscape. The introduction of planting to the rear of the existing brick wall and new tree planting would assist in providing additional 'greening' to the character of the lane.*
- *The proposal would be implemented alongside a landscape strategy that seeks to retain and enhance the landscape structure of the Site. Existing boundary vegetation would for the most part be retained and enhanced through the removal of invasive species and positive long-term management, with the exception of 8 no. trees to be removed from the western boundary of the Site to accommodate new accesses. Additional tree planting along the eastern boundary of the Site, adjacent to the existing hedgerow, would augment the boundary treatment and increase the overall*

canopy cover. The existing TPO oak tree to the centre of the Site would be retained, with the removal of tarmac surfacing, a porta cabin and chain link fence from the RPA of the tree.

- The LVA assesses that at Day 1 and before new planting has established, the Proposed Development would result in a slight to moderate adverse importance of landscape effect to the Site in its local context. By Year 15, the importance of landscape effect would reduce to minimal to slight beneficial on account of the Site becoming embedded into the local landscape and enhancements to boundary vegetation (Refer to Appendix 1, Table 9).

- Overall, the proposed development is considered to result in a very localised beneficial magnitude (and importance) of landscape effect on the core components and purpose for designation of the High Weald National Landscape as a result of the above changes, albeit at a localised site-scale. The exception to this is dark skies, where the proposal would introduce some lighting into a currently unlit Site. In this regard, the design would incorporate measures to minimise light spill from the buildings and only incorporate external lighting where needed (e.g. for safety/security). It is envisaged that the detailed design of lighting could be controlled by condition. The proposal should also be considered in the context of the Site having previously had an active use that would have involved a degree of illumination".

6.49 The report goes on to note that *"subject to the implementation of the Landscape Strategy and its longer-term management, it is considered that the proposed development would offer enhancement of the existing Victorian building and perception and contribution to the landscape character, notably as perceived from Slaugham Lane. The immediate setting of the school building in an asphalt playground would be lost. The key positive landscape feature of a mature Oak tree would be retained and set within a grassed garden to the converted school building that would enhance its immediate landscape and growing conditions whilst also retaining a connection to the school building. The proposed new dwellings would be separated from the existing school building and set within an established landscape structure that would for the most part be retained and augmented with additional tree and hedgerow planting.*

Over time, the removal of detracting features alongside the creation of strengthened boundaries and management of the existing woodland belt would help to retain and enhance the character of Slaugham Lane and the wider landscape and embed the new dwellings into a well contained site, appropriate to the patterns and well-wooded character of the High Weald National Landscape".

6.50 The development proposal would be acceptable from a landscape perspective. The proposal would replace a previous use on the site and has been sensitively designed to utilise existing built form. Notably, the report confirms that *"the proposed development is considered to result in a very localised beneficial magnitude (and importance) of landscape effect on the core components and purpose for designation of the High Weald National Landscape as a result of the above changes, albeit at a*

localised site-scale". Our client would be happy to take all recommendations on board as part of the development and for conditions regarding lighting and landscaping to be imposed as part of any decision. We are of the opinion that that the LVIA has demonstrated that the development proposals would enhance the quality of the rural and landscape character of the district, in line with **Policy DP12** of the District Plan.

Ecology

6.51 The Application is accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, which has been prepared by Arborweald.

6.52 The report draws the following conclusions: -

"Site summary

The proposed development site is currently considered to have low to moderate ecological value within a local context as it comprises predominantly hardstanding and buildings, with natural habitats confined to boundary features and smaller green areas.

The biodiversity value of the total site area is largely attributed to the following factors:

- *The dominance of sealed surfaces and built structures, which have no ecological value.*
- *The presence of some higher-quality habitat, namely the species-rich hedgerow and woodland edge along the southern and western boundaries.*
- *The poor connectivity between on-site habitats and the wider landscape...*

Species likely present

In the absence of mitigation, the current development proposals have the potential to affect protected species. To reduce the risk of an offence being committed, recommendations are outlined in Section 6 of this report. These should be followed to ensure that any potential impacts to protected species are adequately addressed during the planning stage, development and post-development stage.

The following species require no specific mitigation, and can be discounted from future consideration:

Dormice

The following species require 'standard' mitigation, such that subject to application of a combination of non-site-specific measures, a precautionary approach, and toolbox talks no impacts are predicted on these species:

- *Bats*
- *Badgers*
- *Breeding birds*
- *Great crested newts*
- *Hedgehogs*
- *Reptiles*

The following species required additional mitigation measures, being a combination of additional surveys and / or additional site-specific mitigation measures due to the fact that the development presents unique risks to them:

Bats: One (1) dusk emergence or dawn re-entry survey is required between May and September, when weather conditions are suitable, to confirm the presence or likely absence of roosting bats within Building 1 prior to any works".

6.53 In line with the above recommendations, a bat emergence survey has been carried out by Arborweald. The associated report drew the following conclusions: -
"All of the habitats on site have the potential to support foraging and commuting bats.

Bats have been confirmed present on site and as such a licence from Natural England will be required prior to works commencing.

Additionally, a method statement for the protection of bats will be required as a part of the licencing process such that bats are not harmed during the development and are successfully translocated to a safe receptor site.

Compensatory roost features will be required to provide permanent roosts for the bats displaced, and to enhance the site for bats".

6.54 The following mitigations measures are recommended: -

- *"A bat licenced ecologist will contact Natural England and apply for a licence to remove the bats from the building using approved methods.*
- *Once the licence has been granted, the bat licenced ecologist will attend site and conduct a toolbox talk. from the building on discovery and translocated to the receptor.*
- *Once all bats expected to be present are removed, the building will be left stripped overnight for any other vagrant individuals to vacate the building of their own accord.*
- *Demolition can then commence the following day once a walkover by the licenced ecologist has confirmed no bats are present".*

6.55 It is noted that several mitigation measures have been recommended within the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, which include the introduction of hedgehog highways, bird boxes, bat boxes and bee bricks. There are also recommendations for onsite and off-site habitat enhancement.

6.56 Our client is committed to complying with the suggested recommendations and would be happy for these to be ensured via a suitably worded condition. The proposals would be compliant with guidance contained within the NPPF and **Policy DP38** of Mid Sussex District Plan.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

6.57 The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal refers to Biodiversity Net Gain, noting that it will be necessary to deliver off-site enhancement of equivalent or better-quality habitat to meet statutory requirements.

6.58 The appraisal states that “*the existing habitats on site are predominantly semi-improved grassland, blackthorn scrub, and woodland edge, with a relatively low to moderate biodiversity value due to uniform structure, limited species diversity, and patchy condition. The proposed development will result in the loss of these habitats, alongside sealed surfaces and buildings...Due to the loss of 1.17 habitat units associated with grassland and scrub, and the requirements of the BNG trading rules, it will be necessary to deliver off-site enhancement of equivalent or better-quality habitat to meet statutory requirements. A total uplift of 1.29 units is required, representing a 10% net gain over baseline. On-site provision is limited, and therefore, the use of off-site land or statutory credits will be required to achieve compliance*”.

6.59 The Applicant is committed to providing the required BNG. Our expectation is that this will be dealt with by the standard BNG condition.

Drainage

6.50 The Application Site lies within Flood Zone 1, which means that it has a low probability of flooding from rivers and the sea.

6.51 A drainage strategy is included within section 9 of the accompanying Design and Access Statement. This confirms that the development will discharge foul water into the existing mains system subject to detailed design. With regards to surface water, it will discharge to a soakaway per dwelling, to be designed based upon the requirements of BRE Digest 365a and a detailed design.

6.52 We respectfully request that drainage details be dealt with by way of a Condition.

Arboriculture

6.53 A Tree Survey and Report has been prepared by Arborweald in support of this Planning Application.

6.54 The report advises that the following groups require removal to facilitate the current proposals: -

- G5, G8 (both 'C' Category Groups).

6.55 It goes on to note that selective trees (some undersize) from G6 may require removal from southern extent of group to facilitate new access.

6.56 Finally, the following trees and groups have been recommended for removal (medium > longer term) ONLY due to existing structural and physiological defects irrespective of the proposals: -

- T4 (Common ash with ADB), Common ash w/ADB (adj. to T5).

6.57 As part of the development proposals. Trees G6 (where individuals are removed to facilitate proposed access) and G5 will require direct replacement, with each one requiring at least 2-3 individuals being planted to ensure a high establishment rate.

6.58 The report concludes that it *"provides information which, if adhered to, will help ensure the effective protection of retained trees, their appropriate management/regular assessment, and help implement a planting and aftercare scheme appropriate to the local area's character. With the appropriate design, planning and implementation, the proposed development has the potential to positively contribute to the long term arboricultural and ecological value of the site and local area"*.

6.59 The development proposal is acceptable from an arboricultural perspective and would be compliant with **Policy DP37**.

Sustainable Construction & Energy Efficiency

6.60 A Sustainability Statement is included within section 8 of the accompanying Design and Access Statement, and this confirms compliance with **Policy DP39**.

Affordable Housing

6.61 The site is located in the High Weald AONB, and policy DP31 ('Affordable Housing') states that in such locations *"residential developments... providing 6 – 10 dwellings, a commuted payment towards off-site provision, equivalent to providing 30% on-site affordable housing"*.

6.62 Therefore the policy threshold is not met by this proposal for 4 new dwellings, and it is understood that there are no affordable housing requirements in respect of this Planning Application.

7. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY

7.1 As outlined above, the focus of the revised NPPF continues to be for development to be sustainable. It sets out there are three principle 'objectives' to achieving sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. In this part of the Planning Statement the main factors that inform the judgement as to whether the proposal would be a sustainable form of development are summarised. In reaching that view all matters referred to in the above report have been considered.

The Economic Objective

7.2 The proposed development would result in the creation of construction jobs during the build period. The additional population could help generate more local spending in the local community, provision of infrastructure and services, and generate New Homes Bonus funding as well as additional Council Tax receipts. Further, the client's intention is for the funds generated from the new build development to fund the conversion works to the school buildings, allowing the preservation of the building to be ensured. These are all material considerations that weigh in favour of the development. It is considered that the proposal would satisfy the economic role of sustainable development.

Social Objective

7.3 The provision of 4 No. new family dwellings will make a notable contribution to the district's housing supply. The NPPF seeks to promote "*strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations*". Although located in a relatively rural area, there are public transport links and a range of services/facilities within fairly easy reach of the site. Overall, it is considered that the proposal would be satisfactory from a social perspective.

Environmental Objective

7.4 There is an overriding need to ensure that development should contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment. The proposed development in terms of layout, scale and appearance is in keeping with the character of the surrounding area and hence would not result in an adverse impact to the character of the surrounding built environment. We have demonstrated that the proposed development by virtue of its good design and location would bring this NDHA back into long term use, whilst also preserving its setting. Further, the landscape report notes that "*the proposed development is considered to result in a very localised beneficial magnitude (and importance) of landscape effect on the core components and purpose for designation of the High Weald National Landscape as a result of the above changes, albeit at a localised site-scale*". There are no flood risk or biodiversity constraints that relate to this site. The proposal would not result in any highway safety problems. As such, the environmental role of sustainable development would be satisfied by this proposal.

8. CONCLUSIONS

8.1 In conclusion, the proposed development is considered acceptable for the following reasons:

- The former school is classified as a community facility, and **Policy DP25** of the District Plan applies. However, the school has been vacant for a considerable period having been closed down by WSCC, with pupils having been moved to a new Primary School at Pease Pottage some time ago. WSCC confirmed that Warninglid School was surplus to requirements and commenced marketing in October 2023. WSCC also confirmed that no viable alternative uses were identified. WSCC confirmed that a total of “*18 parties inspected the property. Eight bids were received by the initial deadline in November 2023. A further round of bidding was undertaken, and revised offers received... and the marketing was brought to a close in January 2024.*” The Viability Assessment confirms that “*The schedule of offers for the site is not a matter of public record, but we understand that there were no competitive bids for site to continue with an F1 (educational or F2 alternative community use.)*” Therefore all criteria of Policy DP25 (community use is no longer viable) have been satisfied.
- The scheme has been redesigned to address the Council’s pre-application comments. We are confident that the proposals represent a high quality development incorporating the re-use of a vacant former school building, which the Council confirm is a non-designated heritage asset.
- The funds generated from the new build dwellings would facilitate the conversion works to the school building in line with **Policy 34** of the District Plan, which states that “*development that retains buildings which are not listed but are of architectural or historic merit, or which make a significant and positive contribution to the street scene will be permitted in preference to their demolition and redevelopment*”.
- Just the conversion of the school building would not be viable, generating just a 9% return. The Viability Assessment confirms that “*The 4no dwelling scheme is the only option that does meet the target developers profit set indicated by NPPF and RICS... [and therefore this is the] only way a developer could make the site viable and prevent this non designated heritage asset from falling into disrepair.*”
- The proposed development would not appear as an overdevelopment or visually cramped, and it is evident that the Applicant’s proposals will sit comfortably within the streetscene.
- The application is accompanied by a Heritage Statement, which confirms that the proposals “*will enhance the building’s character...The two dwellings within the south-eastern playground have been materially reduced in number and carefully designed to remain visually recessive in views of the school, to maintain verdancy, and to avoid harm to the settings of the adjacent heritage asset. The overall impact on setting is neutral, with elements of enhancement arising from the removal of the modern portacabin structures...The Council’s pre-application concerns (over-development, suburban character, prominent garaging, and tree impacts) have been addressed in the revised scheme. Any potential harm on the character of the building and its setting is considered to be minimal and to be outweighed by the*

benefits from providing the site with the necessary investment and use to ensure its long-term preservation".

- The application is also accompanied by a LVIA, which concludes that “*subject to the implementation of the Landscape Strategy and its longer term management, it is considered that the proposed development would offer enhancement of the existing Victorian building and perception and contribution to the landscape character, notably as perceived from Slaugham Lane. The immediate setting of the school building in an asphalt playground would be lost. The key positive landscape feature of a mature Oak tree would be retained and set within a grassed garden to the converted school building that would enhance its immediate landscape and growing conditions whilst also retaining a connection to the school building. The proposed new dwellings would be separated from the existing school building and set within an established landscape structure that would for the most part be retained and augmented with additional tree and hedgerow planting... Over time, the removal of detracting features alongside the creation of strengthened boundaries and management of the existing woodland belt would help to retain and enhance the character of Slaugham Lane and the wider landscape and embed the new dwellings into a well contained site, appropriate to the patterns and well-wooded character of the High Weald National Landscape*”.
- It is not considered that the proposed development would demonstrably harm the amenities of any neighbouring property. Further, the proposal meets the Council's requirements in respect of Space Standards.
- The proposal will not give rise to highway safety or car parking concerns.
- The proposal meets all the necessary policy requirements, and will cause no significant harm to the character of the surrounding area. In our opinion the overwhelming weight of evidence supports the proposal as it is shown to comply with all relevant Development Plan policies.
- The proposed redevelopment optimises the potential of the site to accommodate development as required by the NPPF. It is strongly considered that the proposed development constitutes a sustainable form of development that accords with the Development Plan for the area and should therefore be approved without delay.

8.2 In addition the District Plan is in excess of 5 years old, and the District Council do not have a 5-year housing land supply. Therefore the presumption in favour of sustainable development is engaged. We contend that there are no adverse impacts arise from the proposed development. The benefits of providing 4 new dwellings at this previously developed and long vacant site are considerable. The proposals are well designed and make efficient use of land. It therefore follows that planning permission should be granted without delay.

September 2025