



PLANNING STATEMENT

applicant

Adrian KIRKPATRICK

site

Sandhill Farm, Sandhill Lane, Crawley Down, Crawley RH10 4LE

proposal

temporary agriculturally-tied caravan accommodation

stage

full planning application

date

December 2024



1. Introduction

This Planning Statement is submitted in support of a full planning application by Adrian Kirkpatrick for a temporary agriculturally-tied caravan at Sandhill Farm, Crawley Down, West Sussex. The proposed accommodation seeks to provide essential on-site residence to enable the applicant to care for livestock, protect property, and manage the farm as outlined in the accompanying business plan. This statement addresses the policy requirements of the Mid Sussex District Plan, particularly Policy DP15: New Homes in the Countryside, and outlines the justifications for temporary agricultural accommodation on this site. It should be noted that Policy DPC3 of the Regulation 19 Submission Draft of the new Mid Sussex District Plan (2021–2039) has similar wording.

This proposal has been amended in response to the findings of a tree survey. The location of the caravan has been adjusted to ensure it does not encroach on any root protection area (RPA). Similarly, the new connection to the existing septic tank has been routed to avoid any RPA.

2. Background and Proposal Context

Site Description and Business Operations

Sandhill Farm is a 55-acre agricultural holding comprised of an Atcost barn, timber sheds, stables, 50 acres of grassland, and approximately 5 acres of woodland and footpaths. The farm has been under the applicant's management since 1995, initially under employment and subsequently as an owner upon inheriting the land in 2013. Due to a recent divorce, the sole dwellinghouse on the property was sold and no longer forms part of the agricultural holding, leaving no on-site residential accommodation.

As outlined in the Sandhill Farm 2024–2027 Business Plan, the applicant aims to increase farm productivity and livestock numbers through gradual investment and expansion. A critical aspect of this plan includes on-site residence to secure the property and ensure the welfare of animals, a requirement that cannot be met by existing nearby accommodation. The proposal aligns with the criteria of DP15 for temporary agricultural accommodation in the countryside.

Amendments in Response to Tree Survey

A tree survey conducted as part of this application identified root protection areas (RPAs) in the vicinity of the proposed caravan site. To address these findings:

- The caravan has been relocated to a position entirely outside any identified RPA.
- The proposed connection to the existing septic tank has been rerouted to avoid any disturbance to RPAs.



These amendments ensure that the proposal respects the natural environment and avoids harm to trees, aligning with the sustainability and environmental protection principles of the Mid Sussex District Plan.

3. Justification under Policy DP15: New Homes in the Countryside

Policy DP15 permits new homes in the countryside if special justification exists. For agricultural workers, temporary accommodation is supported when essential to the functioning of the farm enterprise and when no alternative housing is available to meet the operational need. This proposal aligns with the specific criteria for temporary agricultural dwellings:

- **Lack of Alternative Accommodation (DP15, Criterion 1):**
The accompanying Agricultural Report by David Hall MRICS (July 2019) previously acknowledged that the essential need for on-site accommodation was met by the presence of a single farmhouse. However, as this dwelling was sold in 2024, there is now no alternative residential accommodation within or near the holding to meet the applicant's need. Temporary on-site accommodation is required to address this gap, with no other viable housing solutions available.
 - **Essential Need for On-Site Presence (DP15, Criterion 2):**
The business requires a full-time worker to be readily available for livestock welfare, security, and property management. The Agricultural Report by David Hall confirms that "it is essential for the proper functioning of the enterprise for one worker to be readily available at most times." The applicant's temporary caravan would meet this need until a more permanent solution can be sought, ensuring the viability and security of the farm.
 - **Farm Enterprise Viability (DP15, Criterion 3):**
As evidenced by the Sandhill Farm 2024–2027 Business Plan, the farm is a viable enterprise with plans to gradually increase profitability through livestock expansion and infrastructure investments. In 2026, with the construction of an additional barn, further job opportunities will be created, enhancing the farm's contributions to the local rural economy.
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4. Sustainability Considerations

In alignment with Policy DP39: Sustainable Design and Construction, the proposal demonstrates a strong commitment to sustainability, as detailed in the accompanying Sustainability and Energy Assessment:

- **Renewable Energy Use:**
The proposed caravan will draw most of its power from a 24 kW solar



photovoltaic (SPV) array located on a nearby barn, reducing reliance on grid energy and significantly lowering the carbon footprint of the accommodation.

- **Water Conservation:**

The proposal includes a rainwater harvesting butt, which will be used for non-potable water needs, reducing demand on the mains water supply.

- **Waste Minimization and Resource Efficiency:**

Resource-efficient construction methods and recyclable materials will be used to minimize environmental impact during setup and eventual removal of the caravan.

The amendments made to avoid RPAs further demonstrate the applicant's commitment to environmental sustainability and protection of natural assets.

5. Biodiversity Net Gain and other biodiversity improvements

The accompanying Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report recommends that to achieve more than the required 10% Biodiversity Net Gain, an area of 146 sqm be upgraded from modified grassland into other neutral grassland of at least moderate condition, and through the planting 4 small poor condition trees.

It would be impractical to deliver these improvements within the red line site boundary, so we are proposing that both be delivered immediately adjacent to the site, on land within the applicant's ownership and control. Specifically, the 4 new trees would be planted just west of the application site, and the grassland improvement would be achieved north/west of the application site.

Recommendations for other biodiversity improvements, in relation to bats, birds, invertebrates and terrestrial mammals, were made in Section 7 of the accompanying Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report.

The applicant would be happy for some or all these improvements (including the mandatory 10% BNG requirements) to be secured through a condition or via a Section 106 agreement / unilateral undertaking.

6. Conclusion

The proposed temporary agriculturally-tied caravan at Sandhill Farm meets the special justification requirements set forth in Policy DP15, allowing for necessary agricultural accommodation in the countryside. The loss of the only dwelling on-site has created an urgent need for on-site accommodation to secure animal welfare, property safety, and effective management of farm operations, all critical to the farm's viability.

The proposal is supported by the following justifications:



- **Essential Need:** The presence of a full-time agricultural worker on-site is essential for the farm's successful functioning and aligns with the findings of the 2019 Agricultural Report.
- **Lack of Alternative Accommodation:** The sale of the original farmhouse means no existing accommodation is available to meet this essential need.
- **Viability and Future Plan:** The business plan demonstrates a clear path to profitability, with planned expansions and additional income sources that will allow the applicant to transition fully into farm management by 2027.
- **Commitment to Sustainability:** Through renewable energy use, water conservation, and efficient resource use, the proposal aligns with DP39, showing a clear commitment to sustainable practices.
- **Amendments to Respect Tree RPAs:** The relocation of the caravan and septic tank connection ensures no harm to trees or their root systems, further reinforcing the environmental integrity of the proposal.
- **Biodiversity Net Gain and other biodiversity improvements:** These can be secured through a condition or via a Section 106 agreement / unilateral undertaking.

In conclusion, this proposal for temporary agriculturally-tied accommodation is a necessary, viable, and sustainable solution for Sandhill Farm's operational needs. It will ensure effective management of the agricultural enterprise and contribute to the rural economy, making it well-aligned with the planning policies for new agricultural dwellings in the countryside.