



**Planning, Design and Access Statement**  
Including the Heritage and Sustainability Statements

Idlehurst, Birchgrove Road, Horsted Keynes



Construction of a single-storey conservatory extension to the west-facing elevation, and a small Kitchen extension to the east elevation. Enhancements to the existing fenestration to include replacement balcony balustrading, window replacement and refurbishments, and a replacement rear door. Internal alterations to all levels. Internal refurbishment works to the existing Annexe, to include replacement of the existing external staircase. Erection of a traditional Greenhouse structure within the garden. Associated hard and soft landscaping works to comprise new paved terracing, steps, paths, and remodelling of the existing parking area. Replacement driveway entrance gates

at

Idlehurst, Birchgrove Road, Horsted Keynes

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Planning, Design and Access Statement

on Behalf of

Mrs J. Burke

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May 2025

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is a Planning, Design and Access Statement prepared to accompany the submission of a Householder planning application to Mid Sussex District Council for the construction of single-storey Conservatory and Kitchen extensions at Idlehurst, Birchgrove Road, Horsted Keynes. The proposed works will also involve a number of internal alterations to each floor level, sympathetic enhancements to the fenestration, and associated hard and soft landscaping works.
- 1.2 Idlehurst is an unlisted detached dwelling located in a prominent corner position adjacent to the road junction within the hamlet of Birchgrove. The property sits within the Birchgrove Conservation Area, to the north east of the village of Horsted Keynes. Birchgrove was designated a Conservation Area in 1990, the focal point of which is a small triangular green, around which the majority of the buildings are clustered, away from the highway; the absence of through traffic results in a peaceful and attractive environment.
- 1.3 The application site is designated in the Mid Sussex District Plan as open countryside, is within the High Weald National Landscape (formerly known as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). Furthermore, it lies within the Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area, and in an Amber Impact Zone for Great Crested Newts. The neighbouring property at The Old House is a Grade II Listed building, dating from C17th or earlier.
- 1.4 As described in the pre-application planning response, Idlehurst appears to date from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century or earlier. It is an attractive and characterful dwelling set within good-sized gardens, bordered predominantly by mature hedging and trees, and can be said to make a very positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 1.5 This application is submitted with a Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA), prepared by GHA Trees. This is referred to within the Planning Statement and Landscaping sections of this statement, and concludes that the proposed works will not affect the existing, retained trees.
- 1.6 This Planning, Design and Access Statement includes a Heritage Statement at section 7, to describe the proposed works and how these will not impact upon the character and setting of the Conservation Area setting.
- 1.7 The proposals submitted herein have been the subject of a recent pre-application enquiry to Mid Sussex District Council – reference DM/25/0265. The formal response was received on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2025, in an email format, and the full text is appended to this statement. The content of this response is discussed in Section 5 of this statement.

1.8 The proposals placed before the Planning Department are well-considered and of a high standard of design, demonstrating the following:

- a) The principle of development is supported by the relevant planning policies within the Mid Sussex District Plan, as confirmed in the pre-application advice received;
- b) The proposed Conservatory and Kitchen extensions are modest in their scale and are justified in terms of their design, size and location;
- c) The proposed extensions will greatly enhance the appearance of the existing dwelling, with sensitive alterations to the existing fenestration treatment that will enable the Kitchen extension to blend seamlessly with the existing property;
- d) The traditional vernacular of the Conservatory extension is considered to be the most appropriate design response, reflecting the era of the host dwelling;
- e) The proposed extensions will be well screened from the road thanks to the existing mature hedge and tree screening, and this screening ensures there will be no impact on the amenity of any neighbouring properties;
- f) The proposed Greenhouse is traditional in its appearance, reflecting the era of the property whose garden it sits sensitively within. Its scale is in keeping with the main dwelling and its outbuildings;
- g) The proposed hard and soft landscaping works, including terracing, minor remodelling of the existing parking area, and sensitive planting, will greatly enhance the setting of the dwelling, protecting its character and integrity;
- h) The site is located in Flood Zone 1 and the proposals will not have a negative impact upon the flood risk of the site;
- i) The proposals will incorporate a high level of sustainability within their construction, including the use of local materials where possible.

## 2. Use

2.1 The existing property has full C3 (residential) use and will retain this following the completion of the proposed works.

## 3. Amount

3.1 The proposals comprise the following works:

- The construction of a single-storey Conservatory extension to the west-facing elevation;
- The construction of a small Kitchen extension to the east-facing elevation;
- The erection of a Greenhouse within the gardens;
- Minor fenestration enhancements, to include replacement of the balcony balustrading, refurbishment of the existing windows, replacement of some existing windows (where beyond economic repair), and replacement of the back door to the north elevation;
- Internal alterations to include the enlargement of the ground floor WC, and provision of enhanced sanitary accommodation at first floor level;

- Waterproofing works to the external face of the Basement walls to reduce moisture ingress, with ventilation to alleviate condensation;
- The addition of thermal insulation to the ground floor over the Basement, reducing heat losses and draughts;
- Existing sections of pitched roof to receive thermal insulation at rafter and ceiling level, to greatly improve energy efficiency;
- Externally, hard and soft landscaping works to suit the proposed works, including new paved terracing and steps;
- Remodelling of the existing driveway and parking area, allowing for new gates to improve functionality.

## 4. Layout

- 4.1 The layout of the existing dwelling can be viewed on the accompanying existing plan and elevation drawings. The proposed remodelling of the existing dwelling will enhance its layout to provide greater convenience for its occupants.
- 4.2 The existing ground floor WC will be enlarged to better reflect the scale of the property, while enhancements to the adjacent Utility Room will offer a far more practical layout. A new cupboard will be created within the rear Hall, with a glazed door and sidelights providing a buffer between the back door and the rest of the Entrance Hall.
- 4.3 Internal alterations at first floor level will include the remodelling of the existing sanitary accommodation to provide a more comfortable and practical layout. The main Bedroom will include a separate Dressing Room area for clothes storage, while the Landing is suitably spacious to afford room for a desk and shelving.
- 4.4 At second floor level, the existing Shower Room will be refurbished, new built-in joinery installed for enhanced storage, and access doors provided into the eaves for yet further storage.
- 4.5 The layout of the existing Annexe accommodation will remain unchanged, with the existing staircase being replaced with a new timber staircase of similar proportions.
- 4.6 The Greenhouse has a simple rectangular plan with an extended lobby to the front.

## 5. Planning Statement / Scale

### **Planning Policies**

- 5.1 There are a number of planning policies relevant to this application. As set out in the pre-application advice received, these include:

#### Mid Sussex District Plan

DP12 Protection and enhancement of the countryside  
DP16 Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty  
DP21 – Transport  
DP22 – Rights of Way and other Recreational Routes  
DP26 – Character and Design  
DP34 – Listed Buildings  
DP35 – Conservation Areas  
DP37 – Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows  
DP38 - Biodiversity  
DP39 – Sustainable Design and Construction

#### Neighbourhood Plan – Horsted Keynes

Made on 24th May 2023:

Policy HK1 Location of new development  
Policy HK4 Maintaining local character and good quality design  
Policy HK5 Infill development and domestic extensions  
Policy HK6 Conserving local heritage  
Policy HK9 The High Weald AONB  
Policy HK10 Protection and Improvement of natural habitats  
Policy HK11 Low carbon-design and renewable energy schemes  
Policy HK13 Light pollution

Other relevant Policy documents:

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)  
The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029  
High Weald Dark Skies Planning Advice Note  
The High Weald Housing Design Guide 2020

### **Planning History**

- 5.2 There are no planning applications relevant to the property or these proposals.

### **Pre-application Advice**

- 5.4 The proposals contained herein were submitted to MSDC for pre-application advice. Below is a transcript of the advice received. It should be noted that this advice contained an element that is not being submitted with this application, so reference to this has been omitted.

*'Idlehurst is a detached property located on a prominent corner plot within the Birchgrove Conservation Area. The site is located to the north east of the village of Horsted Keynes, in open countryside and within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It lies within the Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area. The house and*

paddock both fall within an Amber Impact Zone for Great Crested Newts. The neighbouring property at The Old House is a Grade II Listed building, dating from C17th or earlier.

I have now received the attached comments from Emily Wade regarding her preapplication enquiry. Please can you review the detailed comments that Emily has provided with your client.

I support the comments that Emily has raised in respect to the proposed alterations and extensions to the house, which include the proposed orangery extension, kitchen extension and renovation of the first floor front timber balcony railing and brick parapet.

With regards to the proposed detached greenhouse within the rear garden, the main issue that I have is the potential for this, and any related parking/access changes, to impact upon the Root Protection Areas of the trees that are growing on the site. I request that an application is accompanied by a detailed Arboricultural Impact Assessment with a Tree Survey and an Arboricultural Method Statement to show that the trees will not be adversely affected by the proposed developments.

When considering whether to grant planning permission for the proposed development, Mid Sussex District Council would need to have regard to policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as well as local development plan policies, including policies within the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 – 2031, adopted March 2018, and the Horsted Keynes Neighbourhood Plan.

Emily Wade email to Anna Tidey, dated 28<sup>th</sup> April 2025:

Comments on the above pre-application enquiry. My apologies for the delay in getting these to you, which has been caused by pressure of other work, and leave over the Easter period.

Idlehurst is an unlisted detached house located in a prominent position adjacent to the road junction within the hamlet of Birchgrove, within the Conservation Area. The house itself, which appears to date from the 19<sup>th</sup> century or earlier, is an attractive and characterful building set within good sized gardens which makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The current proposal is for various works to the house and the setting around it including:

- An orangery extension to the eastern end elevation;
- A kitchen extension to the western end elevation;
- Reinstatement of the deteriorated timber balcony railing at first floor to the front elevation, with alterations to the brick parapet on which this rests;
- A detached greenhouse within the gardens to the north of the house; and

To consider these works in turn:

- The proposed orangery extension to the eastern end of the house is traditional in style and described as having timber framed windows over a brick plinth, with a glazed lean-to roof. It is moderate in scale and is appropriately subservient to the original house. Subject to detail, this aspect of the proposal is not considered contentious.
- The proposed kitchen extension to the western end of the building is created by enlarging the footprint of an existing small addition to the north west corner of the house, and extending the existing pitched roof to match. Historical map regression suggests that the existing addition dates from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The proposed extension to it is relatively modest in scale, so that the whole would remain appropriately subservient to the core of the house. This aspect of the proposal is therefore not considered contentious in principle. The proposed design is also considered generally sympathetic to the context- in other circumstances the new

window to the side elevation of the house itself might perhaps have been considered better designed to match the existing fenestration to this elevation in its proportions and glazing pattern, but as this replaces non-original French windows this aspect is also considered on balance acceptable.

- The repairs and reinstatement to the balcony will result in minor alterations to its appearance, but these are not considered contentious and the principle of the repair is welcomed. Subject to detail this aspect of the proposal is also therefore considered acceptable.
- The proposed new greenhouse is shown to the north of the house between an existing outbuilding in use as a pool house, and the garage. The building is shown as traditionally styled structure with what appears to be timber framed glazing above a brick plinth. Historical map regression shows that there was previously a yard of ancillary buildings to this side of the house dating from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and surviving into the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> – the building now in use as a pool house would appear to have been adapted from one of these structures. The principle of a new building in this location, notwithstanding the associated minor loss of garden space around the house, is therefore not considered contentious. The scale, form and design of the greenhouse are also considered acceptable subject to detail.
- The proposal also includes alterations to the hard landscaping within the domestic garden and associated with the existing off street parking area- these are not considered contentious subject to detail.

### **Planning Principles**

- 5.5 The pre-application advice has confirmed that, subject to detail, the proposals submitted herein are acceptable in principle.
- 5.6 The proposed Conservatory extension is very modest in its scale, having been designed with a lean-to roof to sit below the stone sills of the first floor windows. Its use of matching materials allows it to better blend in, enhancing this modesty. In her pre-application response, the Conservation Officer describes this aspect of the proposal as 'appropriately subservient to the original house.'
- 5.7 The small Kitchen extension is formed as an extrusion of the existing pitched roof form, with its painted brick façade concealing the jointing between the new and existing brickwork. The Conservation Officer explains that historical map regression suggests that the existing single-storey Kitchen addition dates from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The proposed extension to this element is modest in scale, so that the whole would remain appropriately subservient to the core of the house. This aspect of the proposal is therefore not considered contentious in principle. The proposed design is also considered generally sympathetic to the context. The proposals therefore demonstrate compliance with policies DP26 and DP35 of the MSDC District Plan.
- 5.8 The principle of the repairs and reinstatement to the balcony is considered acceptable in principle, and is confirmed as such by the Conservation Officer. While the replacement balustrade will result in minor alterations to the existing appearance, replacement is very much required owing to their decay and low height. The balcony is an existing feature, whose use does not give rise to overlooking thanks to the tall hedge planting along the adjacent boundaries. In conjunction with the works to insulate the existing balcony flat roof, this aspect of the scheme demonstrates compliance with policies DP26 and DP39 of the MSDC District Plan.



#### 5.15 **Trees**

The property enjoys a verdant setting and these trees are integral to the character of the wider Conservation Area setting. This application is accompanied by a Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment, which concludes that the proposals will not cause harm to the existing trees.

#### 5.16 **Sustainability**

The proposed works will enhance the energy-efficiency of the existing dwelling, with the new extensions being very well insulated, while allowing for solar gain to reduce the demands placed upon the space heating system. It is proposed to install thermal insulation to elements of the existing building fabric, and where they are being replaced, the windows and doors will received slimline double-glazed panes to improve their energy efficiency. The proposals therefore demonstrate compliance with MSDC planning policy DP39. This aspect is covered in greater detail in Section 9, below.

### 6. Landscaping

- 6.1 The existing garden boundaries are clearly defined by mature hedging and trees, supplemented with timber post and rail/wire fencing, providing the well-proportioned gardens with a great deal of mutual privacy. These boundary treatments are to remain largely unchanged, save for the minor works to the driveway entrance gates, discussed below.
- 6.2 The proposed Conservatory extension will require the existing paved terrace to be extended in depth to the west, with the existing steps removed and new steps constructed in alignment with the proposed double doors. The steps will reuse the stone from the existing steps. This paved terrace will be finished in brick pavers, mimicking the paths around the property. The low-level walls to the perimeter of the terrace will reuse the existing stone as far as is reasonably practicable, with any new sandstone to match the existing. The new planted beds immediately adjacent to these walls and steps will create an established feel. The continued use of sandstone is very much in keeping with the prevailing geology and the neighbouring buildings. The existing ground levels will remain unchanged.
- 6.3 The proposed Kitchen extension will require modifications to the existing paved terrace, which will otherwise maintain its current appearance.
- 6.4 The proposed Greenhouse will sit comfortably and sympathetically within its garden setting, the proposed brick paths providing it with an established feel. The location of the Greenhouse is convenient from a useability perspective, and ideal from a sunlight perspective since the verdant environment limits opportunities for sunlight elsewhere in the garden – the Greenhouse requires a minimum 6 hours of sunlight each day.
- 6.5 The proposed remodelling of the existing driveway and parking area is essential owing to the compromised nature of the existing access arrangement. In providing an area that is narrower yet modestly deeper than it is currently, egress onto Birchgrove Lane becomes much easier and safer than it is now. In common with the existing driveway, the surface dressing will comprise pea

shingle gravel and the whole enclosed with timber picket fencing. Planted beds will create an immediately established feel.

- 6.6 The existing trees will be retained and protected throughout the course of the construction works, with the plans not requiring the trimming of hedges, nor the pruning or felling of trees. The accompanying tree survey report by GHA Trees explains how the proposed works will not affect the health and longevity of the retained trees.

## 7. Heritage Statement

- 7.1 **Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM)** – The proposals do not affect a Scheduled Ancient Monument or its setting.
- 7.2 **Archaeologically Sensitive Area (ASA)** – The proposed development is not situated within an Archaeological Notification Area.
- 7.3 **Listed Building** – Idlehurst is not a listed building.
- 7.4 **Conservation Area** – Idlehurst is situated within the Birchgrove Conservation Area.
- 7.5 **Registered Park or Garden of Special Historic Interest** – The site is not situated within any Registered Park or Garden of Special Historic Interest.

### **Visual Impact and Impact on the Conservation Area**

- 7.6 The visual impacts of the proposed extensions and alterations are very minor, with the Kitchen extension having negligible impact from the public realm. The proposed Conservatory extension will not be visible from the public highway, being set back from both the north and south elevations, and as such there will be no visual impact from Birchgrove Road, or indeed the lane leading into the hamlet of houses. The traditional, sympathetic design of these extensions ensures that where glimpses are revealed, the impact is of appreciation for the quality of the design.
- 7.7 The proposed Greenhouse is traditional in its vernacular, respecting the era of the host dwelling, and occupying a position within the site that has historically been built upon. The visibility of the Greenhouse from the public realm is mitigated by its high quality, traditional design, which is evident in the accompanying image, right:



- 7.8 As discussed in the Landscaping section, above, the hard and soft landscaping works have been designed to sympathetically relate to the vernacular of the property and its wider Conservation Area setting.

- 7.9 The proposals are therefore able to demonstrate compliance with policies DP26 and DP35 of the Mid Sussex District Plan.

## 8. Appearance

- 8.1 By virtue of their sensitive design and detailing, the proposals demonstrate a well-considered and **high standard of design**. The traditional typology will result in a remodelled and extended dwelling of exceptional character and architectural merit.

### **Proposed Conservatory Extension**

- 8.2 The proposed Conservatory extension will be formed of prepared timber construction with a painted finish in an off-white colour to match the existing windows. Energy-efficient double-glazed panes will be fitted to the windows, doors, and roof. The windows will sit atop plinth walls in facing brick to match the existing house. The proposed glazed roof will be formed of timber rafters with metal capping pieces in a lead grey colour.

### **Proposed Kitchen Extension**

- 8.3 The proposed Kitchen extension will be formed in prepared timber of the same profile and off-white colour as the proposed Conservatory. The plinth walls will be in brick with a painted finish to match the existing, while the pitched roof will be in plain clay tiles to match the existing. The proposed rooflights will be of the Conservation type, formed in narrow-profile metal frames finished in black and centralised over the door below.
- 8.4 Following comments made during the pre-application site meeting, the design of the new window adjacent to the Kitchen extension has been amended to match the style of the windows elsewhere.

### **New Back Door**

- 8.5 The proposed replacement back door will be of timber construction with glazing bar proportions to match the adjacent windows. The door will be fitted with double-glazed panes, and receive a painted finish in a colour to be confirmed.

### **Proposed Greenhouse**

- 8.6 The proposed Greenhouse is traditional in its style, being constructed of a powder-coated aluminium framing with clear single glazed panes.
- 8.7 The aluminium frame will sit upon plinth walls of facing brick to match the main dwelling. The modest proportions allow it to sit comfortably and sensitively alongside the Annexe building. The location of this structure has also been carefully determined to ensure it receives the correct amount of sunlight during the day, demonstrating that its design is functional as well as attractive.

### **Proposed Annexe Staircase**

- 8.8 The existing steps alongside the Annexe building are in a poor condition and require replacement. It is proposed to provide a replacement timber staircase in timber with a natural finish, allowing it to turn grey over time and blend with the adjacent sandstone walls of the Annexe.

### **Fenestration Enhancements**

- 8.9 The existing fenestration will be enhanced through the careful and sensitive refurbishment of the existing windows and doors. Where the existing windows and doors are beyond economic repair, these will be replaced with new windows and doors to match the existing, incorporating narrow-profile double-glazed panes to enhance the energy efficiency of the property. The new and refurbished windows will be painted in an off-white colour to match the existing joinery, and that proposed for the Conservatory and the Kitchen extension.
- 8.10 It is important to emphasise that the works will be undertaken by skilled, local craftspeople. The Applicant fully appreciates the quality of the existing property and therefore understands how important it will be to carry out the works to the highest possible standard using the best quality materials. The time spent in developing the proposals for both the pre-application submission and this Householder Planning submission is testament to this detailed approach.

## **9. Access**

- 9.1 The property will continue to be accessed via its entrance doors to the north and south elevations.
- 9.2 The proposed extensions have been designed with low threshold doors to provide easy access between the property and its generous gardens. The floor levels within the extension have been designed match those of the existing property.
- 9.3 The existing timber driveway gates will continue to provide privacy and security for the existing property. The proposed timber pedestrian gate alongside the twin five-bar timber driveway gates will enhance the day-to-day functioning of the property, while their traditional five-bar appearance will reflect the property's rural character.

## 10. Sustainability

10.1 The proposals have been developed to ensure the extended and refurbished dwelling achieves an enhanced level of sustainability, with lower energy use in its operation. It is envisaged the following will be incorporated:

- a) The thermal performance of the new building fabric will exceed the standards required by Building Regulations Part L. This will be achieved through the adoption of careful insulation detailing, which in turn will lead to reductions in air permeability and thermal bridging;
- b) The thermal performance of the existing building fabric – the floor over the existing Basement, the roofs over the existing single-storey north-facing additions, and the existing second floor roof space – will be improved through the installation of new thermal insulation. The refurbishment of the existing windows will reduce draughts, and where windows and doors are replaced, these will include slimline double-glazed panes to significantly improve energy-efficiency;
- c) High performance double-glazed windows, doors and roofs to the proposed Conservatory and Kitchen extensions, with gas-filled cavities and prepared timber frames;
- d) Water usage will be reduced through the installation of flow reducing / aerating taps, and low-flush cisterns;
- e) Low energy lighting will be installed throughout the new works to reduce electricity consumption;
- f) The existing space and hot water heating system will be extended to suit the new works, and will operate with greater efficiency owing to the higher levels of thermal insulation and airtightness present in the existing roofs and proposed extensions. This 'fabric first' approach significantly reduces the pressures placed upon the primary heating system.

## 11. Conclusion

11.1 The proposals placed before the Planning Department are well-considered and of a high standard of design, demonstrating the following:

- a) The principle of development is supported by the relevant planning policies within the Mid Sussex District Plan, as confirmed in the pre-application advice received;
- b) The proposed Conservatory and Kitchen extensions are modest in their scale and are justified in terms of their design, size and location;
- c) The proposed extensions will greatly enhance the appearance of the existing dwelling, with sensitive alterations to the existing fenestration treatment that will enable the Kitchen extension to blend seamlessly with the existing property;
- d) The traditional vernacular of the Conservatory extension is considered to be the most appropriate design response, reflecting the era of the host dwelling;
- e) The proposed extensions will be well screened from the road thanks to the existing mature hedge and tree screening, and this screening ensures there will be no impact on the amenity of any neighbouring properties;
- f) The proposed Greenhouse is traditional in its appearance, reflecting the era of the property whose garden it sits sensitively within. Its scale is in keeping with the main dwelling and its outbuildings;
- g) The proposed hard and soft landscaping works, including terracing, minor remodelling of the existing parking area, and sensitive planting, will greatly enhance the setting of the dwelling, protecting its character and integrity;
- h) The site is located in Flood Zone 1 and the proposals will not have a negative impact upon the flood risk of the site;
- i) The proposals will incorporate a high level of sustainability within their construction, including the use of local materials where possible.