

Planning Policy Advice

Application Ref:	DM/25/1650
Application Type: (Pre-app/ application)	Full Planning Application
Address:	Horncastle Care Centre, Plawhatch Lane, Sharpthorne, East Grinstead
Description:	Demolition of the remaining parts of the redundant buildings in the western and southern part of the site; the development of a new specialist dementia care home (Use Class C2); the retention of an existing acquired brain injury (ABI) unit in the northern part of the site (Use Class C2), a retained access from Plawhatch Lane and associated car and cycle parking and landscaping.
Date:	4 September 2025
Policy Officer:	Natalie Sharp
DM Officer:	Joanne Fisher

Development Plan

The Development Plan comprises of the adopted 2018 Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031, currently under review, and the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (Site Allocations DPD) adopted June 2022. The site falls within the West Hoathly Neighbourhood Plan (WHNP) area which was 'made' in 2015.

Below are the Development Plan policies considered key to the consideration of the application proposal.

2018 Mid Sussex District Plan (2014 – 2031)

Principle of Development

DP6: Settlement Hierarchy and DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside - The site is outside of the built-up area boundary as shown on the Policies Maps, Policies DP6: and DP12 are therefore relevant. The Council has undertaken a Settlement Sustainability Review, which enabled a classification of the district's settlements, taking into account service provision and accessibility. Policy DP6 sets out this hierarchy. The application site is east of Sharpthorne, a Category 3 settlement: a medium sized village providing essential services for the needs of their own residents and immediate surround communities. The Applicant's Planning Statement acknowledges that the site is located in a rural area with no immediate access to public transport.

DP16: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – The application site is within the High Weald National Landscape (formerly known as AONB) and therefore protected by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 for its outstanding natural beauty. The High Weald National Landscape, AONB Management Plan 2024 - 2029 is the strategy for looking after the High Weald AONB in order to achieve the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the High Weald AONB. It is a material planning consideration. The Management Plan can be used to guide environmental land management and assess the impact of development or other changes on the High Weald AONB. The High Weald Statement of Significance sets out what comprises the natural beauty of the High Weald.

DP17: Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC - The site is within the 7km zone of influence for the Ashdown Forest SPA. In accordance with Policy DP17, contributions towards SANG and SAMM mitigation should be sought from developments resulting in a net increase in dwellings. The Council's SAMM Strategy Tariff Guidance (2019) and Type of Development and Application of the SANG Contribution (2022) document identify the potential types of development, including specific considerations, where contributions may be sought. For SANG, the guidance states that SANG mitigation will not generally be applied to residential care homes. For SAMM, the requirement for contributions will be considered on a case-by-case basis taking into account the likely mobility of residents and potential for pet ownership.

DP25: Community Facilities and Local Services – The application proposal includes the redevelopment of a former care facility (Horncastle House and Willow Lodge) to an 80-bedroom care home and the retention of another building (Maple Lodge) for specialist care (acquired brain injury facility). The proposal seeks to provide a net increase in bedrooms and an improved facility. Policy DP25 supports the provision of such facilities and services which contribute to creating sustainable communities.

DP30: Housing Mix – The policy supports the delivery of a range of housing types to meet the accommodation needs of the local community, including specialist accommodation and care homes. The Council's 2021 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) indicates that there is a need for residential care bedspaces within the district. The SHMA is the Council's most recent evidence of need. The net increase in bedspaces from the proposed development will contribute to meeting this need.

DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows – This policy supports the protection and enhancement of trees, woodland and hedgerows, in particular ancient woodland and aged or veteran trees. The proposed layout indicates that the eastern building edge will be pulled westward and out of the minimum 15m buffer required to ancient woodland, albeit remaining as hardstanding.

Site Allocations DPD (2022)

SA39: Specialist Accommodation for Older People and Care Homes – Policy SA39 sets out criteria for considering proposals for specialist accommodation for older people and care homes. The reference to the level of identified needs within SA39 is considered to be superseded by the conclusions of the 2021 SHMA, as referenced above.

Housing Land Supply Position

Whilst the Council has performed excellently in respect of the Housing Delivery Test, a new standard method formula was published alongside the NPPF which gives Mid Sussex a significantly higher housing requirement than the current District Plan. As a result, and having regard for the need for an appropriate buffer, the Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites as per the requirements of paragraph 78 of the NPPF.

West Hoathly Neighbourhood Plan

The West Hoathly Neighbourhood Plan (WHNP) was made in March 2015. Since then, the 2018 District Plan has been adopted. If there is conflict between non-strategic policies in the District Plan and WHNP, the District Plan takes precedence.

WHN4: Visualisations – This policy requires that three dimensional visualisations of the proposed development, in situ, are provided as part of the planning application to enable the consideration of whether the proposal is in keeping with the immediate surrounding area.

WHN12: Existing Employment Sites – Section 17 of the WHNP notes that West Hoathly (parish) has limited employment opportunities and seeks to conserve these opportunities through resisting the loss of existing employment sites. The application proposal brings back into use a vacant site and states that the equivalent of 60 full-time jobs will be created.