

Planning statement in respect of a proposed barn at Pots and Pithoi, The Barn, East Street, Turners Hill, West Sussex, RH10 4QA seeking consent for a single storey building for storage purposes and a vehicular parking area, in association with the existing use on site.

The following note seeks to set out the rationale for the development of land at Pots and Pithoi, The Barn, East Street, Turners Hill, in respect of an additional parking area and an ancillary single storey storage.

The primary use of the site is for the sale of Cretan terracotta pots and as such it is considered that the use of the site is as a Class E commercial use. Ancillary uses on site include a café and offices.

The proposals are intended to allow the applicants to provide enhanced customer facilities in respect of showroom space and car parking. The existing business makes an important contribution to the cultural and social community of the local area. As such, it is a successful business that provides a range of skill and opportunities to employees and is looking to expand further. Part of this process is the provision of a new detached building within the north of the site – for storage purposes.

The site has been subject to a previous pre-application submission for three additional buildings which received a positive response from the LPA. In the provision of one additional building the current proposals seek a less intensive use of the site, but building on the principles established in the previous pre-app response.

To allow the application proposals will help support an important local amenity and allow a local business to grow and increase local business opportunities. As such, it is consistent with national Govt advice which seeks to support the rural economy as set out in the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG).

The application is supported by the following:

- Location plan
- Site plan
- Elevational details

Site and surrounding area

The application site refers to a cluster of buildings and associated land and parking area operated as a retail/commercial operation to the north of East Street as identified in the following extract:



The hatched area refers to the existing planning unit, as occupied by Pots and Pithoi comprising the retail buildings, sales area and ancillary activities in the southern portion of this area with a car parking area within its north. The unhatched area comprises land within the applicant's ownership.

The site consists of an area mainly laid to grass with a small, gravelled, area in its southern portion, adjacent to a metal vehicular gate has been used as overflow storage of pots and plants, and for overflow car parking.

Land levels drop from west to east and from south to north.



The retail element of the site comprises a series of single and two-storey buildings arranged in a courtyard layout containing an open retail sales area – for the primary purpose of the sale of Cretan pots.



The main buildings immediately to the south are in retail use with one also in use as a café, with opening hours of between 10am and 4pm every day, including use of the outdoor seating/dining area. To the north of the buildings is the main car parking area.

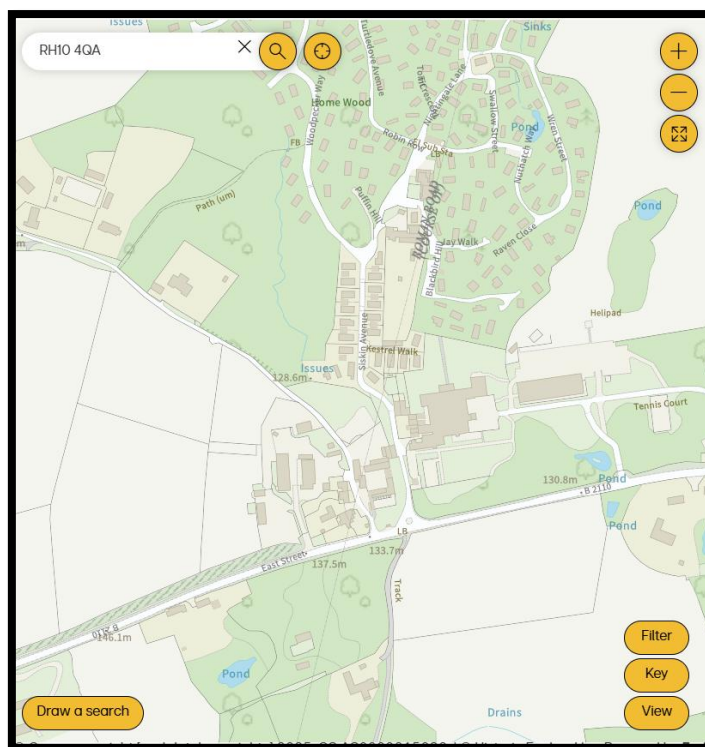
The site is located within a designated countryside location and within 7km of the Ashdown Forest. Public footpath 63W runs along the western boundary of the site, which is a shared route serving The Barns, buildings associated with Fen Place Farm and several dwellings to the north-west. The far north boundary adjoins an Ancient Woodland.

Whilst the site is in a rural location it is located in a midst of a number of buildings. Dwellings and farm buildings are located to the west of the site, a hotel to its east and Turners Hill Park (an estate of single storey buildings for occupation by the over 50s) to the north.

Particular reference is drawn to Fen Place Farm to the immediate east of the site that is a former farm and now contains a number of commercial units – an industrial estate. The complex comprises a number of single storey buildings as per the following aerial photograph and Google Streetview image:



Reference to the Historic England website reveals that there are no listed buildings within the immediate vicinity of the site as per the following extract (courtesy of Historic England):



However, it is noted that a former Roman Road runs through the south-western corner of the site.

The site is not in a conservation area.

Policy advice

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchases Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 require that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The revised National Planning Policy Framework was published in December 2024. Paras 7 and 8 refer to the principles of sustainable development, as follows:

7. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. 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.

8. Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has 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):

a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) a social objective – to support 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; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

Section 6 of the NPPF refers to Building a strong, competitive economy.

Para 85 states that it is important to support businesses.

Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

Para 89 seeks to support businesses in rural areas;

Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.

Annex 2 of the NPPF refers to the following definition of Previously Developed Land (PDL)

Previously developed land: Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill, where provision for restoration has been made through development management procedures; land in built-up areas such as residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape.

Reference is drawn to the *Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 (Mar 2018)*, which is the adopted local plan for the application site.

DP12 allows for development in the countryside where it is supported by other policies in the plan

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.***

In line with Policy DP12, Policy DP14 seeks to encourage small scale economic development as per the following:

Provided it is not in conflict with Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside and DP13: Preventing Coalescence:

...new small-scale economic development, including tourism-related development, within the countryside (defined as the area outside of built up area boundaries as per the Policies Map) will be permitted provided:

- *it supports sustainable growth and the vitality of the rural economy; and*
- *where possible, utilises previously developed sites.*

Policy DP26 seeks high quality design:

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;*
- *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;*
- *optimises the potential of the site to accommodate development.*

The Turners Hill Neighbourhood Plan includes the following policies:

THP12 Visual Perspective

It is a requirement of any proposed development for 1 or more new dwellings or more than 100 sq. m of new commercial floor space that a three-dimensional visualisation of the proposed development, in situ, be provided as part of any planning application. Such visualisations will enable the impact on the character and landscape of the area to be assessed.

THP13 Business Development

The conversion of existing buildings and the small-scale expansion of existing employment premises across the parish will be supported. Development of this nature must meet all the following criteria:

- *Respect the character of the area;*
- *Not harm the surrounding landscape;*
- *and Safeguard residential amenity and road safety.*

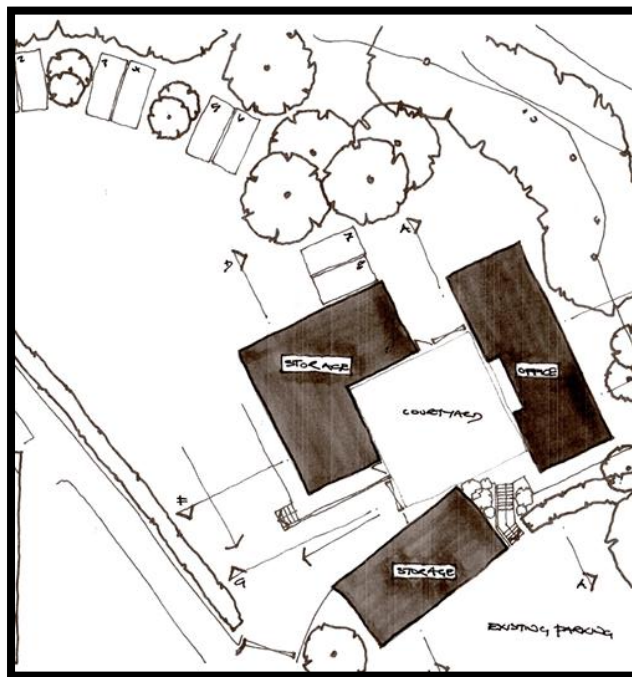
Relevant planning history

Planning permission was granted in April 2000 for a new barn (at the eastern end of the site) for the storage of pots (00/00624/FUL).

In March 2016, planning permission was granted for a change of use of one of the barns (to the west) to be able to serve hot food at the existing café (DM/16/0024).

A pre-application submission was made in respect of three proposed buildings to be used for storage and offices on the site on 12th January 2021 (reference no. DM/20/4739). The response included a meeting with officers on 26th February and a formal response on the 18th May 2020.

The proposed layout was as per the following extract:



The proposed development sought the LPA views on three separate buildings in a courtyard development with eight car parking spaces to their north laid out within the context of the existing trees.

The LPA response was positive and included the following points:

- The principle of development would be accepted on the basis that the *proposed development would maintain or enhance the rural landscape* and supports sustainable growth and where possible utilise previously developed sites.

- *I am of the opinion that the proposed development, subject to being sufficiently 'small scale' that would blend in with the surrounding pattern of development and not being isolated in the landscape, would comply with both these policies, and hence the principle of development would be acceptable. This is, however, subject to its detailed design.*
- *Any application you submit should specify...alternative transport methods for both customers and staff (particularly if increasing)*
- *Any application should include a Heritage Statement and Archaeological Assessment and a lighting assessment*

Proposed development

The proposal is for one new building immediately to the north of the car park / barns, to be used for storage with the existing use. The proposed development will contain a car park for 15 vehicles. Access would be gained via the existing field gate at the south-eastern corner of the site.

The application site is currently hardsurfaced (laid out with gravel) and used for the informal external storage of products and for the parking of vehicles. The proposal therefore seeks to formalise this activity by providing the storage building and car parking spaces.

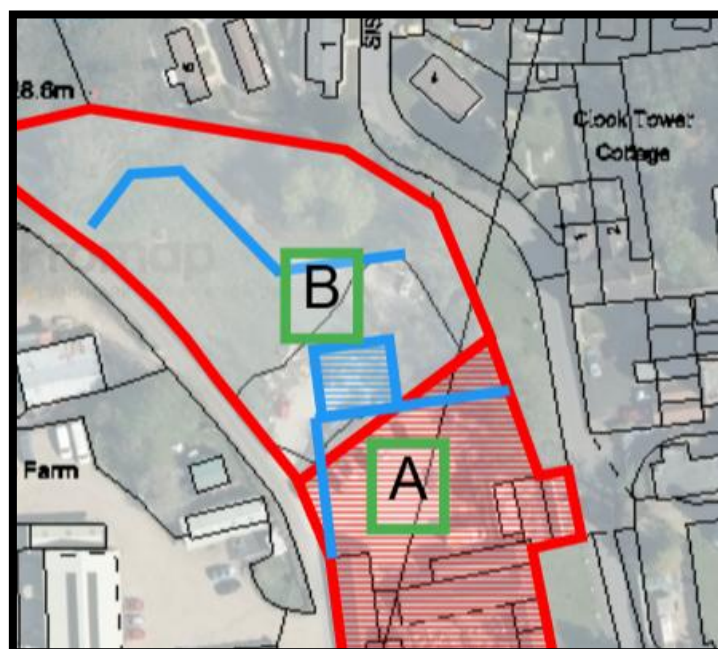
The proposed building will be used for storage purposes. In doing so it will allow for the re-organisation and expansion of the existing business by releasing space in the existing facility currently used for this purpose.

In addition, the applicants have found that due to the success of the site that there is in increasing demand from customers for available spaces within the existing car park.

The proposed development is as per the following layout:



The following extract seeks to show the proposed development within the context of the wider application site and immediate neighbours:



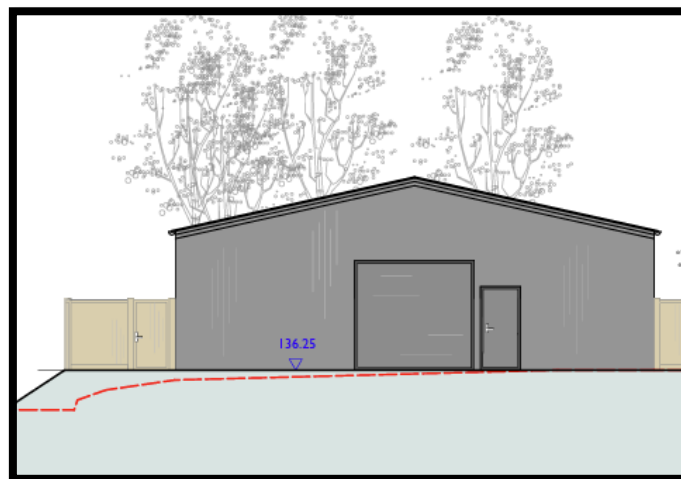
The blue hatched box shows the approximate location of the store in relation to the red hatched area (A) which is the existing operation. The approximate extent of the application site (B) is defined by the blue line. The extract is useful in that it shows the proposed development within the context of existing neighbouring development.

Fen Place Farm is an industrial estate to the immediate west of the access road – comprising a number of single storey buildings some of which are within a few meters of the access road.

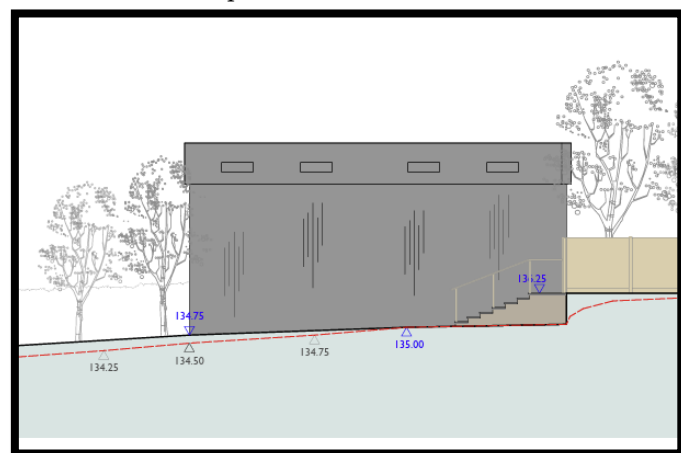
It should be noted that the proposed building is set well into the site, thereby minimising impact on the public domain, and further south than one of the buildings at Fen Place Farm. Similarly a car parking area at Fen Place Farm is further north than that proposed set away from the public domain.

Whilst it is noted that the proposed development will encroach into the countryside it is therefore clear that, due to the fact that the site is contained by existing development on three sides – to include Fen Place Farm – that it will be read as part of the existing form of development. The impact of the proposed development on the countryside, relative to that of Fen Place Farm, will be relatively low.

The proposed elevations are as follows:



Proposed southern elevation



Proposed eastern elevation

The two elevations that have been illustrated are the southern and eastern elevations.

Southern elevation – comprising shows the elevation to the existing car parking and shows the building as a single storey building with access from the site.

Northern elevation – comprising the elevation facing the public right of way that runs along the western boundary of the site. The section shows the impact of local level changes.

Trees/landscaping

There are no trees of note that are to be removed as a result of the development proposals and it is argued that impact in this regard is acceptable.

The application is supported by a landscape scheme that shows how vegetation lost as a result of the proposed development can be replaced. Furthermore, there is the opportunity of providing additional planting on the site's western boundaries thereby reducing the visual impact of the proposed store and car parking area.

Heritage

The site is not located in a conservation area and there are no listed buildings or Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the immediate area of the application site.

There is therefore no impact in respect of heritage as a result of the application proposals.

Archaeology

It is noted that there is a Roman road that runs through the site. The applicants are happy to accept a condition on the consent with regard to a watching brief in respect of saving and recording any findings.

Lighting

No external lighting to the site is proposed. It is not required not least as access to the building is from the existing site. There are no windows to the store and therefore light spill will be minimal.

Assessment

The proposals look to extend an existing business, Pots and Pithoi, that is extremely successful.

Whilst the shopfront for Pots and Pithoi is the sales area and café there is also a significant, crucial, business behind the scenes.

Pots and Pithoi import Cretan pots for sale. Various aspects of the business include the following:

- Selling the pots on site and the café
- Supply pots elsewhere in the country – for example Highgrove House in Tetbury
- One third of sales are trade sales
- Pots on the internet
- Export of pots abroad – to include Europe and the USA
- Facilitate worldwide distribution – to Australia
- Pot design.

As such, Pots and Pithoi has a worldwide reputation.

All aspects of the business are growing and it is clear that lack of space on site and lack of infrastructure are now significant constraints on the business. The applicants are very settled on site and are very happy to stay. This is part is due to the fact that the business has a highly skilled and settled workforce.

However, in order support the operation on-site infrastructure improvement is required. This is in the form of additional storage space (which helps free up space elsewhere on site for other uses) and additional car parking so to ensure customers are able to conveniently access the site.

The lack of space hampers the ability to sell products as per the above – there is lack of storage space on site. To provide additional storage on site will facilitate the growth of all aspects of the business.

Pots and Pithoi seek to work with neighbours to ensure that they are good neighbours. It should be noted that the car parking area meets different needs during the day and can be effectively managed. Deliveries are infrequent (i.e. less than 1 a month) and take place between 7.30am-12.00 midday when the retail aspect is relatively quiet. Delivery lorries are able to park and turn on site and do not block the use of the lane. Due to the fragile nature of the pots there are carefully unloaded by hand – requiring up to 10 workers to load/unload the products and there are no fork lift trucks etc. Vans

are loaded in the morning and on-site all day so no there is no conflict with the retail use.

Planning balance

The site is visually well contained and sits within the context of existing residential and industrial buildings a hotel caravan park and woodland. There are no public rights of way in the area other the access road. Impact on the surrounding area will be minimized.

As such it is argued that the proposed development will be policy complaint. Policies DP12 and DP14 encourage small scale rural commercial businesses where visual impact is acceptable, where it supports an existing business and particularly where it uses PDL.

It is clear that the expansion of business is crucial that visual impact on the countryside will be minimised and furthermore that the site is currently being used on an informal basis for external storage and car parking

The benefits to include the following:

- a. The provision of enhanced retail opportunities on-site – additional space to sell a wider range of pots and furniture.
- b. The expansion of storage facilities so as to ensure that deliveries to internet purchasers can take place and that P and P is able to supply carefully chosen partners (Highgrove etc).
- c. Contribution to the local economy
- d. Protection of existing jobs and the creation of new local jobs to include the following:
 - Retail staff
 - Cleaners
 - Workmen
 - Product designers
 - Marketing
 - Admin

The proposals are clearly compliant with the overarching provisions of the NPPF which seeks to encourage rural business and to do will support the local economy.