

Planning Statement

Report
Planning Statement

File Name
023_R_011

Project
Land west of Cockhaise Farm

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Revision
-

Purpose of Issue
Planning

This document is designed to be read in conjunction with the drawings and documents also issued as part of this application for Full Planning Permission.

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1.0 Introduction

This Planning Statement is in relation to an application at Land west of Cockhaise Farm, Monteswood Lane, Lindfield. Planning permission is sought for the following description of development:

Erection of a single dwelling and associated landscape and works.

This Statement assesses the development in the context of the adopted Development Plan and national policy. The statement should be read in conjunction with other information submitted, particularly the Design and Access Statement and drawings.

This Planning Statement is structured as follows:

- Section 2 provides a review of the site location, planning history and its surrounding context;
- Section 3 details the proposed development;
- Section 4 sets out the relevant planning policy and guidance;
- Section 5 assesses the proposed development against relevant planning policy.
- Section 6 summarises the benefits of the proposal;
- Section 7 provides conclusions.

2.0 The Site and Context

The application site forms part of a larger pasture field within Cockhaise Farm and is defined by a mature framework of hedgerows and woodland edges typical of the Mid Sussex clay vale landscape. The land is gently undulating, with a shallow fall across the field and subtle changes in level that create long but soft horizon lines.

Visual containment is provided by established boundary vegetation. The principal site characteristics are:

- It is not contiguous with a nucleated village edge and is physically separated from surrounding clusters of built form by agricultural land and established hedgerow structure;
- Consists of rural grasslands located in the open countryside.
- Mature hawthorn hedgerows forming strong and continuous field boundaries
- Intermittent mature oak and ash trees embedded within hedgerows
- A copse and woodland belt defining the southern and western edges
- Open grazed pasture with minor internal subdivision



Aerial photograph with site extents denoted in white

The site is located within the rural landscape of High Weald. It lies adjacent to woodland known as Montes Wood. It is located circa 350 metres to the west of Cockhaise Farm and approximately 2.5 km from Lindfield. The Site is surrounded by agricultural land and open countryside and then Montes Wood to the west. The nearest road is Montes Hill which lies directly to the north (c.100m).



Collaged location plan

Ecology

The land itself is majority grassland which has limited vegetation. It contributes little in terms of ecology and biodiversity (other than the hedgerows). The use reflects the character of the wider area of farmland. The hedgerows are largely intact and in good condition, with limited breaks for agricultural access. These boundaries provide both ecological value and a clear rural grain, reinforcing the perception of a long-established agricultural parcel.

Views from the site extend across pasture and woodland rather than towards built form. There are some farm buildings which sit a distance away and are visually filtered by vegetation. The field does not present as a visually prominent ridge or skyline location. Instead, it reads as part of a broader pastoral composition framed by trees.

There are very limited views into the site from the wider area/ roads. This is illustrated in the Design and Access Statement, which further illustrates the site boundaries, neighbouring land and limited visibility of the site. Whilst the site currently comprises low-value improved pasture, it sits within a wider High Weald landscape of significant character and sensitivity.

The site comprises a single field of agriculturally improved pasture. The sward is uniform and species-poor, dominated by tall fescue and perennial ryegrass with frequent cock's-foot and creeping buttercup, reflecting long-term grazing management. Botanical diversity is low and the vegetation structure across the field interior is consistent and open. A linear belt of hornbeam defines the north-western boundary adjacent to Montes Hill, with two small trees within the application boundary. A single mature pedunculate oak stands toward the north-eastern edge of the field, providing the only notable vertical accent within the pasture. To the south and west, the field is enclosed by Brock Shaw, an area of ancient woodland and priority deciduous woodland. This woodland edge is structurally dense, comprising sweet chestnut, hornbeam, hazel, holly, blackthorn and bramble, and forms a strong vegetated boundary condition. Vegetation therefore reads as open and exposed within the field itself, with ecological and structural interest concentrated at its margins.

Access

Access to the site is proposed from Montes Hill, a narrow rural lane running broadly north-east to south-west to the north of the application field. Montes Hill serves dispersed farmsteads, agricultural land and individual rural dwellings rather than forming part of a village street. Traffic movements are low and typical of agricultural and residential use within open countryside.

The proposal introduces a new vehicular access from Montes Hill, designed as a simple agricultural-style field entrance consistent with rural access points found along the lane and within the wider High Weald landscape. The access is not conceived as a suburban driveway entrance, but as a restrained rural opening within the field boundary.

The new access will be formed through localised works to the existing hedgerow and boundary vegetation, with the wider hedgerow structure retained and reinforced through native planting. A set-back gate arrangement will allow vehicles to wait clear of the carriageway, while maintaining the visual character of a rural field entrance.

From the entrance, the access route extends southwards into the site, following a discreet alignment across the field edge toward the proposed dwelling. The route has been located to limit visual prominence, avoid unnecessary disruption to established landscape structure, and preserve the rural character of Montes Hill.

A public right of way runs to the north-east of the site, outside the application boundary. The route remains physically separate from the proposed access and does not intersect with the entrance.

Planning Designations and history

The Site lies within the Green Belt and High Weald AONB, but is not within a Special Protection Area (SPA) or Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Montes Wood to the west and north is designated as Ancient Woodland.

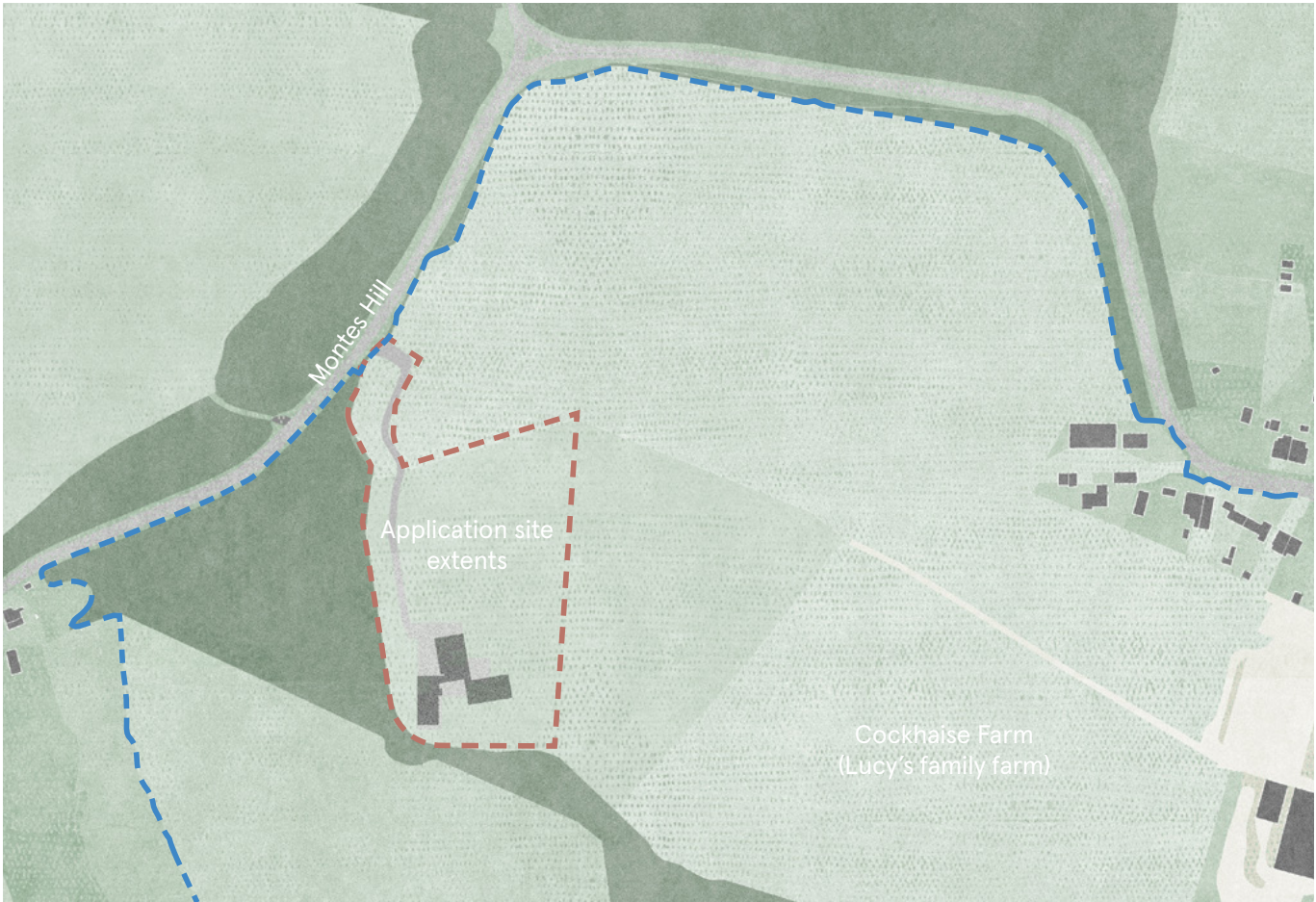
The Site is not within a designated settlement or small village. There is no relevant recent planning history associated with the Site.

According to the Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning, the site lies entirely within Flood Zone 1, defined as land having a low probability of fluvial flooding (less than 0.1% annual probability). No part of the application boundary falls within Flood Zones 2 or 3, and there are no areas of functional floodplain affecting the site. The mapping confirms that the site is not located within an area identified as being at risk from fluvial flooding.

3.0 Application Proposals

The proposal involves the erection of a single dwelling, a considered landscape design and associated structures and works. The Proposal includes a new vehicular access from Montes Hill, designed in the character of an agricultural field entrance, with visibility information provided in support.

The site presents significant opportunities to reinforce the wooded character of the High Weald landscape while accommodating a carefully integrated rural dwelling. These are summarised below and set out in detail in the supporting Design and Access Statement. These opportunities have been important drivers to the proposals and informed the architectural and landscape concepts.



Collaged location plan

Landscape integration

The gently sloping topography and strong woodland edge allow the proposed house to be positioned so that it sits naturally within the landscape, framed by existing vegetation and partially screened by trees.

Woodland relationships

The proximity of woodland and coppice provides an opportunity to reinforce the transition between open pasture and woodland through additional native planting, strengthening ecological networks and enhancing habitat diversity.

Trees and orchards

New tree planting across the site can extend the wooded character of the landscape while retaining the open quality of the field. Orchard planting and scattered native trees provide a traditional rural response that reflects historic patterns of land management in the High Weald.

Ecology

The development provides opportunities to enhance biodiversity through habitat creation including native tree and shrub planting, species-rich grassland and wildlife features integrated into the landscape design.

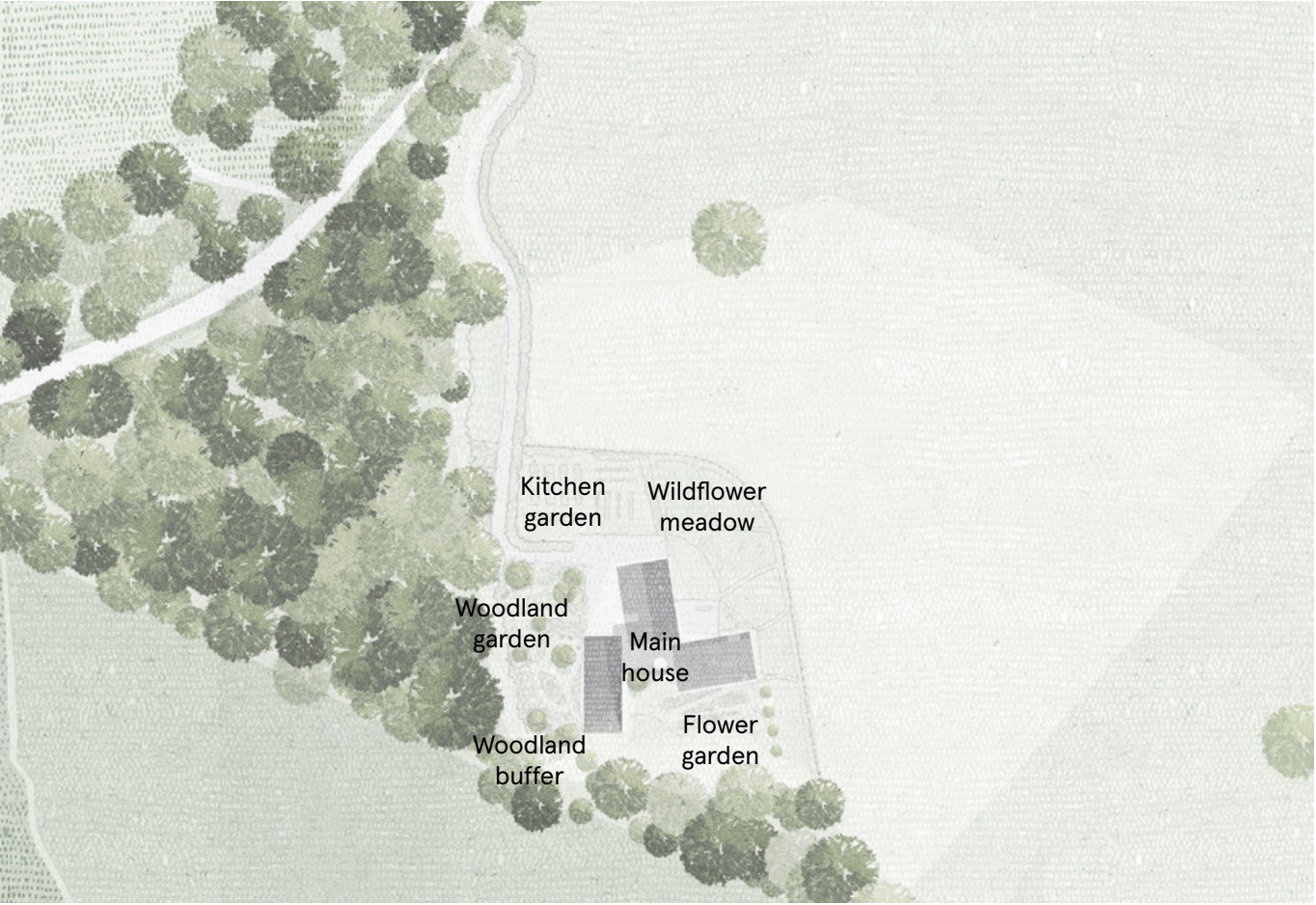
Architecture

The project offers the opportunity to deliver a carefully considered contemporary house rooted in the traditions of rural High Weald settlements. By responding to landform, vegetation and views, the architecture can appear as a natural component of the landscape rather than an imposition upon it.

These opportunities and a very detailed interrogation of the Site created five key design themes that would guide the development of both the house and the surrounding landscape. These themes underpin the design approach and are reflected in the architectural and landscape decisions set out throughout this document.

- 1. Embedding Mid Sussex into the design
- 2. A contemporary farmstead
- 3. Natural materials
- 4. A landscape shaped for wheelchair access
- 5. Ecological gains

The image below highlights key elements of the Proposed Development. The main house is situated at the southern part of the site, away from the road and surrounded by rural landscape. The house is a composition of small buildings that are a contemporary interpretation of the local farmstead condition – a small cluster of buildings arranged within the landscape, shaped by climate, topography, movement and long-term inhabitation. It lies adjacent to Montes Wood, and a woodland buffer is proposed with native species to help integrate the development into the existing landscape and character of the area. A woodland garden, flower garden and kitchen gardens are proposed immediately adjacent the main house to reflect the specific conditions of that part of the site. A wildlife meadow is proposed to replace areas of low-value grazed pasture with species-rich grassland. Its irregular geometry reflects the surrounding field pattern whilst increasing biodiversity and seasonal variation across the site. A native orchard is also proposed to the north of the home along the access route. The new access and internal route have been carefully considered so that the arrival sequence reads as part of the rural field structure, rather than as a suburban driveway. The entrance is designed in the character of local agricultural field access points, with restrained detailing, localised hedge works and native reinforcement planting.



Collaged site plan denoting the proposed landscape elements and their integration with the architecture

The house is not conceived as an isolated object placed within a field, but as part of a wider landscape structure characteristic of the High Weald. The proposal works with the existing qualities of the site – irregular pasture, woodland edge, hedgerow structure and topography – reinforcing and extending these conditions rather than replacing them. Existing landscape patterns are retained and intensified to create a more coherent and ecologically robust setting.

The landscape character of the proposal is derived directly from the surrounding High Weald landscape and its existing patterns of woodland, meadow and enclosed pasture. The landscape design includes different zones that emerge from a close reading of the existing site and existing conditions— extending woodland edges, reinforcing field boundaries, enriching pasture and strengthening relationships between cultivated and uncultivated land. The zones are explained in detail in the DAS and summarised below.

Woodland Buffer

A buffer zone is introduced to strengthen the relationship with the ancient woodland, through the creation of a managed woodland buffer. This will extend the ecological reach of the woodland edge using native species (hazel, birch, sweet chestnut). The woodland edge is intended to feel gradual and natural rather than abrupt, allowing the house to sit within an expanded tree structure rather than in open isolation. Long-term coppice management and ecological stewardship form part of the strategy, reflecting local woodland practices whilst supporting biodiversity over time.

Woodland Garden

The woodland buffer transitions into a more intimate woodland garden. Here, layered planting, understorey species and accessible winding paths create a sheltered and immersive landscape condition closely associated with the daily occupation of the house. The intention is for the building to sit within vegetation rather than against it, softening the relationship between architecture and landscape whilst creating opportunities for close interaction with planting throughout the seasons.

Wildflower Meadow

The existing pasture landscape is reworked as a species-rich wildflower meadow. This retains the openness and pastoral character of the field whilst significantly increasing ecological value through the introduction of diverse native grasses and flowering species. The meadow is intended to feel continuous with the wider landscape rather than ornamental, reinforcing the broad open grain of the High Weald setting.

Kitchen Garden and Orchard

A productive kitchen garden and heritage orchard establish a cultivated landscape closely tied to the working character of the site. Positioned adjacent to the principal living spaces, these areas support seasonal occupation, food cultivation and everyday interaction with the landscape. The orchard reflects traditional patterns of land use within the High Weald, combining productive planting with meadow grazing beneath widely spaced trees.

Flower Garden

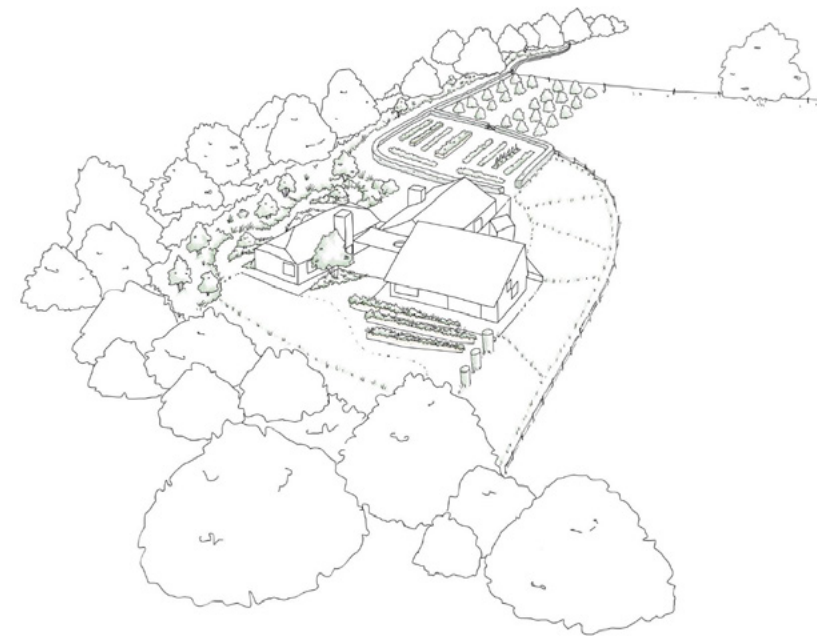
A more intimate flower garden is positioned immediately around the house, introducing a cultivated landscape condition directly associated with the domestic life of the building.

Transitional Planting

Between these principal landscape zones, meadow edge and transitional planting soften boundaries and avoid abrupt spatial divisions across the site. Native grasses, shrubs and understorey planting allow the landscape to dissolve gradually between woodland, garden and pasture conditions, strengthening ecological continuity and helping the proposal sit comfortably within its setting.

Accessible Path Network

All landscape areas are connected by a continuous network of permeable, step-free paths designed to provide full accessibility across the site. Their arrangement encourages gradual occupation of the landscape and supports long-term independent use of the site, ensuring that accessibility is embedded within the structure of the proposal rather than treated as a secondary technical requirement.



Concept sketch for proposed landscape denoting raised accessible planters and walkways



Artist's impression of the proposed house and landscape

4.0 Planning Policy Framework

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 directs Local Planning Authorities to determine planning applications in accordance with the policies of the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The adopted statutory Development Plan for Mid Sussex District Council comprises:

- Mid Sussex District Plan (adopted March 2018);
- Planning Policies Map; and
- Saved policies of the Mid Sussex Local Plan (May 2004).

Material considerations also include national policy, which is primarily expressed through the NPPF and national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) and the Council's emerging Development Plan.

The draft District Plan 2021 – 2039 was submitted for Examination on 8th July 2024. The Examination in Public has taken place and in February 2026, the Council published the Inspector's Hearings Agenda. We understand that at the hearings in April 2026, the Council agreed to produce a 'long list' of additional sites that would be required to meet the Inspector's 1,200–1,300dpa target housing requirement range. Given the advanced stage of the draft Local Plan, some weight should be attached to the emerging District Plan.

Local Plan

The Mid Sussex District Plan was adopted in March 2018 to guide development across the District until 2031. It sets out the overarching spatial strategy and housing requirements for the District for the plan period. Policy DP4 sets out the approach to housing across the District. It states that 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. Policy DP15 specifically sets out the Plan's approach in relation to isolated homes in the countryside which relates to NPPF Paragraph 84. It 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
The proposed development meets the requirements of Policy DP6: Settlement Hierarchy.”

The draft District Plan 2021 – 2039 was submitted for Examination on 8th July 2024. The Examination in Public has taken place and in February 2026, the Council published the Inspector’s Hearings Agenda. The draft document states the Local Housing Need (LHN) for housing is 19,620 dwellings (an average of 1,090 dwellings per annum). The latest hearing however suggests a housing requirement of 1,200-1,300dpa is needed. The draft Local Plan also maintains policy support for exceptional homes in the countryside as set out in Policy DPC3. It states that:

“New homes in the countryside, defined as areas outside the built-up area boundaries on the Policies Map, will be permitted in specific circumstances, as set out below:

1. Accommodation is essential to enable the operation of an agricultural, forestry or similar rural enterprises requiring full time rural workers to live at, or near, their place of work;
2. In the case of new isolated homes in the countryside, where the design of the dwelling is of exceptional quality, is truly outstanding and would significantly enhance its immediate setting and is sensitive to the character of the local area;
3. Development would involve the subdivision of an existing residential building;
4. The proposed development meets the requirements of Policy DPH2: Sustainable Development – Outside the Built-Up Area;
5. The proposed development is not in conflict with Policy DPC1: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside; or
6. Affordable housing in accordance with Policy DPH10: Rural Exception Sites.”

The adopted Policies of relevance to the proposed development are set out below.

- DP4: Housing
- DP5: Planning to Meet Future Housing Need
- DP6: Settlement Hierarchy
- DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside
- DP15: New Homes in the Countryside
- DP16: High Weald AONB
- DP21: Transport
- DP26: Character and Design
- DP27: Dwelling Space Standards
- DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

- DP38: Biodiversity
- DP39: Sustainable Design and Construction
- DP40: Renewable Energy Schemes
- DP41: Flood Risk and Drainage

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF is an important material consideration. The National Planning Policy Framework (‘the NPPF’) was latest amended in February 2025. It set out the Government’s policies for the planning system and maintains that a presumption in favour of sustainable development remains at the heart of the Framework (paragraph 10). The revised NPPF follows the election of the new Labour Government in July 2024 and their important objective to increase housing delivery across the country, with a target to delivery 1.5 million homes within by 2029.

It should be noted that the Government has made changes to the methodology to determine the housing need figures for each Local Authority. The revised method will increase the housing need for Mid Sussex to 1,356 homes per annum. It should also be noted that the Mid Sussex District Plan is now more than 5 years old and is therefore considered ‘out of date’, albeit the draft replacement District Plan is at an advanced stage.

NPPF Paragraph 8 sets three overarching objectives for sustainable development. These are:

- 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 well-designed, beautiful and safe places, 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 protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

Paragraph 9 states that these objectives should be delivered through the preparation and implementation of plans and the application of the policies in this Framework.

Paragraph 10 explains that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development at the heart of the Framework.

Paragraph 11 explains this presumption in relation to decision taking. Applications should be approved where they accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay. OR, “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 clear reason for refusing the development proposed;
- ii) or 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.

As outlined earlier in this Statement, both the adopted and emerging District Plan do contain a relevant policy in relation to isolated homes within the countryside. These are considered in the planning assessment and the policies are broadly consistent with **NPPF Paragraph 84**, which is set out in full below.

“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:
 - is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and
 - would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.”

This Statement provides a detailed assessment of the planning application against Paragraph 84(e).

Paragraphs 131 to 141 outline the key policies achieving well-designed and beautiful places.

Paragraph 131 explains that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.

Paragraph 137 states that design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.

Paragraph 138 stated that in assessing applications, local planning authorities should have regard to the outcome from these processes, including any recommendations made by design review panels.

Paragraph 139 explains that significant weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.

Paragraph 187 states that 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;
- c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
- d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
- e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local

environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans;

f) and re-mediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

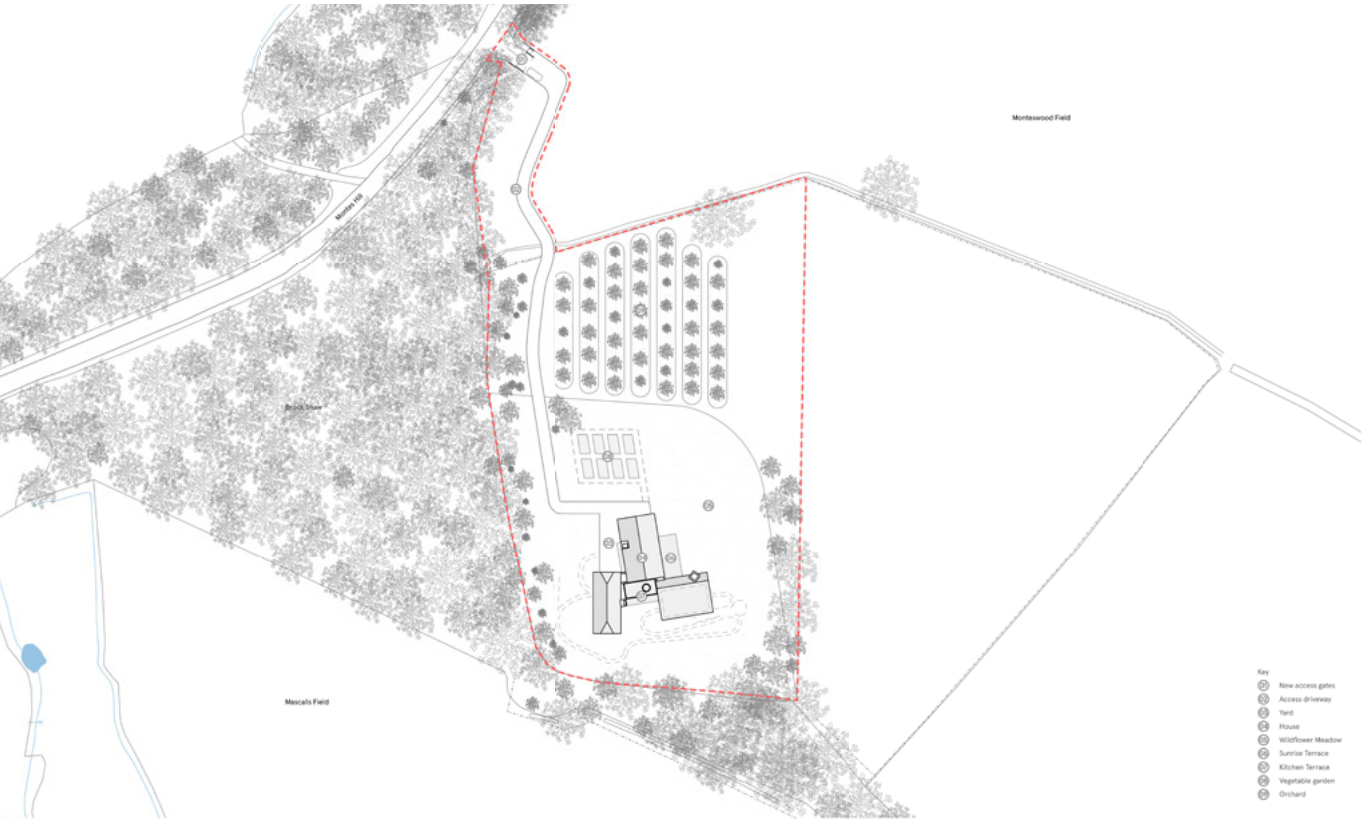
Paragraph 192 sets out the approach to protecting and enhancing biodiversity and habitats.

Paragraph 193 explains that development should not result in the loss or deterioration of ancient woodland.

Paragraph 231 explains that the policies in the Framework are a material consideration which should be taken into account in dealing with applications from the day of its publication. Plans may also need to be revised to reflect policy changes which this Framework has made.

Paragraph 232 goes on to state that “however, existing policies should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted or made prior to the publication of this Framework. Due weight should be given to them, according to their degree of consistency with this Framework (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).”

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Proposed site plan

5.0 Planning Assessment

This section outlines the proposed development against the adopted Development Plan and other material considerations and outlines planning considerations which are material to the planning balance. This is considered under the following headings.

Principle of Development / Compliance with Paragraph 84 e) of NPPF

Impact on Ecology, Visual, Highways

5.1 Principle of Development / Compliance with National Policy

Policy DP6 relates to the Settlement Hierarchy and designates Lindfield as a Category 2 (larger village) Settlement. The Site is located over 1.6km from the designated settlement area. It is therefore a rural landscape not within a Settlement.

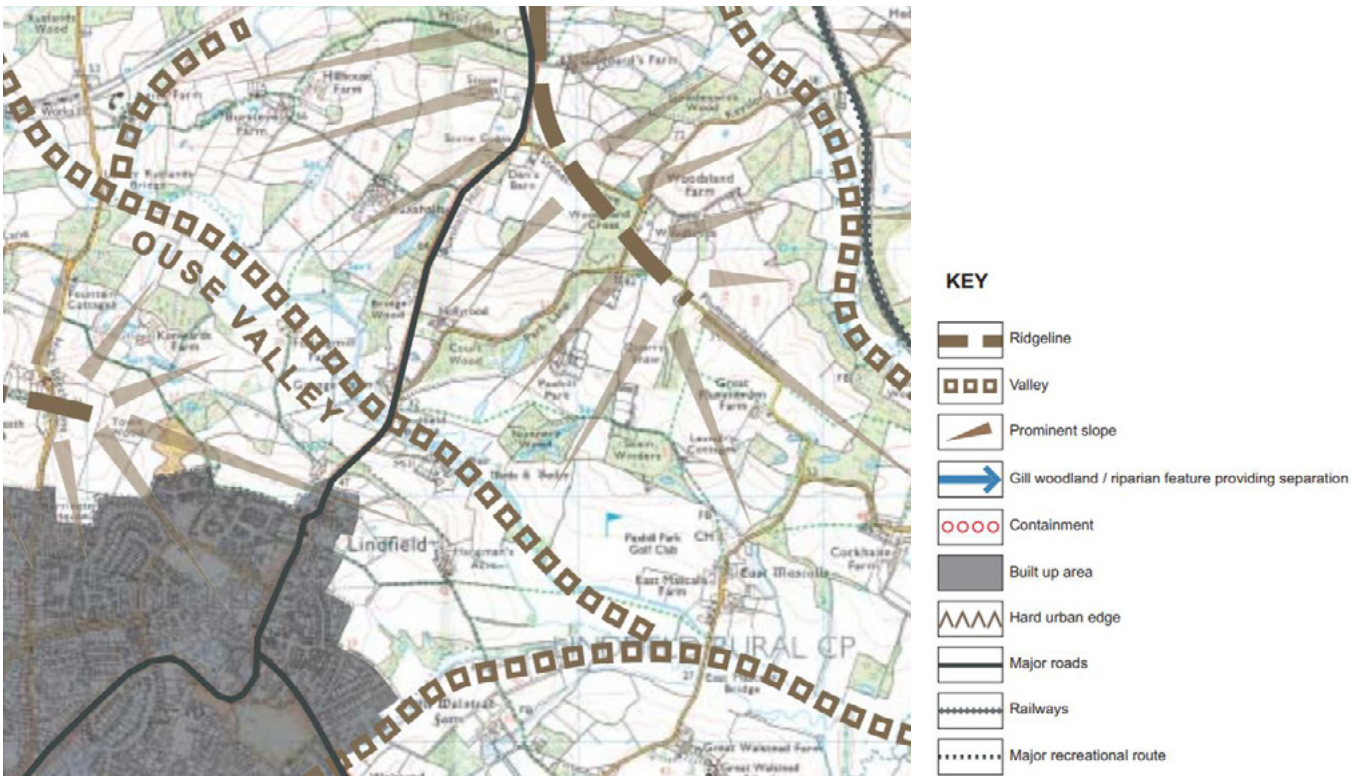
Policy DP12 states that the countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty. It defines the ‘countryside’ as the area outside of built-up area boundaries on the Policies Map. This applies to this Site.

The Site is therefore located outside of the defined built-up area and located within the Countryside.

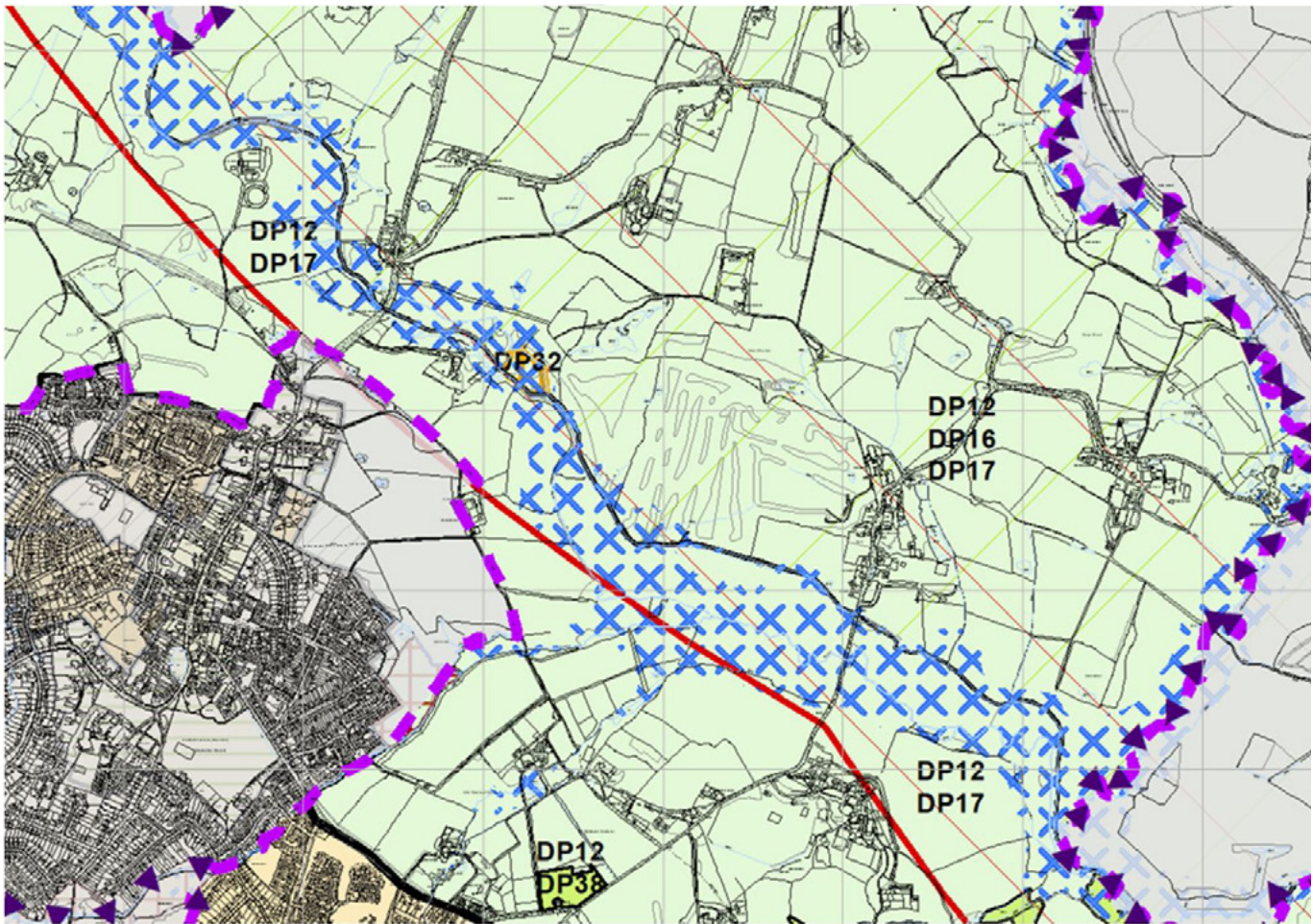
The driving principle is to erect a purpose-built house of exceptional architectural quality that is strongly embedded into, and reflects, the historic character and culture of the High Weald.

The Local Plan includes a Landscape Character Assessment.

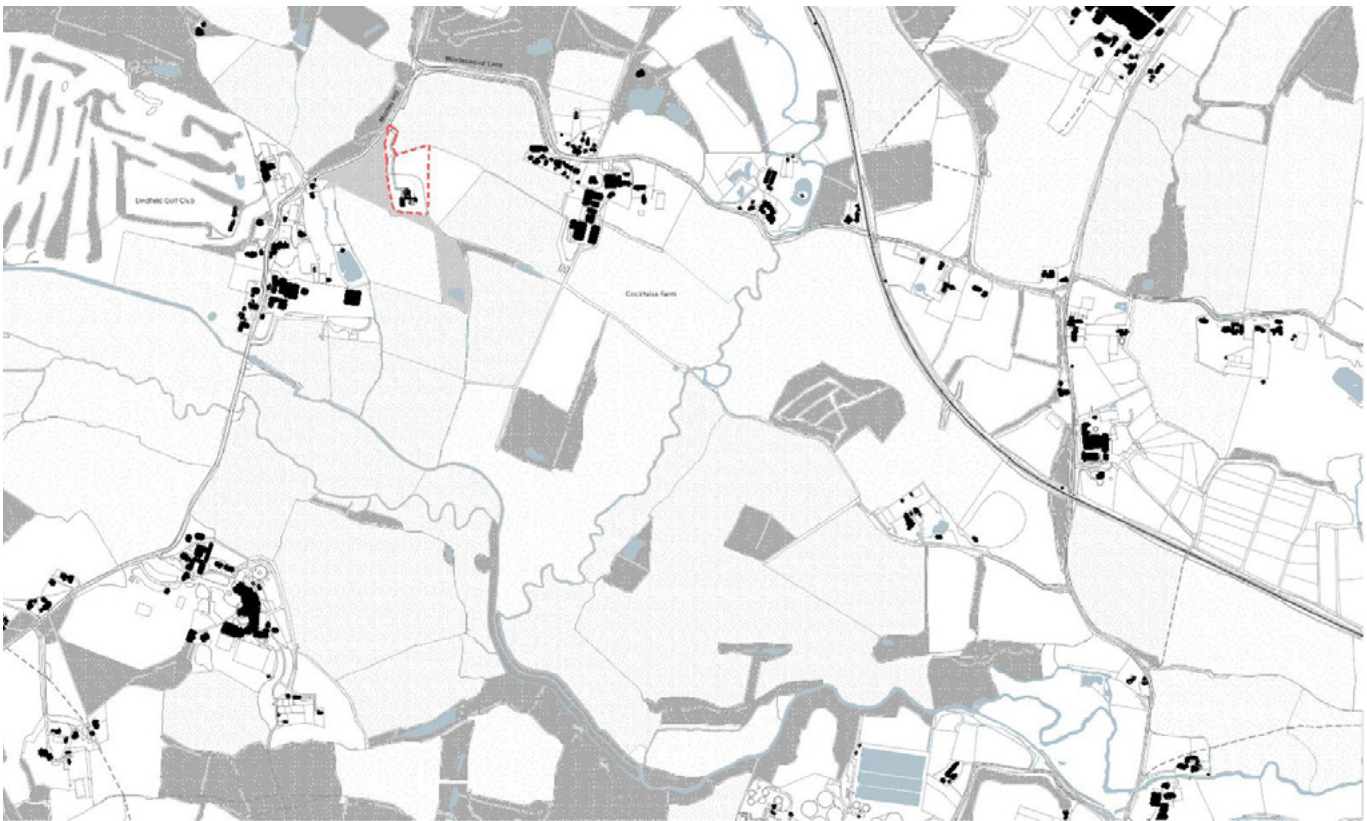
The Extract for the area is indicated below. This shows that there are a ridge-line and prominent slopes to the north of the Site, but that this site is relatively flat and doesn’t have a specific landscape character. It forms part of the wider Ouse Valley.



Landscape Character Assessment



Policies Map



Proposed Location Plan | Illustrating the isolated nature of the site

Adopted Local Plan Policy DP15 provides specific policy guidance in regard to new homes in the Countryside. It states that the Strategic Objectives are to 1) protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities; and to 2) provide the amount and type of housing that meets the needs of all sectors of the community. This is a careful balance, and the delivery of a new home is an important material consideration.

The 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 includes “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”

Policy DP12 states that 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. A key design principle of the proposal has been to ensure the proposal is embedded into the character, history and topography of the area to ensure that it enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character. The Design and Access Statement analyses the landscape character in great detail to ensure that the resultant proposal is sympathetic and informed by this context. This has formed a key element of the design ethos.

It is therefore considered that the application does not conflict with Policy DP12 and the proposal will enhance the quality of the rural landscape in this particular setting, through the use of an intelligent and considered architectural and landscape approach. The assessment of the principle of the development therefore needs to consider the remainder of Policy of DP15 and also NPPF Paragraph 84. This is set out below.

Policy DP 15/ NPPF Paragraph 84 Assessment

The Adopted District Plan includes Policy DP15 that sets out the Council’s approach to new homes within the countryside. This is broadly consistent with national policy in relation to Paragraph 84. It should also be noted that the advanced draft Local Plan similarly includes draft Policy DPC4, which is also consistent. For ease of reference, the 3 broadly consistent policies are set out below.

Policy DP15 states that:

“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”

Draft Policy DPC4 states that:

“In the case of new isolated homes in the countryside, where the design of the dwelling is of exceptional quality, is truly outstanding and would significantly enhance its immediate setting and is sensitive to the character of the local area”

Paragraph 84 of the NPPF 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:
 - is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and
 - would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.”

It should be noted that past NPPF changes updated the above policy and removed the requirement for the proposal to be ‘innovative’.

All three policies include largely similar tests. All require the delivery of exceptional quality development (the NPPF also refers to outstanding architecture) on isolated sites and all require enhancement to its immediate setting and being sensitive to the character of the area.

This policy guidance has been critical to the design thinking for the proposal and the design exploration of the Site. The assessment of the proposal against these policies has been

explored in great detail with planning officers through pre-application advice and at the Design Review Panel. The section below therefore assesses the resultant planning application against each criteria of NPPF Paragraph 84 (which is the most up to date policy assessment, but as highlighted is largely consistent with DP15). In essence the criteria to comply with policy include 1) located on an isolated site; 2) the design is outstanding and reflects the highest standards of architecture; and 3) the proposal will enhance its immediate setting. These three points are considered in turn below and set out in detail in the Design and Access Statement.

Is the Site Isolated?

The first policy test is establishing whether the site is ‘isolated’ for NPPF Paragraph 84 to be triggered.

The meaning of the word ‘isolated’ was the subject of the ‘Braintree’ judgement which the High Court judge determined should be given its ordinary meaning of “far away from other places, buildings or people; isolated”. The appeal court judge stated that this “simply connotes a dwelling that is physically separate or remote from a ‘settlement’”.

It is evidently clear that the Site is ‘physically separate’ from a settlement and therefore is ‘isolated’.

The Site is located outside of any defined settlement on the Proposals Map. It consists of rural grasslands located in the open countryside. It lies adjacent to a woodland known as Montes Wood. It is located over 350 metres to the west of Cockhaise Farm and approximately 2.5 km from Lindfield. Cockhaise Farm is a farmstead with predominantly farm buildings and a small number of dwellings.

There is a clear physical, visual and functional separation between the Site and Cockhaise Farm or any other building. All land that abuts the Site is either rural landscape or woodland. It forms part of a field pattern, which has hedgerows marking the edges of the field that reflects the agricultural character. There is no visual connection between the Site and the Farm. The Site is instead part of the rural character seen as adjacent to Montes Wood. It is therefore clearly physically separate and therefore isolated. The first policy test is therefore met.



Drone photograph of existing site extents denoted in white

NPPF 84 Criterion e) assessment

Criterion e requires that the design of the isolated home needs to be of exceptional quality. This is the 'headline test'. To do this, the scheme must meet two sub criteria, which include an 'and' policy and therefore both need to be met. These two criteria are considered below.

Criteria 1: Truly outstanding design, reflecting the highest standards in architecture and raising standards in rural areas

The quality of architecture has been a key driver and consideration of the project from the outset. There is a unique opportunity to create a building with a real connection to the surrounding landscape that is informed by the strong character and history of High Weald and not imposed.

The architecture doesn't seek to 'stand out' in physical terms, in the sense of it being unduly prominent or impactful. Instead, the design ethos has been about delivering architecture of the highest standards that 'belongs in its context'. This approach is entirely embedded in its specific context and is not readily repeatable.

To reach this goal, the architect has spent 3 years understanding the place and evolving a truly unique design and approach that is 'of this place'. The DAS provides a detailed assessment of Site constraints and opportunities (pages 42 to 43). These are integral to how the architecture and proposal has been informed to create a building and landscape of exceptional quality and locally integrated. This is summarised below.

Landscape integration

The gently sloping topography and strong woodland edge allow the proposed house to be positioned so that it sits naturally within the landscape, framed by existing vegetation and partially screened by trees.

Woodland relationships

The proximity of woodland and coppice provides an opportunity to reinforce the transition between open pasture and woodland through additional native planting, strengthening ecological networks and enhancing habitat diversity.

Trees and orchards

New tree planting across the site can extend the wooded character of the landscape while retaining the open quality of the field. Orchard planting and scattered native trees provide a traditional rural response that reflects historic patterns of land management in the High Weald.

Ecology

The development provides opportunities to enhance biodiversity through habitat creation including native tree and shrub planting, species-rich grassland and wildlife features integrated into the landscape design.

Architecture

The project offers the opportunity to deliver a carefully considered contemporary house rooted in the traditions of rural High Weald settlements. By responding to landform, vegetation and views, the architecture can appear as a natural component of the landscape rather than an imposition upon it.

This detailed understanding of the Site led the architect to set clear objectives from the outset that it was felt a building of exceptional architecture should seek to achieve. These include:

1. Embedding Mid Sussex into the design
2. A contemporary farmstead
3. Natural materials
4. A landscape shaped for wheelchair access
5. Ecological gains

These design themes are evident within each decision noted throughout the Design and Access Statement.

The proposed dwelling is the result of an extensive process of site observation, design development and consultation. From the outset the project has been guided by two closely related ambitions: to use intelligent architecture to create an exceptional accessible home that emerges naturally from the landscape of the High Weald.

The Applicant's use of a wheelchair has been central to the brief and has shaped both the architecture and landscape from the earliest stages of the project. The proposal seeks to demonstrate an approach to accessibility in which architecture, landscape and everyday life are considered together – creating a home where accessibility contributes directly to spatial quality, environmental integration and long-term liveability.

Accessibility is therefore treated not as a technical requirement applied to a completed design, but as a spatial principle informing the organisation of buildings, courtyards and gardens. The house and landscape are conceived as a seamless environment that allows movement across the site to occur naturally and without hierarchy. The DAS explains this design process in greater detail (pages 56–57). This intelligent integration of accessibility and environmental design pushes beyond

conventional standards of sustainable domestic architecture. It further demonstrates that the design is outstanding. It has used this brief requirement to provide a home that surpasses 'compliance' to reach a standard of exemplary design and accessibility..

At the same time the design is grounded in a careful reading of the High Weald landscape. This historic landscape has evolved through centuries of woodland management, pasture farming and dispersed settlement. Small irregular fields, hedgerows, woodland edges and loose clusters of farm buildings define the character of the area. The proposal interprets this context through a contemporary reworking of the local farmstead typology. Rather than a singular building object, the dwelling is conceived as a loose grouping of forms arranged around a sheltered courtyard. This arrangement reflects the spatial organisation of agricultural yards common throughout the High Weald while creating protected external spaces that form an integral part of everyday life. This is explained in the DAS in greater detail (pages 58-63).

Landscape and architecture are developed together as part of a wider ecological strategy for the site. Existing woodland margins are reinforced and extended, while areas of meadow, orchard and productive garden increase biodiversity and strengthen the character of the pasture landscape. The landscape proposal seeks to make a setting for the new house that is in balance with a rich and diverse landscape whilst noting the evident ecological net gains possible in collaboration with our specialist ecologist and landscape designer.

It is proposed that:

- the building and its adjacent land use be appropriate in scale and land use pattern to the surrounding areas, without negative visual impact;
- the biodiversity of the site is significantly improved and maximised;
- significantly enhance the aesthetic, functional and ecological character of the site and its relationship to the surrounding landscape;
- a picturesque and working landscape is produced.

The design concept has been critical throughout- to the siting of the building on the plot, to the arrangement of the building and landscape, to the type of materials and construction process. The DAS also explains the design evolution process in detail and how the design has been informed by a Design Review Panel which has enhanced and refined the design.

The Design Review Panel fully supported the proposal and its exceptional design quality. Their full latest advice is set out below.

"The Panel commended another enjoyable presentation and were pleased to see the scheme had been improved in response to the previous Panel comments whilst retaining the original vision.

The Panel felt that there would be a definite improvement to views from the public right of way for passers-by. Rather than concealing the building, the concept is to enrich the views of the immediate landscape, while at the same time safeguarding the privacy of future occupants.

The Panel felt that the architecture and the landscaping was beautiful, and the use of local materials and educational connection with the community laudable. The modern vernacular would enhance its setting. The simplicity of the building worked.

In particular, the reduction in the floor plan was welcomed from a sustainability point of view. Although the Panel recognised that achieving passive house certification may be difficult due to the form of the building, an overheating study should accompany the planning application."

In summary, the proposal has been informed by a strong concept vision from the outset that is informed directly from this local context. The Design and Access Statement explains that dispersed farmsteads are a key characteristic in this part of the High Weald. The proposal builds on the local dispersed farmsteads characteristic to further this tradition and create a house that is integrated into its landscape. The location and relationship to the adjacent woodland is also critical and the design ethos seeks to embrace this through enhanced ecological benefits and management of the ancient woodland with a proposed buffer woodland of native species to integrate the proposal further into the existing character. The interrelationship between woodland and the farmstead is an intriguing concept that successfully provides a sympathetic response to the landscape.

In the design team's view, the proposal has resulted in an exceptional piece of architecture that is deeply rooted in the character and landscape of the High Weald.

This meets the test of creation e).



Artist's impression of the of the proposed house and landscape

Use of sustainable design and innovative methods of construction to raise standards of architecture

In addition to a considered and sensitive approach to architecture, the new development seeks to minimise the environmental impact and carbon emissions as far as possible through the use of innovative methods and intelligent architecture. These aspects need to be considered as part of the schemes assessment against the policy criteria. The DAS outlines these methods in great detail, and a summary is provided below given these are unique public benefits of the proposal.

- The building form, orientation and construction have been carefully considered to minimise energy demand.
- The energy strategy prioritises passive performance, creating a stable internal environment and reducing the need for mechanical intervention. The building layout/ arrangement ensures low levels of solar gain. Openings are proportioned in response to orientation. Glazing is paired with external shading and deep reveals to control solar exposure through the year.
- Natural ventilation is integral to the layout. Openable windows are positioned to enable cross ventilation across all primary spaces, with high-level openings allowing warm air to escape and support night cooling during summer months.
- Target U-values are low across all elements, with walls, floors and roof designed to significantly reduce heat loss. Triple glazed windows are used throughout, set within the insulated envelope to maintain continuity of performance.
- Airtightness is a key part of the strategy, with a target of less than 1 m³/h·m² @50Pa. This is supported by careful detailing of junctions and a clear airtightness line within the construction.
- Thermal bridging is minimised through consistent build-ups and simplified junctions. Ventilation is provided through a whole-house mechanical ventilation system with heat recovery, achieving high efficiency while maintaining good indoor air quality. The system is integrated within the plan, with short, direct duct routes and a centrally located unit to reduce energy loss and simplify installation.
- Heating and hot water are provided through a fossil fuel-free system. The reduced energy demand of the building allows a low-capacity system to be used, supported by thermal storage and controlled set points to manage energy use efficiently. On-site renewable energy generation is maximised through roof-mounted photovoltaic panels, with the intention that annual energy

demand is offset by on-site production. Provision is made for battery storage to allow generated energy to be retained and used effectively.

The materials and construction technique has also been a key consideration to create an exemplar building and design. The use of timber structure, hempcrete infill and lime-based finishes lends itself to a slower, more tactile construction process, one that can accommodate learning and participation alongside delivery. The architect and applicant are also exploring the opportunity for the project to engage with local education colleges and training providers during construction to advance the knowledge on this innovative form of construction. This could take the form of site visits, small-scale involvement in specific elements of the build, or collaboration with specialist suppliers and contractors already working with these materials.

The proposal is proposing the use of hempcrete (with timber) as the key materiality. It will be one of few homes that use this material. Hempcrete is a truly sustainable material that will create a highly sustainable building. The benefits of using this material are highlighted below. This further demonstrates the proposal's ambition to advance understanding of low-carbon construction methods within a rural domestic context.

Advantages of using hempcrete:

- Hempcrete is highly insulating and airtight; ideal for meeting today's building standards.
- Hempcrete also has thermal mass. This means that hempcrete buildings change temperature more slowly and thus have reduced energy demands for heating and cooling compared to buildings insulated with lightweight insulation materials.
- In hempcrete, insulation and thermal mass work together resulting in an extremely energy efficient building.
- Hempcrete is natural, vapour permeable and hygroscopic, creating healthy indoor environments, and protecting the building's fabric.
- Hempcrete materials are produced locally; with UK grown hemp, and binders from the UK or Western Europe.
- Hemp transforms CO₂ during its growth by capturing carbon and releasing oxygen. Using hemp in construction locks away carbon for the lifetime of the building. Research indicates that a net 110-165kg of CO₂ is sequestered per cubic metre of hempcrete.
- Hemp can be grown in rotation with food crops to improve the soil and reduce weeds, it does not require agrochemicals in its cultivation and there is no need for pesticides or insecticides.

- The hemp shiv used in hempcrete is a low-value waste product of the hemp seed and fibre industry.

In summary, the approach to sustainability and use of natural and innovative materials has been considered in great depth at this stage. Innovative approaches will be deployed with intelligent architecture to reduce the carbon footprint of the building. These approaches and technologies further reiterate the exemplar quality of architecture proposed. Suitably worded planning conditions can request further details in this regard. This again demonstrates that the first criteria of Paragraph 84 has been met.



Photograph taken by Benjamin Machin during hempcrete building workshop



Collaged view of interior as Landscape of natural materials

Criteria 2): Enhancement of immediate setting

The field that forms the Site consists of grassland (that has a limited biodiversity role) and there is limited visibility of the Site from the surrounding area.

The proposal significantly enhances the immediate setting in two key areas.

- 1) the considered approach to landscape will enhance the Site's contribution towards the High Weald local rural character and better integration into the woodland.
- 2) the biodiversity and ecological value of the site will be significantly increased.

The proposed architectural concept fully extends to the landscape vision. The connection between the building and the landscape is a critical design objective of the project. The two have been considered and developed in tandem.

1. Enhance the Site's contribution to landscape character

The objective for the house is to become an integral part of this landscape rather than dominate it. The proposed building nestles into the existing corner of the site, sitting alongside the existing hedgerow with its eaves height matching that of the hawthorn, integrating the building into the existing landscape.

A comprehensive landscape and planting scheme has been designed to significantly enhance the landscape, integrate the building into its setting, whilst delivering a domestic home for Lucy and Nick's family. The net ecological gains are vast on a site that offers little currently. The characteristics of the existing site are enhanced rather than revolutionised however, working with what is there and not landing alien concepts.

There is a comprehensive landscape and planting scheme that will significantly enhance the landscape, integrate the building into its setting and deliver a unique setting for the enjoyment of future occupants. The key objectives for the landscape strategy are:

- the building and its adjacent land use be appropriate in scale and land use pattern to the surrounding areas, without negative visual impact;
- build and enhance the existing character of the landscape, rather than create anything alien;
- the biodiversity of the site is significantly improved and maximised;

- significantly enhance the aesthetic, functional and ecological character of the site and its relationship to the surrounding landscape;
- a picturesque and working landscape is produced.

The adjacent ancient woodland has clearly been a critical design driver in this vision and the relationship between the two has provided a compelling concept to explore in the design process. The landscape proposal extends the existing woodland with native species of tree, grass and wildflower. The scheme also includes a productive garden including beehives, heritage orchards and edible planting to play on the idea of a farmstead in the woodland and making best use of the land and reflecting traditional farmsteads.

The landscape design was a focal discussion in the Design Review Panels, which has informed and evolved the thinking. The access road was relocated to ensure no impact with the ancient woodland and the species and character of the landscape was refined to better fit to this context.

The latest Design Review Panel notes confirmed that there would be a:

“definite improvement to views from the public right of way for passers-by. Rather than concealing the building, the concept is to enrich the views of the immediate landscape, while at the same time safeguarding the privacy of future occupants.” And that, “the Panel felt that the architecture and the landscaping was beautiful, and the use of local materials and educational connection with the community laudable. The modern vernacular would enhance its setting. The simplicity of the building worked.”

This is an important material consideration in relation to whether the proposal provides an enhancement to its immediate setting.



Artist's impression of the of the proposed house and landscape

2. Enhance the Site's biodiversity and ecology

Rewilding and bringing the landscape back to nature has been a key priority to enhance landscape.

The field that forms the Site is currently unmanaged, as is common in rural Mid Sussex. A Preliminary Ecology Appraisal (PEA) has been prepared by Ecology Partnership. This has surveyed the application site to understand the existing ecological potential of the site and to advise on mitigation measures both for the development and construction to minimise any adverse ecological impact and optimise the potential of the site for ecology. The report explains that the Site comprises species-poor modified grassland, grazed by cattle and a line of trees on the north-western boundary. Adjacent to the site (but outside of the application boundary) on the south and west is an area of ancient woodland.

There are no priority habitats on site and a buffer zone of over 15m has been created to the woodland to prevent any possible root damage. The line of trees on site has ecological value and a maximum of two small trees will be removed to create an access road. This, however, will not impact the connectivity of the line of trees as its canopy is connected to the adjacent woodland across the road.

The assessment considers all existing biodiversity potential and how this should be protected and improved upon. As a result of this early consideration to ecology and biodiversity, the proposal will achieve significant net ecological gains across the site. The landscape design has been a true collaboration between the architect and landscape designer. The landscape strategy for the Site has been designed to protect and retain existing trees (except two) and vegetation and then realise significant re-wilding and biodiversity whilst retaining and building on the character of the area.

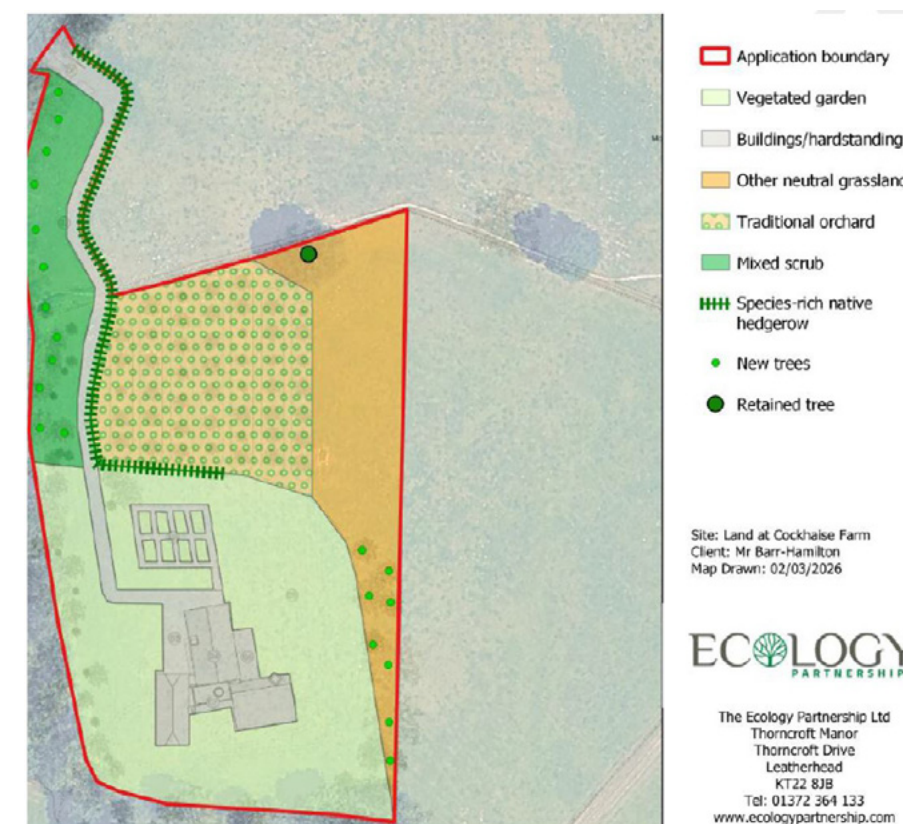
The proposal maintains the most significant ecological value on the existing Site and builds on this with a carefully considered and sensitive landscape strategy. The hedgerow is maintained and significantly enhanced and expanded – the BNG calculation confirms there is +2,717% increase in hedgerows units.

In addition, the proposed landscape strategy introduces new trees, rewilding and new habitats. The proposal therefore replaces grassland of low ecological value with a range of plant species and habitats that greatly improve the biodiversity of the site. This is shown in the proposed ecology plan below, which results in a +42.34% increase in BNG. This is a significant public benefit of the proposal.

The selection of tree species for proposed planting will be based on native trees found during the ecological site review as well as from specialist guidance. Other species of trees will be chosen appropriate to this place.

The PEA also considered the potential for wildlife and species on the site. The report then sets out recommended mitigation measures for the development and for construction techniques. These recommendations are included in the proposal and can form part of appropriately worded planning conditions.

In summary, the proposal is highly sensitive to the defining characteristics of the area and will clearly significantly enhance its immediate setting (which is predominantly agricultural and grasslands). We have worked hard to develop the landscape proposals from the concept design we showed to the Design Review Panel. The scheme has evolved and enhanced through this consultation. The resultant scheme provides a significant enhancement of the setting by 1) creating a sensitive and enhanced landscape which complements this part of Mid Sussex and the proposed building; 2) provides a significant increase in the biodiversity and ecology of the site.



BNG Assessment Zone Map

Conclusion of Assessment against Paragraph 84

This Statement has provided a detailed assessment of how both criteria of Paragraph 84 have clearly been met by this high-quality proposal. Planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the Framework as a whole.

As outlined earlier in the Planning Statement, adopted Policy DP15, and emerging Policy DPC3 are consistent with Paragraph 84.

Therefore, the detailed assessment set out above should be read to also demonstrate that the proposal fully complies with these adopted/ emerging local plan policies. The principle of the proposal is therefore fully compliant and in line with the adopted

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5.2 Assessment of impact upon Ecology, Visual and Highways

Ecology

This Statement has already outlined the positive impact on ecology and biodiversity. A Preliminary Ecological Assessment has been undertaken and the recommendations incorporated into the proposal. The Site currently has a low ecological value due to its grassland status. The proposal will significantly increase the range of habitats, provide a net increase in trees and vegetation and provide a quality landscape that enhances the contribution of the site to the local landscape and complements the new built form. There will therefore be no adverse impacts and the net gain in trees and biodiversity is a benefit of the proposal.

Given the Site is within the SAC buffer zone, it is envisioned that a SAMM tariff and SANG payment contribution may be required to offset any potential impacts.

There are also two national statutory designated sites and two non-statutory sites within 2km of the red line boundary. However, due to the small-scale nature of the proposals, they are of a sufficient distance away to not be affected by this development.

A buffer zone of over 15 metres has been created from the Site interventions to the ancient woodland. This ensures there will be no adverse impact (such as root damage) to the ancient woodland and therefore is in accordance with the NPPF.

Ecological mitigation measures have been set out in the PEA. It is expected that these measures are secured by suitably worded planning conditions.

Highways

Access from the lane is designed as a calm transition rather than a point of interruption.

A new vehicular access is proposed from Montes Hill. The access has been designed as a simple agricultural-style field entrance, consistent with rural access points along Montes Hill and within the wider High Weald landscape. This approach provides safe and suitable access to the proposed dwelling while maintaining the informal rural character of the lane.

The access arrangement is supported by visibility information submitted with the application. Localised works to the existing hedgerow and boundary vegetation are proposed only where necessary to form the access and provide suitable visibility. The wider hedgerow structure will be retained and reinforced with

native planting.

Any gate will be set back from the carriageway to allow vehicles to wait clear of Montes Hill. Surfacing and edge details will be selected to maintain a rural character and avoid suburbanising the lane.

The hedgerow will be locally opened to form the access and reinforced to either side. Vegetation within the visibility splays will be managed to remain below 600mm, maintaining clear sightlines while retaining the wider rural edge. The access is designed as a simple, legible opening, avoiding an engineered or suburban character. It provides a safe and policy-compliant point of entry consistent with the lane and its use.

From this point, movement towards the house is direct and readable. The approach avoids unnecessary changes in level and separates pedestrian movement from vehicle manoeuvring. Arrival is organised around a small forecourt, allowing a short and sheltered route from vehicle to entrance.

This access road is considered to be safe, well located and appropriate for the use proposed.

Visual

The existing open field site lies on a gentle slope affording limited views to and from the site. This is demonstrated in the Design and Access Statement. The proposed house is sited appropriately and nestled into the existing woodland and will have minimal impact upon the landscape.

The visual impact has been informed by Design Review Panel feedback. This concluded in the panel stating “that there would be a definite improvement to views from the public right of way for passers-by. Rather than concealing the building, the concept is to enrich the views of the immediate landscape, while at the same time safeguarding the privacy of future occupants.”

In summary, through a careful consideration of site placement and the interplay of landscape and built form, the proposal will have limited visibility from any public viewpoints. When seen the views of the enhanced landscape will provide attractive views that fit as part of the character of the wider landscape. In conclusion, we consider there will be no adverse visual impact from the proposal.

6.0 Benefits and Balance

The above assessment of impacts has shown that no significant adverse effects are expected as a result of the development and that the proposals overall would accord with the provisions of the Development Plan and Framework, in particular NPPF paragraphs 84 e) and 131.

The benefits of the proposed development are considered to be wide-ranging and significant, supporting and delivering the objectives of the Local Plan/ Framework. These are summarised below within the context of the three aspects to sustainable development as set out within the Framework.

- A specialised design house to accommodate the user's accessibility needs through the use of intelligent architecture. This type of concept and need has been considered as an innovative form of architecture and a benefit on other planning applications.
- Proposed development will enable the Applicant to remain in the area; thus contributing to the local housing stock and freeing up an existing property for another family.
- Substantial investment into the local area and associated economic impact. The construction will generate jobs and help support the local economy.
- The residents will support facilities in the local area.
- Delivery of a new dwelling within the local area, which contributes to local housing need. This is in the backdrop of a national housing crisis and the delivery of new homes being a key pillar of the Government's strategy to deliver growth and respond to the needs of the Country.
- Increasing the variety of homes available in Mid Sussex, and the opportunity for future occupants to enjoy the dwelling.
- The construction process of such a hempcrete building could be undertaken in collaboration with local building colleges to enhance the local skills-base in future building methods. The Applicant also intends to publish the project extensively so the design is shared with anyone who may wish to learn from it is able to do so. Suitably worded planning conditions can secure these substantial social benefits.
- Quality design reflecting the highest standards of architecture. The development has been sympathetically designed into the landscape and the layout allows for the protection, enhancement and longevity of key character features such as hedgerows and woodland.
- Net gain in trees and vegetation. This results in an increased ecological value of the Site- significantly surpassing the 10% BNG requirement.

- Innovative use of materiality and passive energy systems which results in an exceptionally low carbon development.

The proposed development therefore constitutes sustainable development as it meets all three dimensions (economical, social and environmental).

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7.0 Conclusions

The proposed development relates to single detached dwelling built into the landscape in a rural context on an isolated Site. The Adopted District Plan includes Policy DP15 that sets out the Council's approach to new homes within the countryside. This is broadly consistent with national policy in relation to Paragraph 84. It should also be noted that the advanced draft Local Plan similarly includes draft Policy DPC4, which is also consistent.

All three policies include largely similar tests. Both require the delivery of exceptional quality development (the NPPF also refers to outstanding architecture) and both require enhancement to its immediate setting and being sensitive to the character of the area. In addition, NPPF Paragraph 84 requires the site to be 'isolated'.

Conclusion of Assessment Against Paragraph 84

This Statement in conjunction with the Design & Access Statement demonstrates how the proposed new house and landscape meets and surpasses the very stringent criteria of Paragraph 84 of the NPPF.

Firstly, the Site is clearly isolated in the countryside. The Site is not located within, or near to, a defined settlement in the Proposal Map. It consists of rural grasslands located in the open countryside. It lies adjacent to woodland known as Montes Wood. Lindfield is c.2.5 km from the Site.

The proposal then meets criteria e) of Paragraph 84. The proposed design is of exceptional quality. This is further summarised below.

- The design is outstanding and will raise standards of architecture in the area. The design team has drawn on their experience to ensure the proposed development achieves the highest design standards creating an outstanding architectural and landscape design. The design is borne of a reading of this place and translates these design cues into a contemporary dwelling that furthers the quality of design in the local context. The design has been informed following a constructive and positive Design Review Panel process, which resulted in support of the proposal from the panel.
- The dwelling has been designed so that it seamlessly assimilates into the surrounding landscape and creates a high quality design in harmony with the surroundings. A combination of existing and proposed vegetation helps the dwelling sit discreetly within the wider landscape. The boundary hedgerow creates a sense of enclosure and enables the development to have a discrete presence within the landscape.

- The proposal will also significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area. The site currently comprises species-poor, modified grazing pasture. The proposal transforms this baseline condition into a structured and diverse landscape, including traditional orchard, species-rich grassland, native hedgerow and woodland edge planting. The scheme delivers a +42.34% biodiversity net gain and a +2,717.8% increase in hedgerow units, significantly exceeding statutory requirements. All habitats are secured for long-term management over a 30-year period, ensuring that the ecological benefits are both measurable and enduring.
- The exemplar design extends to its approach to sustainability. The environmental performance of the building is inherent to its architecture. Form, orientation and construction are resolved together to reduce energy demand at source, with systems used only to support this baseline performance. This approach produces a building that is not only low-energy in use, but fundamentally efficient by design, demonstrating a level of integration and clarity appropriate to the ambitions of the proposal.
- The proposed scheme provides no adverse visual impact. A comprehensive landscape and planting scheme has been designed to significantly enhance the landscape, integrate the building into its setting, whilst delivering a high-quality and sustainable home designed for the specific needs of the user. The net ecological gains are vast on a site that offers little currently. The characteristics of the existing site are enhanced rather than revolutionised however, working with what is there and not landing alien concepts.
- The proposed dwelling is to incorporate sustainable construction technologies to achieve exemplary low levels of embodied energy and carbon emissions. With careful selection of materials and design and orientation to maximise the benefits of solar gain, the proposal will vastly surpass the general standards of current house building.

The proposal therefore meets the criteria of NPPF Paragraph 84 (e) and complies with national planning policy.

We consider there is no harm as a result of the proposal. We also consider there are wide ranging benefits of the proposal, which are material considerations. Planning consent should therefore be granted without delay.

Paragraph 84 e) of the NPPF allows isolated dwellings in the open countryside provided that they are of exceptional design.

It has been demonstrated in this statement that the proposed development fully meets the criteria outlined. The design was also strongly supported by the independent design review panel. There are no technical or environmental impacts that would significantly or demonstrably outweigh the substantial benefits of the proposal.

In accordance with paragraph 11 of the Framework, the development proposal clearly constitutes 'sustainable development'. It is therefore respectfully requested the application is approved without delay.

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