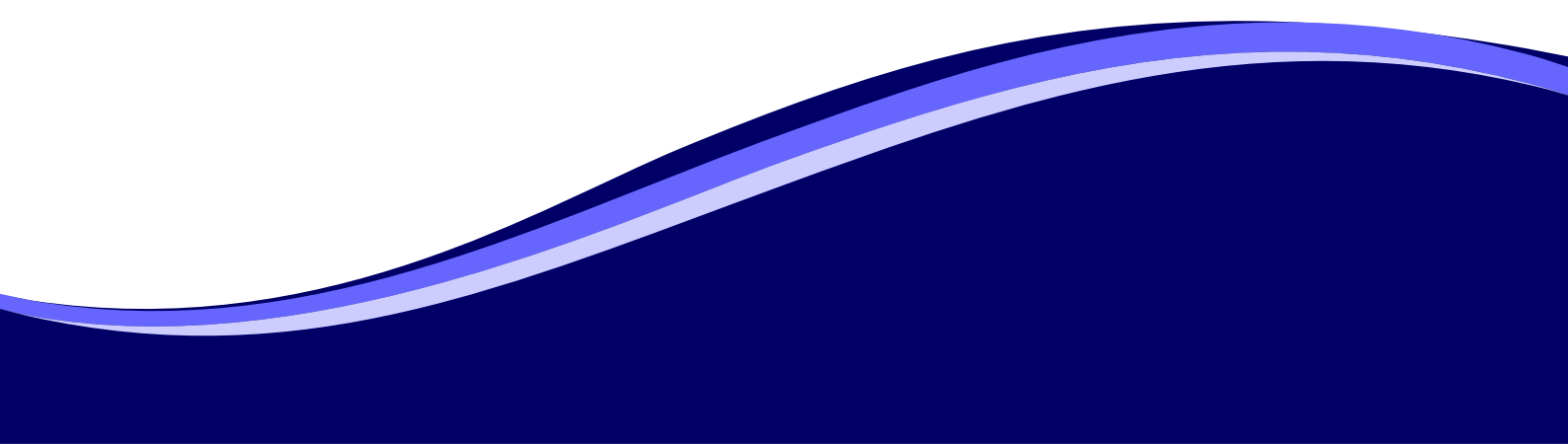


Design, Access & Planning Statement

Prince Albert Public House,
Copthorne Bank,
Copthorne,
Crawley
RH10 3QX

Residential Development

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1 Introduction

Site Address:

The Prince Albert Public House, Copthorne Bank,
Copthorne, Crawley RH10 3QX

Applicant:

Westcoast Convenience Limited

Architect:

UAN Architecture

Proposal:

Sever land and erect convenience store with
associated access and parking. Retain public
house with revised pub garden layout.

Author:

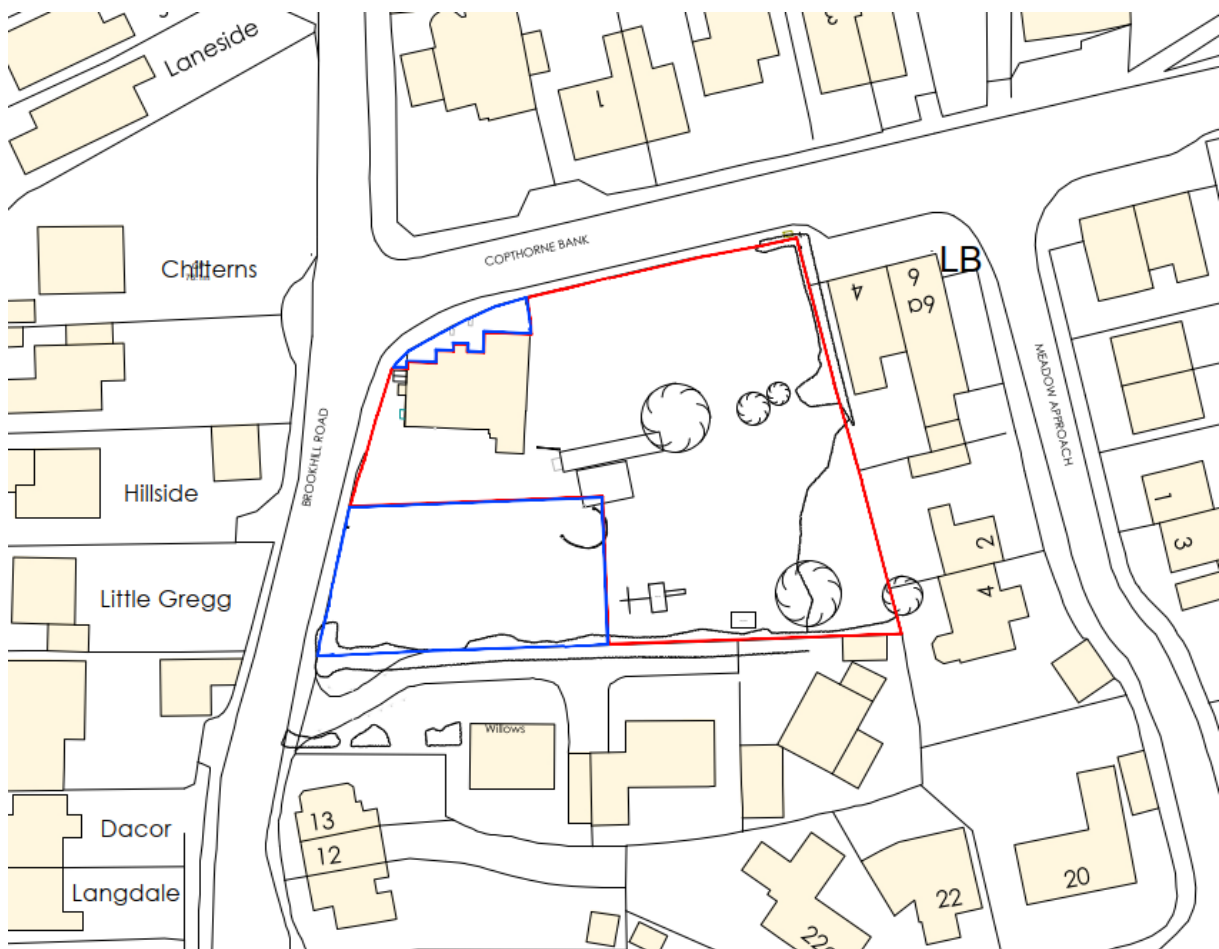
Mr C. Miell, BA(Hons), MPlan, MRTPI

Date:

May 2026

Application type:

Full application



Location Plan

2 Background

The Site and Surroundings

Site Area

0.19 ha

Use

Public House (Sui Generis) with associated car park and garden to the side / rear.

Built form

The application site is occupied by a detached two storey public house which sits on a substantial corner plot at the junction of Copthorne Bank and Brookhill Road. The current building was constructed in C19 and has a simple traditional form with a pitched roof and render / painted brick exterior. To the east of the public house there is a storage container, which provides secure storage for the business. Behind the storage container there is a small timber smoking shelter.

Landscape

The public house benefits from a large pub garden to the rear. The garden is mainly laid to lawn and features a children's play park. Within the garden there is a silver birch tree, which would be felled to facilitate the proposed development.

To the south of the public house there is an overgrown area of scrub land, which has been separated from the wider pub garden by fencing. Planning permission was given in 2019 to construct a two-storey rear extension in this location, which would have provided 8 x letting rooms with new kitchen, disabled toilet and staff accommodation. The permission lapsed in 2022.

Access

To the side of the public house is a large car park, which is accessed from Copthorne Bank. This is a private car park, which is for the sole use by patrons and staff of the public house. The site is located within walking distance of a range of services and facilities in Copthorne town centre.



Site Photos



Site Photos

Character Overview

The site is located within the historic core of Copthorne. The Copthorne Neighbourhood Plan 2021-2031 explains that *"At the centre of Copthorne is its historic core. This primarily residential area has clusters of commercial activity along Copthorne Bank, Borers Arm Road and Church Road. It is interspersed with a number of historic buildings contributing to a rich sense of place"*.

The immediate area has a suburban character of the area with a mix of residential and commercial premises. The buildings are typically two storey detached or semi-detached properties of varying architectural form, merit and materials.



View of site from northeast
Source: Google Streetview (March 2026)

Planning History

Pre-Application

No pre-application discussions have been undertaken before the submission of the current application because it follows a refused scheme and the material planning issues are well understood.

However, pre-application discussions (LPA Ref; DM/23/3242) were held with in 2023/24 prior to the submission of the previous planning application. The LPA advised that the principle of severing the site to provide land for a residential development and a convenience store was in accordance with the development plan owing to the site's sustainable location and the proposal forming windfall development in the built-up area

Site History

- **TA/84/P/1115:** Single-storey extension to provide porch and enlarged bar area. **APPROVED** on 5th February 1985
- **06/02073/FUL:** Demolition of existing rear extension and erection of new extension for dining area and updated toilet facilities (incl disabled). **APPROVED** on 23rd November 2006
- **08/01522/FUL:** Retrospective planning application for a rain shelter. **APPROVED** on 7th July 2008
- **DM/15/4045:** Extension to existing public house to provide 8 no. letting rooms, extended kitchen and staff accommodation. Amended plans received 3rd December 2015 showing revised materials to elevation, revised window design and external fire escape on south elevation. **APPROVED** on 7th January 2016
- **DM/19/01314:** Proposed 2 storey rear extension with external staircase to provide 8 letting rooms with new kitchen, disabled toilet and staff accommodation. **APPROVED** on 26th April 2019.
- **DM/24/2957:** Sever existing land to retain existing public house use and area of pub garden and erect a convenience store and 4 no. apartments with associated works, including alterations to the existing vehicular access and car park. **REFUSED** on 20th January 2026.

LPA Reference: DM/24/2957 – Overview

This application was submitted in November 2024 and sought permission to sever the existing land to retain existing public house use and area of pub garden and erect a convenience store and 4 no. apartments with associated works, including alterations to the existing vehicular access and car park.

After 12 months of negotiation with the Local Planning Authority, which resulted in several positive design changes, including highway improvements, the planning application was recommended for approval by the Planning Officer. Due to the number of objections, the application was referred to the Council's Planning Committee. The Committee Members overturned the Officer's recommendation and refused planning permission on 20th January 2025.

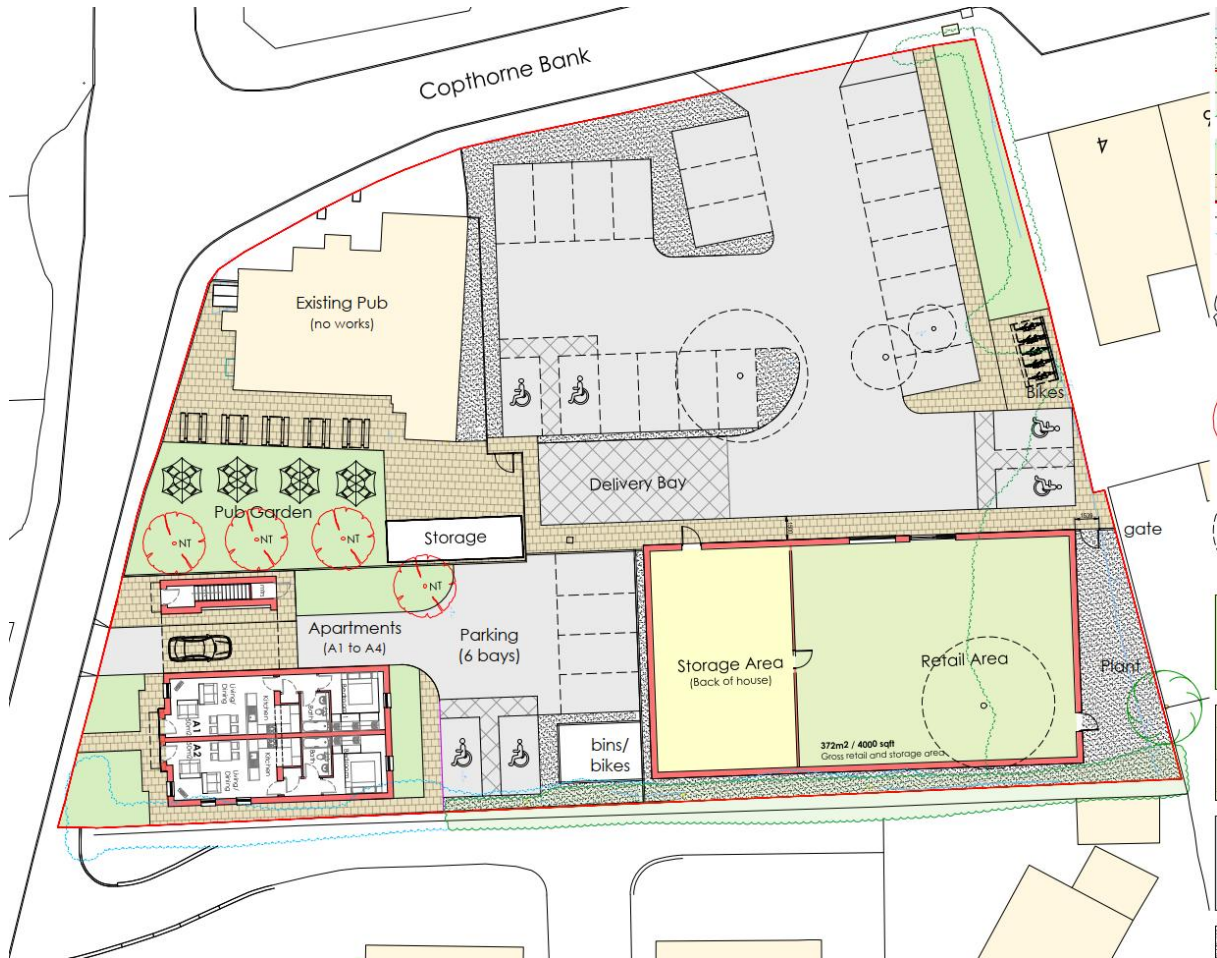
The **SOLE** reason for refusal on the Council's decision notice states:

"The design of the proposed apartment block and retail unit building would have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area, specifically due to the scale, bulk and height of the apartment block in relation to the public house and Boundary Cottage, and the unsympathetic design and appearance of the retail unit building. The proposal is therefore contrary to policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, policies CNP1, CNP2 and CNP11 of the Copthorne Neighbourhood Plan and the Mid Sussex Design Guide. The Council recognises that it is currently not able to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites and having regard to paragraph 11d)ii) of the NPPF, while limited positive weight has been given to the proposed apartments, the adverse impacts identified (substantial harm to the character and appearance of the area) are considered to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. As such, there are no material considerations that indicate a decision should be made otherwise than in accordance with the Development Plan"

It is noted that the reason for refusal relates exclusively to design matters (highlighted in **yellow**). Therefore, it follows that the Planning Committee were satisfied with the Officer's assessment regarding the other material planning considerations set out within the Officer Report, including the principle of development (residential and new convenience store) and the subsequent reduction of the pub garden.

The Local Planning Authority must determine similar cases in a consistent manner. Therefore, it would be unreasonable for the Planning Officer and/or Planning Committee to find the principle of development unacceptable when determining the current application. Instead, the focus should be on whether the revised design approach overcomes the previous concerns, which are clearly identified within the sole reason for refusal.

LPA Reference: DM/24/2957 – Refused Plans



Site Plan



Proposed Streetscene (West) 1:200

Proposed Streetscene

LPA Reference: DM/24/2957 – Refused Plans



Proposed Elevation (West) - Street Elevation 1:100



Proposed Elevation (North) 1:100

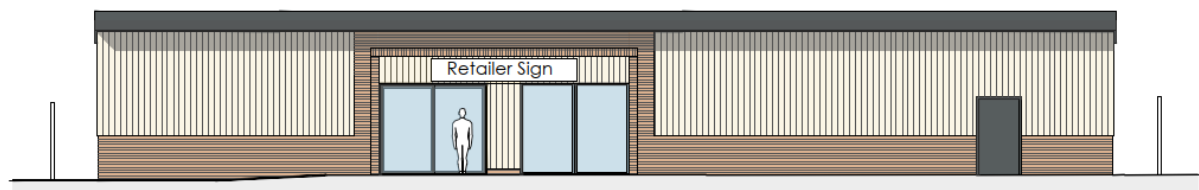


Proposed Elevation (East) 1:100

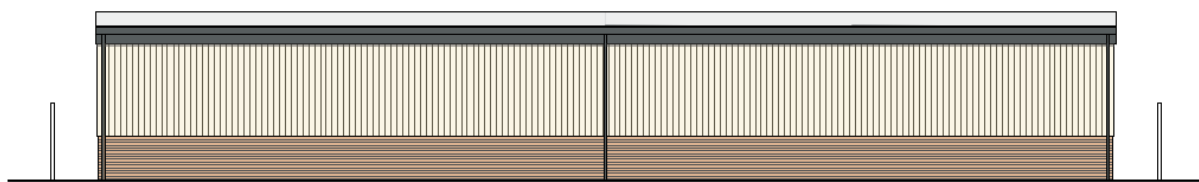


Proposed Elevation (South) 1:100

Proposed Elevations - Apartments



Proposed North Elevation (Street facing) 1:100



Proposed South Elevation (rear) 1:100

Proposed Elevations – Convenience Store

Planning Policy

Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 – 2031 (March 2018)

- DP3 – Village and Neighbourhood Centre Development
- DP4 – Housing
- DP5 – Planning to Meet Future Housing Need
- DP6 – Settlement Hierarchy
- DP17 – Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC
- DP21 – Transport
- DP25 – Community Facilities and Local Services
- DP26 – Character and Design
- DP27 – Dwelling Space Standards
- DP28 – Accessibility
- DP29 – Noise, Air and Light Pollution
- DP30 – Housing Mix
- DP37 – Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- DP38 – Biodiversity
- DP39 – Sustainable Design and Construction
- DP41 – Flood Risk and Drainage
- DP42 – Water Infrastructure and the Water Environment

Copthorne Neighbourhood Plan 2021-2031 (February 2021)

- CNP1 – General Development Requirements
- CNP2 – Redevelopment and Infill Development within the Defined Built-Up Area
- CNP4 – Important Community Facilities
- CNP5 – Conversion of Public Houses
- CNP7 – Parish Heritage Assets
- CNP11 – CA4: Historic Core
- CNP13 – Our Economy
- CNP14 – Sustainable Transport
- CNP15 – Car Parking
- CNP16 – New Parking Areas

Supplementary Planning Documents

- Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD (November 2020)
- West Sussex County Council – Guidance on Parking at New Developments (September 2020)
- Planning Noise Advice Document: Sussex (September 2021)

Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2039

The District Council is reviewing and updating the District Plan. It was submitted for examination in July 2024, no examination hearings have taken place at this point. At this stage, the Local Planning Authority does not know which Policies will be the subject of unresolved objections and therefore only minimal weight can be given to the Plan.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and is a material consideration in planning decisions. The following sections of the NPPF are relevant to the proposal:

Section 2 – Achieving sustainable development:

- Paragraph 11 – *"Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For **decision-taking** this means: (c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or (d) 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: the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies of this Framework taken as a whole"*

Section 6 – Building a strong, competitive economy:

- Paragraph 85 – *"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"*

Section 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities:

- Paragraph 98 – *"To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should: a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments."*

Section 9 – Promoting sustainable transport:

- Paragraph 115 – *“In assessing sites that may be allocated for development in plans, or specific applications for development, it should be ensured that: a) sustainable transport modes are prioritised taking account of the vision for the site, the type of development and its location; b) safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users; c) the design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflects current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code; and d) any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree through a vision-led approach.”*

Section 11 – Making effective use of land:

- Paragraph 124 – *“Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.”*
- Paragraph 125 – *“Planning policies and decisions should: c) give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, proposals for which should be approved unless substantial harm would be caused.”*
- Paragraph 128 – *“Local planning authorities should also take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in plans, where this would help to meet identified development needs”*

Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places:

- Paragraph 131 – *“The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.”*
- Paragraph 135 – *“Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments: (a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development; (b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; (c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities).”*

3 Description of Proposal

Use

It is proposed to sever the eastern portion of the existing pub garden to provide land for a new convenience store (Use Class E) with associated car parking. The existing public house use is to be retained save for a reduction in the amount of pub garden.

A separate planning application has been submitted by the applicant concerning the southern portion of the existing pub garden, which is proposed to be redeveloped with two detached dwellings including associated access and parking.

Copthorne is a Category 2 settlement under Local Plan Policy DP6 (Settlement hierarchy) and is defined as a "Larger village acting as Local Service Centres providing key services in the rural area of Mid Sussex. These settlements serve the wider hinterland and benefit from a good range of services and facilities, including employment opportunities and access to public transport.". As such, the site is suitable location for residential development.

The pub itself is registered as an Asset of Community value (ACV) and as such, Local Plan Policy DP25: Community Facilities and Local Services and Neighbourhood Plan Policies CNP5 and CNP7 are of relevance. These policies seek to protect against the loss of the existing public house.

Policy DP2 (Town Centre Development) seeks to create and maintain town and village centres. It sets a threshold for the provision of a Retail Impact Assessment for developments over 500sqm or more gross floorspace for the sale of convenience or comparison goods outside a town centre. The proposed convenience store will have a gross floorspace of 372sqm which is under this threshold.

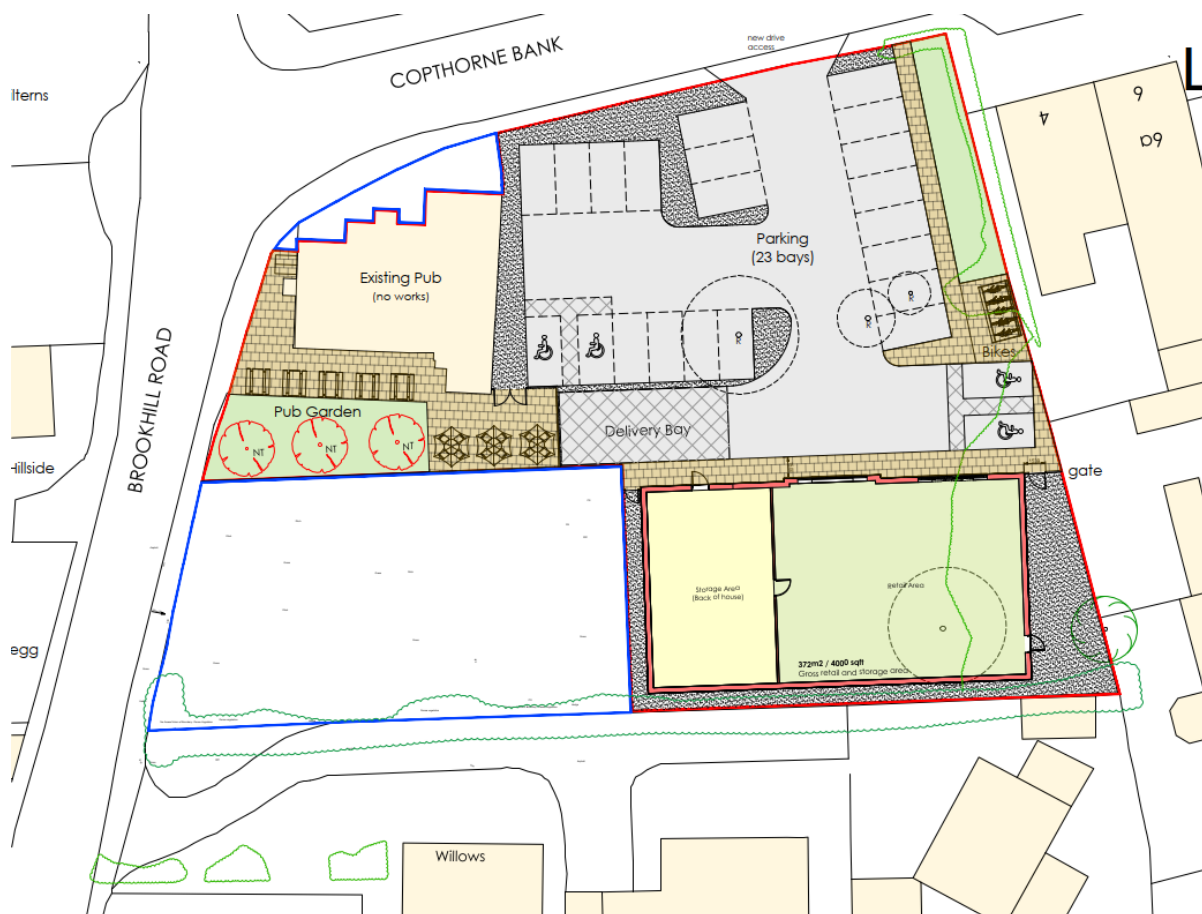
Policy DP6 sets out that "Development will be permitted within towns and villages with defined built-up area boundaries. Any infilling and redevelopment will be required to demonstrate that it is of an appropriate nature and scale (with particular regard to DP26: Character and Design), and not cause harm to the character and function of the settlement."

Policy CNP2 of the Neighbourhood Plan supports redevelopment and infill development of sites within the defined built-up area subject to a number of criteria being met in relation to character, design and amenity.

The garden land to be retained to serve the existing public house use is ample in order to provide sufficient external space to serve this use. This position is supported by the viability report submitted with the planning application.

As per the previous scheme, the shared boundary between the pub garden and residential development (subject of separate planning application) will be planted with a line of new trees which will provide aural and visual screening between the domestic and commercial uses. In addition, the pub garden will be improved by to provide usable seating areas which will be a significant improvement upon what is seen on site now.

The principle of the proposed development is considered to be acceptable. This is in line with the pre-application advice received. The existing public house use is to be retained, the proposed convenience store is entirely appropriate in this sustainable location as supported by local policy, as per the LPA's previous decision.



Proposed Site Plan

In determining the previous application, the Planning Officer concluded that the principle of a new convenience store at the site was acceptable and compliant with the development plan, noting in his Officer Report that *"it is considered that the retail unit on its own merits is acceptable and does not conflict with Policy DP6 of the Mid Sussex District Plan or national guidance."*

This assessment was informed by the Retail Justification Statement submitted by the applicant in support of the previous application, which concluded:

"The proposed retail unit can be accommodated within Copthorne village based on existing available retail expenditure, with a high surplus remaining, even when assuming a limited population growth from 2021 to 2026 and adopting an incredibly robust sales density figure.

Furthermore, whilst it is emphasised that considerations of retail 'need' have been removed from national planning policy, and that, in any case, there would be no need to undertake such an assessment at this Site, it is argued that such a high surplus can indeed be interpreted to demonstrate a 'need' for additional retail convenience premises."

Given that the Officer's position was not overturned by the Planning Committee (i.e. retail need / retail impact did not form a reason for refusal), it follows that the previous conclusions remain valid and the principle of a new convenience store at the site remains acceptable. For this reason, the application has not submitted a Retail Justification Statement with this planning application because it is not required.

In terms of other considerations, several residents objected to the previous proposal on account of new store jeopardising the Post Office use. In response to this, the Planning Officer concluded *"this planning application has to be considered on its own merits, rather than speculation on what may or may not occur in future. As such, the proposal does not conflict with this policy."* (Policies CNP4.2 and CNP4.3 of the Neighbourhood Plan). This assessment remains valid for the current application.

Similarly, a large number of neighbouring residents objected to the siting of the retail unit in this location, stating that it would be better situated within the Heathy Wood development to the west rather than adjacent to existing facilities. In response to this, the Planning Officer concluded *"Members will be aware that determination of any planning application must be made in terms of what is submitted, rather than what may be preferred elsewhere. For the above reasons, it is considered that the retail unit on its own merits is acceptable and does not conflict with Policy DP6 of the Mid Sussex District Plan or national guidance"*. Again, this assessment remains valid for the current application.

Amount

The proposal seeks to retain the existing public house use, whilst severing a portion of the pub garden to provide land for a new convenience store.

The amount of development proposed has been driven by the desire to make effective use of this large underutilised site, whilst ensuring the existing public house use is protected, respecting the prevailing pattern of and the amenities of existing and future occupiers, as well as the following considerations:

- The need to make optimum use of the site;
- To provide a development of high-quality design;
- The need to preserve neighbouring amenity;
- To provide an appropriate amount of car parking, cycle parking and suitable access standards;
- To provide adequate bin storage;
- To preserve trees and soft landscape.

The proposed convenience store will be 372sqm, which falls below the 500sqm threshold set out within Policy DP2 for the provision of a retail impact assessment. As such, the size of the proposed convenience store is wholly appropriate and will not impact upon the vitality of other centres.

The land provided to serve the existing public house use is considered to be ample in order to provide sufficient external space to serve this use. This position is supported by the viability report submitted with the planning application.

As can be seen from the accompanying plans, the amount of development proposed has been carefully balanced to create an attractive scheme that makes efficient use of the site, whilst not representing an overdevelopment of the site or creating an overbearing impact on the neighbouring properties.

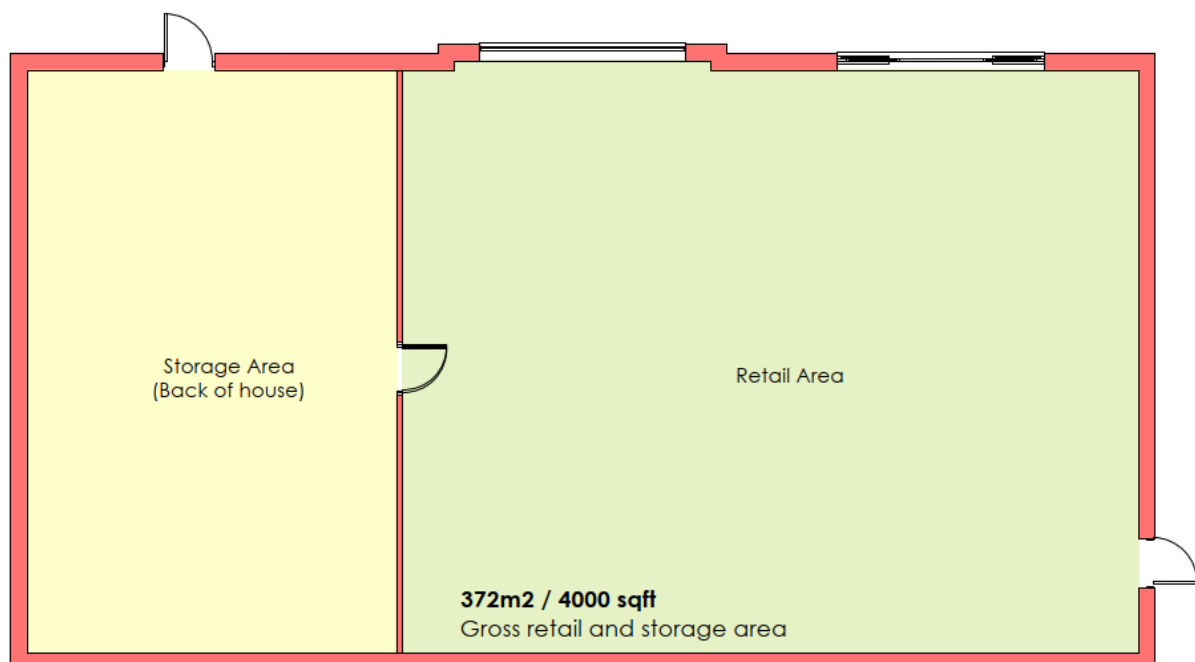
The proposals therefore accord with Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan and Policies CNP1, CNP2 CNP11 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Layout

The layout of the scheme has been carefully thought out to make maximum use of the site whilst ensuring the existing public house use is retained. The relationship between the public house and the new convenience store is appropriate and sufficient space is given to soft landscaping and parking to provide a redevelopment that is in keeping with the surrounding area.

A good-sized rear garden to the south of the public house is proposed to be retained as part of the redevelopment of the site, which is commensurate with the size of the pub and the type of venue, which is primarily a wet establishment with limited/no food offering.

The convenience store is to be located to the south-east of the site. Parking and access is provided to the north of the site with an ample number of parking bays proposed and a delivery bay all accessed from Copthorne Bank. The convenience store use is set a good distance from the proposed apartments with the apartment parking area in between, in order to minimise any potential for noise impacts. A Noise Assessment is submitted to demonstrate that the proposed convenience store will not result in significant noise impacts on surrounding uses.



Ground Floor Plan 1:100

Proposed Floor Plan

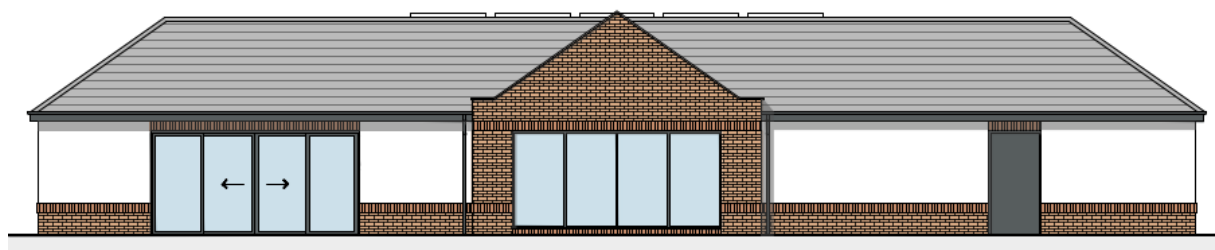
Scale & Appearance

The design and appearance of new convenience store is **substantially different** to the previous proposal block, which the Council's Planning Committee found to be unacceptable due its *"unsympathetic design and appearance"*

The proposed convenience store would be a single storey building with a traditional appearance. As per the previous proposal, it would be set back within the site, close to the boundary with the neighbours to the south and east. However, due to the single storey nature and its proposed crown roof, it will sit much lower than the properties that surround it and as such will not appear overly dominant or result in amenity concerns.

Externally, the building would have brick and render finish with a tiled roof form, all of which would be an appropriate response to the area's local distinctiveness. The principal façade of the building would incorporate a central gable feature, which would add visual interest and respond positively to other traditional buildings within the immediate area.

Given the above, the character and appearance of the area would be maintained, and a carefully designed proposal would be incorporated into the street scene without adversely affecting the local distinctiveness of the area. As such the development is in accordance with Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan and Policies CNP1, CNP2 and CNP11 of the Neighbourhood Plan.



Front (North) Elevation 1:100

Proposed Front Elevation

Access

It is proposed to retain the existing access from Copthorne Bank to serve the public house and the convenience store. Additional hardstanding is proposed to the front of the convenience store in order to facilitate a policy compliant level of parking.

A transport statement has been provided by ADL Traffic & Highways. It sets out that there are no apparent road safety issues on the network near the site that would require mitigation as a result of the proposed development. The site is situated in a location of good accessibility to encourage active travel modes (walking and cycling) to / from the proposal site, whilst also benefiting from good accessibility to bus stops with relatively frequent services.

As set out within the transport statement, the majority of trips linked to the new store will be existing on the network and accordingly incidental on the highway network. The additional trip generation will be imperceptible when considering the prevailing traffic flows on the highway network.

The proposed development will provide 23 commercial parking spaces to serve the public house and convenience store. Policy compliant bin and bike stores are also proposed. The proposal accords with NPPF paragraph 114 and Policy DP21 of the Mid Sussex District Plan and Policies CNP14, CNP15 and CNP16 of the Neighbourhood Plan.



4 Planning case

Principle of Development

- Policies DP25, CNP5 and CNP7: The proposals ensure the existing Public House use is retained, and its viability will not be impacted as a result of the proposals.
- Policy DP2: The proposed convenience store is of a sufficient size to serve the local community without impacting upon the prosperity of other services or local centres
- Policies DP6 and CNP2: The proposed development will see an efficient use being made of this underutilised site in a sustainable location within the settlement boundary.
- The principle of development for the proposed uses in this location is considered acceptable.

Impact on Character and Appearance of the area

- The proposed development has been carefully considered to ensure the character and appearance of the area is preserved.
- The design and appearance of the proposed convenience store responds to the local vernacular and ensures that the development will assimilate into the surrounding development.
- The amount of development proposed on the site ensures it does not appear overcrowded and as such matches the prevailing density of the area.
- Where possible, areas of soft landscaping have been incorporated into the proposals to soften the overall visual appearance.
- The proposals accord with Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan and Policies CNP1, CNP2 and CNP11 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Residential Amenity – Neighbouring Residents

- The proposed new development has been designed to preserve the amenity of neighbouring occupiers, especially with regards to the residential dwellings to the south and east of the site.
- The scale of the new store ensures that no overbearing impacts would occur.
- The design of the convenience store includes an acoustic fence in order to mitigate any potential impacts from the service area.
- The transport statement includes a delivery management plan to ensure that deliveries are undertaken in a neighbourly manner.
- The proposals accord with Policies DP26 and DP29 of the Mid Sussex District Plan and Policies CNP1 and CNP2 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Trees and Biodiversity

- BNG Credits will be purchased to achieve 10% BNG net gain.
- The submitted ecology report confirms that there will be no impact upon protected species.
- The proposal accords with Policies DP37 & DP38 of the Mid Sussex District Plan.

Parking and Highways

- The submitted Transport Statement sets out that the proposed development will not have a perceptible impact on highway movements and will not lead to highway safety concerns.
- A policy compliant level of car and cycle parking is proposed for all uses at the site.
- The proposals accord with Policy DP21 of the Mid Sussex District Plan and Policies CNP14, CNP15 and CNP16 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Waste and Recycling

- Appropriate bin storage will be provided within the site. It will meet all necessary policy requirements for capacity.

Conclusion

- As the proposal complies with the Development Plan and there are no material considerations which indicate that it should be determined otherwise, the applicant looks forward to receiving the support of Mid Sussex District Council for this application.