

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Incorporating a Heritage Statement

**Birch House, London Road, Balcombe,
Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH17 6HT**

Loft conversion with internal alterations

Document control	
Site address	Birch House, London Road, Balcombe, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH17 6HT
Local planning authority	Mid Sussex District Council
Application type	Householder application for planning permission
Existing use	Single dwellinghouse (Use Class C3)
Proposed use	Single dwellinghouse (Use Class C3) — no change of use
Designations	Balcombe Conservation Area; High Weald National Landscape (High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)
Project reference	2026-06-RH17

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Design and Access Statement is submitted by 1 Stop Design & Build on behalf of the applicant in support of a householder application for planning permission to Mid Sussex District Council.
- 1.2 The application site is Birch House, London Road, Balcombe, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH17 6HT ("the Site"), a detached two storey dwellinghouse in single family occupation within Use Class C3.
- 1.3 The development proposed is: **"Loft conversion with internal alterations."**
- 1.4 The Site lies within the Balcombe Conservation Area and within the High Weald National Landscape. This Statement is prepared in accordance with Article 9 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) and, because the Site lies within a designated area, explains how the design takes account of the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 1.5 This Statement also incorporates a Heritage Statement at Section 8, describing the significance of the heritage assets affected and assessing the effect of the proposals upon that significance, as required by national policy and by Policies DP34 and DP35 of the Mid Sussex District Plan.
- 1.6 The Statement is structured as follows. Section 2 describes the Site and the existing building. Section 3 assesses the heritage and landscape context. Section 4 sets out the policy framework. Section 5 describes the brief and the constraints and opportunities. Section 6 records the evaluation of design options. Section 7 describes the proposals under the design headings of use, amount, layout, scale, appearance and landscaping. Section 8 is the heritage assessment. Sections 9 to 13 address landscape, amenity, access, sustainability and other matters. Section 14 lists the submitted drawings and Section 15 concludes.

2. THE SITE AND THE EXISTING BUILDING

Location and setting

- 2.1 Birch House is a detached two storey dwellinghouse on London Road, Balcombe. Balcombe is a village in the northern part of Mid Sussex, approximately five miles north of Haywards Heath, sitting on a ridge between wooded valleys within the High Weald National Landscape. London Road (B2036) is one of the two principal routes through the village.
- 2.2 The Site occupies a well-established plot with mature boundary planting and generous garden ground to the rear. The dwelling is set back from London Road behind a driveway and integral garage. The wider street is characterised by large detached houses of varying ages and styles set in spacious gardens, with tree and hedge lined roads and grass verges, a pattern that gives this part of Balcombe its notably open and green character.

The building

- 2.3 Birch House is a substantial detached house of two storeys with a complex, multi-pitched roof incorporating a principal ridge, a projecting front gable with bay window and canopy, and subsidiary hipped and mono-pitched elements. Roof pitches on the existing building range from

5 degrees to 45 degrees, with the principal slopes at 40 degrees, as recorded on Drawing A-002. Two brick chimney stacks rise through the roof and are retained.

- 2.4 The dwelling has been extended and altered at ground floor level. A contemporary flat-roofed rear extension accommodates the 31 m² kitchen and dining room and is finished in vertical timber cladding with dark grey framed windows and doors and a large flush rooflight. This extension is a completed and established part of the building and sets the current material language of the rear elevation, as shown on Drawings A-003, A-005 and A-006.

- 2.5 The existing accommodation is as follows:

Level	Accommodation	Drawing reference
Ground floor	Kitchen / dining 31 m ² , playroom 13 m ² , living room 17 m ² , hallway 11 m ² , WC 1 m ² , integral garage 18 m ²	A-001
First floor	Three bedrooms (17 m ² , 13 m ² and 10 m ²), bathroom 5 m ² , landing 8 m ²	A-001
Roof space	Unconverted void of approximately 52 m ² on plan, in storage use only, with no fixed staircase and no habitable accommodation	A-002

- 2.6 The established floor levels, which are unchanged by the proposals, are: ground floor 0.200 m, upper ground floor 0.450 m, first floor 3.250 m, loft floor 6.030 m and roof ridge 9.440 m above the site datum.
- 2.7 The roof void is generous in plan and in height. The 3.410 m rise from loft floor level to ridge means the space is inherently capable of accommodating habitable rooms without any increase in the height of the building. It is presently a wholly under-used volume within an otherwise efficiently used family house.

3. HERITAGE AND LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

The Balcombe Conservation Area

- 3.1 The Site lies within the Balcombe Conservation Area. The Conservation Area covers both the historic core of the village at the crossroads, where the majority of the listed buildings are concentrated, and the later nineteenth and twentieth century southward expansion of the village along its principal roads.
- 3.2 The Council's published description of the Conservation Area identifies the following as the features which particularly contribute to its character:
- the attractive stone walling within the area;
 - the large detached houses, set predominantly in spacious gardens, and the extensive grass verges bordering wide roads, which contribute to the overall open character of the residential parts of the Conservation Area;

- the number of hedgerows and fine trees, both deciduous and evergreen, in the area.
- 3.3 Two points follow from this and are central to the assessment of these proposals. First, the significance of this part of the Conservation Area is derived principally from spatial and landscape characteristics — plot size, spacing between buildings, garden ground, boundary treatment, verges and tree cover — rather than from architectural uniformity. Second, the Council’s own description expressly recognises that the buildings here are of varying ages and styles. The Conservation Area does not depend for its significance on a repeated house type, a consistent roof form or a single material palette.
- 3.4 Birch House is not a listed building and is not identified as a non-designated heritage asset. It is a positive but unremarkable component of the Conservation Area, contributing to its character principally through its detached form, its generous plot, its set-back from the highway and its mature landscaped setting. Each of those attributes is entirely unaffected by the proposals.

The High Weald National Landscape

- 3.5 The Site lies within the High Weald National Landscape, formerly and still statutorily designated as the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, requires relevant authorities to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area.
- 3.6 The defining components of High Weald character, as set out in the High Weald National Landscape Management Plan, are geology and landform, ancient routeways, dispersed historic settlement, ancient woodland, and field and heath patterns. Vertical timber weatherboarding is a long-established building material of the Weald and is a characteristic feature of both vernacular and modern buildings across the designated landscape. The palette proposed here is drawn from that tradition rather than imported into it.

Planning history

- 3.7 The existing ground floor rear extension, finished in vertical timber cladding with dark grey glazing, has been constructed and forms part of the established fabric of the building. It is the immediate architectural context for the present proposals and the reference point for the material palette adopted.

4. PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that the application be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan comprises:
- the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014–2031, adopted 28 March 2018;
 - the Mid Sussex Site Allocations Development Plan Document, adopted 29 June 2022; and
 - the Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan 2015–2031, made 22 September 2016.
- 4.2 Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special attention be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. This is a statutory duty and is addressed directly at Section 8 below.

Policy / guidance	Relevance
District Plan Policy DP26 — Character and Design	Requires all development, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings, to be well designed and to reflect the distinctive character of the towns and villages while being sensitive to the countryside.
District Plan Policy DP34 — Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets	Requires heritage assets to be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.
District Plan Policy DP35 — Conservation Areas	Requires development within a conservation area to conserve or enhance its special character and appearance.
District Plan Policy DP37 — Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows	Requires the retention and protection of trees and hedgerows of amenity value.
District Plan Policy DP38 — Biodiversity	Requires the protection and enhancement of biodiversity.
District Plan Policy DP39 — Sustainable Design and Construction	Requires development to be designed and constructed to high environmental standards.
District Plan Policy DP41 — Flood Risk and Drainage	Requires surface water to be managed appropriately.
Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan 2015–2031 and its associated design guidance	Forms part of the development plan and carries full weight. Its design guidance seeks high quality development reflecting the local vernacular, using local materials including brick, sandstone, timber and clay tiles, and integrating with the High Weald National Landscape.
Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD	Adopted supplementary guidance and a material consideration, setting out detailed design principles for extensions and alterations, including within conservation areas.
High Weald National Landscape Management Plan	A material consideration, identifying the defining components of the designated landscape.
National Planning Policy Framework	Chapter 12 (Achieving well-designed places) and Chapter 16 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) are of direct relevance, together with the requirement that great weight be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets.
Emerging Mid Sussex District Plan 2021–2039	Submitted for examination in July 2024 and not yet adopted. It is a material consideration carrying limited weight at present.

5. THE BRIEF, CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The brief

- 5.1 The applicant's family has outgrown the first floor accommodation. Birch House presently provides three bedrooms and a single bathroom serving the whole house, together with a large unconverted roof void. The brief was to provide an additional bedroom with its own bathroom and a dedicated study, entirely within the existing envelope of the building, without extending the footprint, without losing garden ground, and without altering the appearance of the house as seen from London Road.

Constraints

- The Site lies within the Balcombe Conservation Area, engaging the statutory duty under section 72(1) of the 1990 Act and Policies DP34 and DP35.
- The Site lies within the High Weald National Landscape.
- The existing roof is complex, with several pitches and orientations, two chimney stacks and limited runs of unbroken slope.
- The first floor landing is compact, so the position of any new staircase is tightly constrained by the existing structure.
- The building is prominent in views from its own frontage, so any change visible from London Road required particular restraint.

Opportunities

- The roof void is large, at approximately 52 m² on plan, with a 3.410 m rise from loft floor to ridge — sufficient for full-height habitable rooms without raising the building.
- The rear roof slopes face away from London Road and are contained by the building itself and by mature boundary planting.
- The existing timber-clad ground floor rear extension has already established a coherent contemporary material language at the rear of the building, which a new intervention can extend rather than contradict.
- Vertical timber boarding is a material with deep roots in the Wealden building tradition, allowing a contemporary form to be delivered in a locally authentic material.
- Using the existing envelope avoids any loss of garden, any loss of trees, and any erosion of the spacious plot pattern which gives this part of the Conservation Area its character.

6. EVALUATION OF DESIGN OPTIONS

6.1 Four approaches were tested before the submitted scheme was settled upon.

Option	Description	Outcome
Option A — Rooflights only	Conversion of the roof space lit solely by rooflights within the existing slopes.	Rejected. The head height available beneath the existing slopes at the perimeter is insufficient to deliver usable rooms of the size required, and the resulting accommodation would fail to meet the brief. This option would deliver the least external change but would not deliver a workable conversion.
Option B — Two or three separate pitched dormers	A series of small pitched-roof dormers distributed across the rear slope.	Rejected. The existing roof has several changes of pitch and direction and limited unbroken slope. A series of small dormers would read as a scatter of unrelated additions on an already complex roof, adding visual clutter rather than order, and would still not deliver continuous usable floor area.
Option C — Raising the ridge or a hip to gable enlargement	Increasing the height or altering the principal roof profile to gain volume.	Rejected at the outset. Any increase in the height of the building or alteration of its principal roof profile would change the way the house is read within the Conservation Area and from London Road. It was ruled out as a matter of principle.
Option D — Single L-shaped dormer, contained below the existing ridge (the submitted scheme)	One coherent dormer element wrapping the rear and inner return of the roof, flat roofed, aligned to but not exceeding the existing ridge, finished in vertical timber cladding with dark grey glazing to match the existing ground floor rear extension.	Adopted. It delivers the accommodation required within the existing envelope, keeps the ridge height and the front elevation unchanged, resolves as a single deliberate element rather than a series of additions, and continues the material language already established at the rear of the building.

6.2 The governing design decision was to treat the intervention as one element rather than several. On a roof of this complexity, a single, calmly detailed volume in a recessive material reads more quietly than a collection of small traditional dormers competing with the existing pitches and stacks. The dormer is therefore designed as a distinct and legible contemporary layer, clearly of its own time, subordinate to the retained principal roof and confined to the elevations which face away from the public realm.

7. THE PROPOSALS

Use

- 7.1 The Site is and will remain a single dwellinghouse within Use Class C3. There is no change of use, no subdivision, no additional dwelling and no ancillary or commercial use. The new accommodation is served by the existing internal circulation, the existing single entrance and the existing services.

Amount

- 7.2 The proposals create approximately 37 m² of habitable accommodation within the existing roof space, comprising a bedroom of 19 m², a study of 9 m², a bathroom of 4 m² and a landing of 5 m². The dwelling moves from three bedrooms to four, with an additional study.
- 7.3 There is no increase in the footprint of the building. No garden ground is lost, no hardstanding is added and no part of the plot is developed that is not already built upon. The whole of the additional floorspace is won from a volume that already exists.

Layout

- 7.4 A new staircase rises from the existing first floor landing to a new loft landing, positioned to make use of the existing stair core so that the first floor rooms are not reconfigured beyond the immediate landing area. The three existing bedrooms and the existing family bathroom are retained unaltered in size and position.
- 7.5 At loft level, the bedroom occupies the rear of the plan where the dormer provides full head height and outlook over the applicant's own garden. The study occupies the return of the L, and the bathroom is placed against the internal wall where head height is lower and daylight requirements are least. An internal head height of 2.410 m is achieved throughout the habitable areas, as dimensioned on Drawing A-016.
- 7.6 The ground floor is unaltered. The garage, hallway, living room, playroom and kitchen/dining room are all retained in their existing form and position.

Scale

- 7.7 The scale of the building is unchanged in the terms that matter to the Conservation Area. The ridge remains at 9.440 m, exactly as existing. The eaves line is unchanged. The footprint is unchanged. The building continues to read as a two storey detached house of the same overall mass and the same relationship to its plot and to its neighbours.
- 7.8 The dormer has a face height of 2.560 m and is contained wholly within the existing roof volume, aligned to but never exceeding the existing ridge. It is set within the roof slope, not perched upon it, and does not extend beyond the eaves or the flank walls of the building at any point.

Parameter	Existing	Proposed
Number of dwellings	1	1 (no change)

Parameter	Existing	Proposed
Use class	C3	C3 (no change)
Footprint	As existing	No change
Ridge height	9.440 m	9.440 m (no change)
First floor level	3.250 m	No change
Loft floor level	6.030 m	No change
Front elevation	As existing	Unchanged save for three flush conservation rooflights
Bedrooms	3	4, plus a study
Bathrooms	1	2
Parking	Integral garage and driveway	Retained unaltered
Garden ground	As existing	Retained in full

Appearance and materials

- 7.9 The front elevation is preserved in its entirety. The gable, bay, canopy, fenestration pattern, chimneys and roofline that give Birch House its presence on London Road are all retained without alteration. The only change to the front roof slope is the introduction of three rooflights, which are conservation-profile units set flush within the plane of the roof with a slim black finish, so that they sit as dark voids within the tiled slope rather than as projecting features.
- 7.10 The dormer is finished in vertical timber cladding to match the existing ground floor rear extension, with windows and doors in dark grey to match the same. This is not an arbitrary choice. The rear of Birch House already reads as a contemporary timber and dark-glazed composition at ground floor level. Extending that language upward produces a rear elevation that is coherent and deliberate, in which the two contemporary interventions are legible as a single design idea against the retained traditional body of the house.
- 7.11 The choice of vertical timber boarding is also locally rooted. Weatherboarding is one of the characteristic building materials of the High Weald and appears throughout the villages of the designated landscape on buildings both historic and modern. Timber is expressly identified in Balcombe's own design guidance as a local material. The cladding will silver naturally over time to a soft grey, recessing further into the backdrop of mature boundary planting rather than standing out against it.
- 7.12 The dark grey glazing keeps the openings reading as shadow rather than as frames, which reduces the apparent bulk of the dormer face considerably compared with a white or light-coloured frame. The flat roof of the dormer is finished in a dark single-ply membrane, concealed behind the fascia and not visible from any ground level viewpoint.

Element	Specification
Dormer cladding	Vertical timber cladding, matched to the existing ground floor rear extension in species, board width, profile and fixing detail; left to weather naturally
Dormer windows and doors	Dark grey framed, matched to the existing ground floor rear extension in colour, profile and glazing pattern
Dormer roof	Dark single-ply membrane, laid to falls, concealed behind fascia and not visible from ground level
Rooflights	Conservation-profile rooflights with a slim black frame and central glazing bar, set flush within the plane of the roof slope
Retained roof covering	Existing tiles retained; any tiles disturbed by the works to be reinstated, with any shortfall made up in reclaimed tiles to match
Chimneys	Both existing stacks retained in full, unaltered in height, material or detail
Rainwater goods	To match the existing in material, profile and colour
Front elevation	Wholly unaltered

Landscaping

- 7.13 No landscaping works are proposed and none are required. All existing trees, hedges and boundary planting are retained in full. No tree is to be felled, pruned or otherwise affected, and no root protection area is encroached upon, because all works are confined to the roof of the existing building. The frontage, driveway, boundary treatment and garden are entirely unchanged. The proposals therefore have no effect at all on the trees, hedgerows and spacious garden settings which the Council identifies as central to the character of the Conservation Area.

8. HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

Significance

- 8.1 The heritage asset affected is the Balcombe Conservation Area, a designated heritage asset. Its significance in the vicinity of the Site is derived from the pattern of large detached houses of varying ages and styles set in spacious gardens; the stone walling, hedgerows, mature trees and grass verges; and the resulting open, green and spacious character of the residential parts of the village. Birch House contributes to that significance through its detached form, its plot, its set-back and its landscaped setting rather than through any particular architectural or historic interest of its own. It is neither listed nor identified as a non-designated heritage asset.

Assessment of effect

- 8.2 The proposals do not touch any of the attributes from which the significance of the Conservation Area is derived:

- the plot, its boundaries and its spacious garden setting are unchanged;
- the spacing between Birch House and its neighbours is unchanged;
- the set-back of the building from London Road is unchanged;
- all trees, hedges and boundary planting are retained;
- the footprint, height and mass of the building are unchanged;
- the front elevation, including its gable, bay, canopy, fenestration and both chimney stacks, is retained without alteration.

8.3 The dormer is located on roof slopes which face away from London Road. It is contained below the existing ridge, so the silhouette of the building against the sky — the aspect of a roof which registers most strongly in a conservation area streetscene — is unaltered. Views of the dormer from the public realm are limited by the building itself and by the mature boundary planting which is retained in full.

8.4 Where the dormer is seen, it is seen as a considered contemporary element in a locally characteristic material, related directly to the existing timber-clad ground floor extension beneath it. It does not imitate historic forms and does not create a false impression of age. National policy and good conservation practice both accept that new work within a conservation area may be of its own time, provided it is well designed and respects the character of its setting. That is what is proposed here.

8.5 The three rooflights to the front roof slope are the only change visible from London Road. Set flush within the plane of the roof, with slim black frames, they read as dark recesses within the tiled slope. Rooflights of this kind are a common and accepted feature of roofs in conservation areas and cause no harm to the character or appearance of the area.

Conclusion on heritage

8.6 The character and appearance of the Balcombe Conservation Area is preserved. The attributes that give the Conservation Area its significance are wholly unaffected, the public realm experience of the Site is essentially unchanged, and the one substantial intervention is confined to the private rear roofscape and expressed in a material drawn from the building tradition of the High Weald. The statutory duty under section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is discharged, and the proposals accord with Policies DP34 and DP35 of the District Plan.

8.7 No harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset arises. If, contrary to that assessment, the Council were to identify any harm, it would be at the lowest end of less than substantial, and it would be outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme: the retention and efficient use of an existing building within the Conservation Area, the avoidance of any pressure to extend into the garden ground and tree cover which give this part of the village its character, the substantial improvement in the thermal performance of the roof, and the delivery of family accommodation that allows an existing household to remain in the village.

9. HIGH WEALD NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

- 9.1 The proposals conserve the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape. There is no change to the footprint, height or silhouette of the building and therefore no change to its contribution to longer views across the landscape. No woodland, tree, hedgerow, field boundary or routeway is affected. No new built form is introduced into open land.
- 9.2 The proposals also further the purpose of the designation in a modest but real way. They meet a household's accommodation needs within an existing building rather than through new development in a sensitive landscape, they use a material rooted in the Wealden building tradition, and they improve the environmental performance of an existing dwelling. The duty under section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, as amended, is satisfied.

10. RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

- 10.1 The proposals have no material effect on the living conditions of any neighbouring occupier.
- 10.2 There is no increase in the height, footprint or mass of the building, so no additional overshadowing, loss of daylight or overbearing effect can arise. The dormer is contained within the existing roof volume and does not project beyond the eaves or the flank walls at any point.
- 10.3 The dormer windows face over the applicant's own rear garden, which is generous in depth and enclosed by mature planting. The outlook is across land within the applicant's ownership. Given the depth of the garden and the retained boundary vegetation, no material overlooking of any neighbouring habitable room window or private garden arises. The applicant would raise no objection to a condition requiring any flank-facing glazing to be obscure-glazed and non-opening below 1.7 m.
- 10.4 The proposals accord with Policy DP26 of the District Plan in respect of amenity.

11. ACCESS

Vehicular and transport access

- 11.1 The existing vehicular access from London Road is retained without alteration. Its position, width and visibility splays are unchanged and there is no highway safety implication.
- 11.2 The integral garage and the existing driveway are retained in full. No parking space is lost. The Site is within the built-up area of Balcombe, within walking distance of the village facilities and of Balcombe railway station on the London to Brighton main line, so the Site is well placed for travel by means other than the private car.

Inclusive access

- 11.3 The existing points of entry to the dwelling are retained unaltered, so the level and manner of access to the building is unchanged. The proposals neither improve nor prejudice access into the building at ground level.
- 11.4 Within the dwelling, the new staircase is designed to comply with Approved Document K in respect of going, rise, headroom, width and handrail provision. The new loft accommodation is

served by a bathroom on the same floor, so a household member using the top floor is not obliged to descend a flight to reach sanitary facilities. The existing ground floor WC is retained.

- 11.5 Doorway widths and circulation within the new accommodation are set out in accordance with Part M of the Building Regulations as it applies to work in an existing dwelling.

Emergency access and means of escape

- 11.6 Means of escape from the new third-storey accommodation will be provided in accordance with Approved Document B, by way of a protected stair enclosure from loft level to the final exit, with fire doors to habitable rooms opening onto the escape route and interlinked mains-powered smoke detection throughout. The existing vehicular access affords unaltered access for emergency vehicles.

Refuse and servicing

- 11.7 Existing refuse storage and collection arrangements are unchanged and remain adequate for the dwelling.

12. SUSTAINABILITY AND CONSTRUCTION

- 12.1 The most sustainable form of development is the one that uses what already exists. These proposals create a bedroom, a study and a bathroom entirely within a volume that is already built, already roofed and already heated at its boundaries. No new foundations, no new external walls and no new roof structure over open ground are required.
- 12.2 Converting the roof space requires the roof to be insulated to current standards. The thermal performance of the roof plane will therefore improve substantially over the existing uninsulated or lightly insulated condition, reducing heat loss from the whole dwelling and lowering its energy demand and carbon emissions in use.
- 12.3 The works will be constructed in accordance with the Building Regulations in force at the time. Timber cladding is a low-embodied-carbon, renewable material which requires no chemical finish where left to weather naturally. Construction will be carried out from within the Site, and materials and plant will be stored within the Site frontage without obstruction of London Road.
- 12.4 The proposals accord with Policy DP39 of the District Plan.

13. OTHER MATTERS

Drainage and flood risk

- 13.1 There is no increase in roof area, in footprint or in impermeable surface. Surface water run-off is therefore unchanged and the existing drainage arrangements remain adequate. Rainwater goods disturbed by the works will be reinstated to match the existing. The proposals raise no flood risk issue and accord with Policy DP41.

Trees

- 13.2 No tree, hedge or area of boundary planting is affected. All works are confined to the roof of the existing building, and no excavation, scaffolding foundation or material storage will encroach upon the root protection area of any tree. The proposals accord with Policy DP37.

Biodiversity

- 13.3 Statutory biodiversity net gain does not apply to householder development. The applicant is nonetheless aware of the protection afforded to bats and their roosts under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and the works will be carried out in accordance with the applicant's obligations under that legislation. The proposals accord with Policy DP38.

Contamination, archaeology and ground conditions

- 13.4 The works involve no ground disturbance, no excavation and no change of level. No issue of contamination, archaeology or ground stability arises.

15. CONCLUSION

- 15.1 The proposals convert an existing, unused roof void at Birch House into a bedroom, study and bathroom, entirely within the existing envelope of the building.
- 15.2 In summary:
- There is no increase in footprint, no increase in ridge height, no loss of garden ground and no loss of trees or boundary planting. The plot pattern, spacing, set-back and landscaped setting which give this part of the Balcombe Conservation Area its character are entirely unaffected.
 - The front elevation and the roof silhouette are preserved without alteration. The only change visible from London Road is three flush conservation rooflights within the front roof slope.
 - The dormer is confined to roof slopes facing away from the public realm, contained below the existing ridge, and designed as a single coherent element rather than a scatter of competing additions on an already complex roof.
 - Its vertical timber cladding and dark grey glazing match the existing ground floor rear extension, producing a coherent contemporary rear elevation, and draw on weatherboarding, a material long established in the building tradition of the High Weald.
 - No material effect arises on the living conditions of any neighbouring occupier.
 - Access arrangements, parking and refuse provision are unchanged, and the internal works are designed to meet Approved Documents B, K and M.

- The proposals improve the thermal performance of the roof and meet a household's needs within an existing building rather than through new development in a designated landscape.
- 15.3 The character and appearance of the Balcombe Conservation Area is preserved, the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape is conserved, and the proposals accord with Policies DP26, DP34, DP35, DP37, DP38, DP39 and DP41 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, with the Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan, with the Mid Sussex Design Guide and with the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 15.4 There is no conflict with the development plan read as a whole and no material consideration which indicates that permission should be withheld. The Council is respectfully requested to grant planning permission.