

# **PLANNING STATEMENT**

## **Alteration of existing window opening and installation of external staircase**

Flat 5, Franklands Court  
Greenlands Drive  
Burgess Hill  
West Sussex RH15 0AS

August 2026

## 1. Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for the installation of an external metal staircase to the rear elevation of Franklands Court, together with the alteration of an existing living room window opening to form a glazed external access door.

The proposed staircase will provide direct access from Flat 5 to the rear communal gardens and terrace serving Franklands Court. It will also provide a substantially safer and more practical secondary means of egress from the flat than the existing arrangement.

The proposals have received consent in principle from Franklands Court Limited, the management/freehold company responsible for the building. A formal Licence to Alter is being prepared separately.

## 2. The Application Site

Franklands Court is a substantial historic building situated at Greenlands Drive, Burgess Hill, towards the southern boundary of the town. The building is now in residential use and comprises nine self-contained flats set within communal grounds.

The application relates to an existing window opening in its rear elevation and the area of communal garden immediately below and adjacent to that opening.

The rear elevation is finished predominantly in painted white render/brickwork and incorporates traditionally proportioned sash windows and a number of external rainwater pipes and other services. The ground immediately behind the building forms an established communal garden/terrace characterised by paving, planting, shrubs and numerous containers and planters, producing a mature and informal garden setting.

## 3. History and Development of Franklands Court

Franklands Court is understood to have originated in approximately the 17th century as a farmhouse. For more than two hundred years the farm was owned by the Marten family, with farmland extending from Keymer Road in the east to London Road in the west.

The arrival of the London & Brighton Railway in 1839 divided the farm into two parts. An occupation bridge was constructed across the railway to maintain access between the two parts of the holding, and that bridge survives today.

A major transformation took place in 1864, when the original two-storey farmhouse, approximately 40 feet by 20 feet, was substantially enlarged by the addition of two wings, transforming it into a mansion.

By 1910 the property was described as “The Hydro” and was occupied by the Weidhaus Hydropathic Institute, which had acquired the property in 1909. In 1911 it was sold to Southdowns Hydro Limited and subsequently became known as the Franklands Park Hotel. The company operated a successful hotel business from the premises until 1956.

In 1956 the mansion was converted into flats, establishing the residential use which continues today. The building survives as Franklands Court and remains in private residential ownership.

This history is relevant to the present proposal. Franklands Court is a building which has evolved considerably during its lifetime, from farmhouse to enlarged Victorian mansion, hydropathic establishment, hotel and finally residential apartments. The proposed works represent a modest and largely reversible intervention when viewed against that wider history of adaptation.

## 4. Heritage Status

Franklands Court is not a listed building and is not situated within a conservation area. Accordingly, the proposal does not affect a designated heritage asset and no listed building consent is required in connection with the works.

Nevertheless, the applicant recognises the considerable age, history and architectural interest of Franklands Court. These characteristics have therefore been treated as important design considerations in developing the proposal.

The proposed staircase represents a comparatively modest further adaptation of the building to meet the practical requirements of its continuing residential use. The design deliberately responds to the character of the building through the use of slender metalwork, simple vertical balustrading, an off-white finish which relates to the existing painted elevation, and decorative supports beneath the landing. These details give the structure the appearance of a traditionally influenced external stair or balcony rather than a utilitarian modern fire escape.

Its location on the rear elevation, together with its lightweight and largely reversible construction, further limits its effect upon the architectural character of Franklands Court. Although no statutory heritage designation applies to the site, the proposal has therefore been designed with appropriate regard to the age, history and established appearance of the building.

## 5. Existing Arrangement

The existing rear elevation serving Flat 5 contains a traditionally proportioned sash-style window at first-floor level. There is presently no conventional direct access from this room to the garden.

The external wall beneath the window forms part of the white-painted rear elevation. At ground level there is an existing door/opening elsewhere within the elevation together with rainwater goods, pipework and other service installations. The communal garden immediately adjoining the elevation contains substantial established planting which softens views of the lower portion of the building.

## 6. Proposed Development

The proposal comprises two related elements: alteration of the existing living room window opening and installation of an external metal staircase.

The existing window opening will be extended downwards to create a glazed external access door. The width and general vertical alignment of the existing opening will be retained, thereby avoiding the visual effect of creating an entirely new or disproportionately wide opening within the elevation. The proposed glazed door and adjoining glazing will incorporate glazing bars and proportions which respond to the traditional fenestration of the building.

A metal staircase will be installed immediately outside the new door. It will comprise an upper landing, metal balustrading, a descending stair flight, handrails, structural supports and columns, decorative metal brackets/detailing beneath the landing and a short lower section providing access to garden level. The metalwork is proposed to be finished in an off-white/light colour, visually relating it to the white-painted rear elevation.

## 7. Design Approach, Scale and Appearance

The design objective has been to provide a functional external staircase without introducing an unduly heavy, utilitarian or industrial-looking structure onto the historic building.

The staircase has relatively slender balusters, handrails and supports, allowing the existing elevation to remain visually legible through the structure. Particular attention has been paid to the treatment of the upper landing. The decorative brackets and traditionally detailed supports shown in the proposal give the structure a character more closely associated with a traditional external balcony or veranda than with a modern commercial fire escape.

The staircase is modest in scale when considered in the context of the substantial three-storey rear elevation of Franklands Court. Its height is dictated by the existing first-floor opening and the level of the communal garden. The upper landing is limited to the dimensions reasonably necessary to provide safe access between the proposed door and stair flight.

The proposal does not involve an extension of the building's accommodation or the creation of additional floorspace. It is an open structure through which the existing building remains visible. The visual mass of the proposal is consequently substantially less than would arise from a conventional enclosed extension or projecting built form.

## **8. Effect on Character and Appearance**

The proposal affects the rear elevation rather than a principal public-facing façade. The works do not alter the overall height, roof form, massing or silhouette of Franklands Court.

The existing window opening establishes the position and width of the proposed doorway, meaning that the alteration to the masonry elevation itself is relatively limited. The staircase is an open, lightweight structure and will be painted to relate to the colour of the building. It therefore avoids the visual bulk that would result from an enclosed stair tower or other substantial addition.

For these reasons, the proposal is considered to respect the architectural character of Franklands Court while remaining readily identifiable as a later, functional intervention.

## **9. Views from Franklands Way**

The applicant has specifically considered the potential visual effect of the proposal from Franklands Way. Existing and proposed long-distance visualisations can be found in Appendix A.

From Franklands Way, Franklands Court is seen beyond the neighbouring residential development. The foreground is dominated by single-storey bungalows, garages/outbuildings, boundary fencing and substantial garden vegetation.

The proposed staircase occupies only a small part of the distant rear elevation. The before-and-after views demonstrate that, although the upper landing and part of the staircase may be discernible from certain positions, the structure does not materially alter the overall appearance or silhouette of Franklands Court. Its light colour visually relates to the white elevation and its open construction considerably reduces its apparent mass.

The structure is also viewed against, rather than above, the substantial rear elevation of Franklands Court. Accordingly, the proposal will not become a prominent or intrusive feature within the wider street scene.

## **10. Relationship with 7 Franklands Way and Residential Amenity**

Particular consideration has been given to the neighbouring bungalow at 7 Franklands Way, being the residential property closest to the application site.

The proposed staircase is situated against the rear elevation of Franklands Court and is separated from 7 Franklands Way by the existing communal garden, boundary treatments and a substantial belt of mature trees, shrubs and other established vegetation.

Photographs in Appendix A have been taken from the existing Flat 5 window which is proposed to be converted into the new access door, looking directly towards 7 Franklands Way. These provide a representative indication of the outlook which would be available from the proposed doorway and upper staircase landing.

The photographs demonstrate that there is a high degree of existing natural screening between Flat 5 and the neighbouring property. The intervening garden contains substantial mature evergreen and deciduous vegetation, including tall hedging, trees and dense shrubs. This vegetation considerably filters and, at lower levels, largely obscures views towards the bungalow and its associated private garden areas.

Although parts of the roof and more distant elements of the neighbouring development can be seen above and between the vegetation, there is no clear or open outlook directly into the principal private areas immediately associated with 7 Franklands Way. The established landscaping therefore provides an effective visual buffer between the application site and the neighbouring dwelling.

This is an important characteristic of the existing relationship between the properties. The proposed works will not create an entirely new elevated viewpoint: the existing first-floor window already provides an outlook from essentially the same position and height towards Franklands Way. Converting that opening into a door and providing an external landing will therefore not introduce overlooking from a previously unobserved part of the building.

The submitted photographs provide particularly clear evidence of the degree of screening which already exists and demonstrate that the established landscaped setting is capable of accommodating the proposed staircase without causing material harm to neighbouring residential amenity.

Accordingly, the proposal is considered to maintain an acceptable relationship with 7 Franklands Way and other neighbouring residential properties.

## **11. Landscaping and Communal Garden**

The staircase has been positioned so that it integrates with the existing communal garden arrangement as far as practicable. The open construction allows planting to remain visually prominent around and beneath the staircase.

Existing planting will continue to soften views of the structure, particularly from ground level and more distant viewpoints. Any temporary disturbance to paving, planting or garden surfaces arising during construction will be made good following completion.

The formal Licence to Alter also requires protection of the communal areas during the works and the making good of any damage caused to landscaping, paving, walls, drainage or services. The proposal will therefore preserve the general landscaped character and continued communal use of the rear garden.

## **12. Access**

A principal benefit of the proposal is the creation of a practical direct connection between Flat 5 and the communal garden. At present there is no conventional direct external access from the living accommodation concerned.

The proposed door, landing and staircase provide a clear and straightforward pedestrian route from the flat to garden level. The staircase will incorporate appropriate handrails, guarding, landings and structural support and will be designed and constructed in accordance with the applicable Building Regulations and structural requirements. The detailed structural design will be undertaken by appropriately qualified persons.

The proposal does not alter vehicular access, parking arrangements or access to Franklands Court from the public highway.

### **13. Fire Safety and Secondary Egress**

Although the application is principally for the physical alteration to the building and the provision of garden access, the proposal also has an important secondary benefit in relation to means of egress from Flat 5.

A Community Fire Safety Officer from West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service attended Flat 5 on 12th August 2026 and noted that the existing secondary escape arrangement, involving escape through a small window at the top of the stairs, was considered unsuitable because of health and safety concerns and that a safer second exit through a converted living room window would be desirable, subject to appropriate plans and approvals.

The proposed staircase therefore provides not merely an amenity improvement but a substantially more conventional and practical external route from the flat. The applicant recognises that planning permission does not itself establish compliance with Building Regulations or fire-safety requirements. The staircase and altered opening will therefore be subject to the necessary separate technical approvals.

### **14. Management and Maintenance**

Franklands Court Limited has agreed in principle to the proposed works, subject to the completion of the appropriate formal documentation.

Under the proposed arrangements, responsibility for the staircase, landing, balustrades, handrails, structural supports, fixings, access door and protective finishes will rest with the leaseholders of Flat 5. The staircase will therefore be subject to an identifiable continuing maintenance responsibility rather than becoming an unmanaged addition to the communal building.

The Licence also provides for access by Franklands Court Limited for inspection where reasonably necessary and requires the works to be kept in good repair, condition and appearance.

### **15. Planning Policy Context**

The application should be determined in accordance with the statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The principal development plan documents relevant to the proposal are the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014–2031 and the Burgess Hill Neighbourhood Plan 2015–2031. The National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026) and the Mid Sussex Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document are also material considerations.

At national level, Policy DP3 of the National Planning Policy Framework – Key Principles for Well-Designed Places requires development proposals to respond to their context, including the history, character and features of the site and its setting, so that they integrate appropriately with their surroundings. It identifies, amongst other matters, the importance of built form, identity, landscaping and

the use of materials and architectural features in creating visually attractive and characterful development.

The proposed development responds positively to these principles. The staircase is positioned on a secondary rear elevation and has been deliberately designed as an open and visually lightweight structure rather than an enclosed stair tower. Its slender metalwork, simple vertical balustrading, off-white finish and decorative support details have been selected to relate sympathetically to the scale, colouring and established architectural character of Franklands Court. The existing window opening determines the position and width of the proposed doorway, thereby limiting the extent of alteration to the building fabric. The overall height, roof form, massing and silhouette of Franklands Court remain unaffected.

At local level, particular regard has been had to Policy DP26 – Character and Design of the Mid Sussex District Plan. DP26 requires alterations and extensions to existing buildings to be well designed, to address the character and scale of surrounding buildings and landscape, to protect valued townscapes, trees and gardens, and not to cause significant harm to the amenities of nearby residents, including through effects upon privacy and outlook.

The proposal is considered to accord with these requirements. The staircase is subordinate in scale to the substantial three-storey host building and its open construction allows the existing elevation to remain readily legible through it. Its location at the rear of the building, combined with the retained mature garden setting, substantially limits its prominence in wider views. The submitted visualisations demonstrate that the staircase would occupy only a small proportion of the distant elevation when viewed from Franklands Way and would not materially alter the overall character or silhouette of the building.

The residential amenity requirements of Policy DP26 have also informed the design. The proposed landing does not introduce an entirely new elevated viewpoint towards neighbouring properties: the existing first-floor window already provides an outlook from substantially the same position and level. In addition, the substantial intervening distance, boundary treatments and mature trees, hedges and shrubs between Franklands Court and 7 Franklands Way provide a significant degree of existing visual screening. The proposal would therefore retain the existing relationship between the properties without introducing a materially greater degree of overlooking or loss of privacy.

The proposals are also consistent with the principles of the Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD, which supplements Policy DP26 and seeks development that responds appropriately to its local context, respects the character of existing buildings and safeguards neighbouring amenity. The Design Guide expressly applies not only to larger schemes but also to smaller-scale alterations, extensions and building conversions and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Policy DP37 – Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows is also relevant insofar as the mature vegetation within the communal garden makes an important contribution to the setting of the building and provides visual screening. The proposal does not depend upon the removal of the established belt of trees and shrubs which separates Franklands Court from neighbouring development. The retention of this landscaping is consistent with the policy objective of protecting trees and vegetation which contribute to local character and visual amenity.

The Burgess Hill Neighbourhood Plan similarly seeks to improve the residential environment and promote sustainable, well-designed development which takes account of the character and amenity of the local area. Franklands Court is not identified within the Neighbourhood Plan as one of the specifically designated Areas of Townscape Value under Policy H3, but the proposal nevertheless responds to the Plan's wider objectives by respecting the established character of the building and its landscaped residential setting.

Taken as a whole, the proposal represents a modest and largely reversible alteration to an existing residential building. It preserves the architectural legibility and overall form of Franklands Court, maintains the landscaped character of the communal garden, safeguards neighbouring residential amenity and has only a limited effect upon wider public views. At the same time, it provides a practical direct connection between Flat 5 and the communal gardens and a substantially safer and more conventional secondary means of egress.

The applicant therefore considers that the proposal accords with the relevant design, character and residential amenity provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy DP26 and Policy DP37 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, the Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD and the relevant objectives of the Burgess Hill Neighbourhood Plan.

## **16. Reversibility**

An additional benefit of the proposed design is its relative reversibility. Unlike a substantial masonry extension or enclosed stair tower, the staircase is principally a metal structure which could be removed if it ceased to be required.

The affected parts of the elevation could then be made good without fundamentally altering the overall form of Franklands Court. This reinforces the subordinate nature of the intervention and reduces its long-term effect upon the fabric and appearance of the building.

## **17. Planning and Heritage Conclusion**

Franklands Court is neither listed nor within a conservation area. The application therefore falls to be considered principally in terms of design, character, residential amenity and other relevant development-plan considerations rather than policies concerned with the preservation of designated heritage assets.

The historic interest of the building nevertheless forms part of the context within which the proposal has been designed. The proposed staircase responds appropriately to that context. It is located on a secondary rear elevation, is modest in scale relative to the substantial host building, employs an open and visually lightweight construction and incorporates a colour and decorative treatment sympathetic to the existing elevation.

The proposal does not alter the building's roofline, overall massing or principal architectural form and is substantially reversible. It therefore enables the building to accommodate a practical modern residential requirement without materially diminishing its established character or appearance.

The relationship with the nearest neighbouring dwelling, 7 Franklands Way, has been carefully considered. Given the physical separation, intervening landscaping and limited circulation function of the staircase and landing, the proposal is not considered to give rise to unacceptable overlooking or loss of residential amenity.

The development will provide a useful direct connection between Flat 5 and the communal gardens and, importantly, a substantially safer and more practical secondary route of egress than the existing arrangement.

The proposal represents an appropriate adaptation of an existing residential building which responds sensitively to its architectural and historic character while providing a clear functional and safety benefit to the occupants of Flat 5. It is therefore respectfully submitted that planning permission should be granted.

## Appendix A - Photographic Illustrations



*Existing rear elevation*



*Proposed arrangement*



*Existing view from Franklands Way*



*Proposed view from Franklands Way*



*Existing view from window towards 7 Franklands Way*



*Existing view from window towards 7 Franklands Way*