

**MJP
PLANNING**

**TONY ROBINSON
FALCON PARK, RH10 4XF**

Storage and distribution use of
Buildings A and B (Class B8),
associated external alterations,
demolition of Building C, and
construction of a replacement single
storey office building (Class E)

PLANNING STATEMENT



1.0 Introduction

1.1 This planning statement has been prepared by MJP Planning on behalf of Tony Robinson (“the applicant”). The applicant is proposing storage and distribution use of Buildings A and B (Class B8), associated external alterations, demolition of Building C, and construction of a replacement single storey office building (Class E) at Falcon Park, Hophurst Lane, Crawley Down, RH10 4XF (“the site”).

1.2 Full planning permission is sought for (“the proposal”):

“Use of Buildings A and B for storage and distribution (Class B8) along with external alterations to include a single storey front extension to Building A to create a lobby area, recladding, new windows and loading bays, demolition of Building C and construction of a replacement single storey office building (Class E).”

1.3 The principle of redevelopment and refurbishment of this currently vacant, underutilised brownfield employment site is strongly supported by planning policy. Policies DP1 and CDNP07 actively encourages the protection, intensification and upgrading of existing employment land, and the proposals respond directly to this objective by retaining the site in employment use and delivering modernised Class B8 floorspace through the reuse and improvement of the existing buildings. This investment will significantly enhance the attractiveness, functionality, appearance and long term viability of a site that is currently in poor condition. The proposals are also consistent with Policy DP12 as the development is confined to an established and enclosed employment site, with no encroachment into the surrounding countryside.

1.4 The application is supported by a suite of supporting documents, which should be read in conjunction with this planning statement. The full submission comprises the following:

- Plans Pack, by Matthew Allchurch Architects
- Design and Access Statement, by Matthew Allchurch Architects
- Energy Statement, by SRE

1.5 This statement is structured as follows:

- **Section 2** - describes the site and its surroundings, the planning history and pre-application engagement;
- **Section 3** - details of proposed development;
- **Section 4** - highlights the national, local planning policy and guidance relevant to the determination of the application;
- **Section 5** - assesses the proposed development against the relevant policies of the Development Plan and considers the planning balance case; and
- **Section 6** - provides a conclusion outlining the benefits of the proposal in the context of planning policy.



2.0 Site Context and Planning History

Site Context

- 2.1 Falcon Park is located on the edge of Crawley Down along Hophurst Lane and extends to approximately 0.75 hectares. The site comprises a collection of existing commercial and employment buildings, and former ancillary structures. Vehicular and pedestrian access is taken from Hophurst Lane, which connects Crawley Down with Felbridge. The site is currently vacant but benefits from an established lawful use for office, and storage and distribution, reflecting its historic role as a training and operational facility associated with the aviation industry. The site currently contains two portal frame buildings to be maintained and utilised with minimal interventions, and a handful of small decrepit outbuildings. The two larger buildings form a double height warehouse connected to a single storey building on the south west corner. There are areas of hardstanding used for parking and servicing, and mature trees and vegetation around the perimeter providing a strong sense of enclosure.
- 2.2 The surrounding area is characterised by a mixed context, combining residential development to the south of Hophurst Lane with commercial and light industrial uses in the immediate vicinity at Parkfields Farm.
- 2.3 In planning policy terms, the site lies outside the defined settlement boundary of Crawley Down, located approximately 200 metres away to the southwest, and is therefore designated as countryside. The adopted policy map shows that the site lies within an area identified for the protection and enhancement of the countryside and is located within the Ashdown Forest 7km zone of influence. These designations recognise the wider landscape sensitivity of the area and the need for development to be carefully managed. Notwithstanding this, Falcon Park is a previously developed site with a long established commercial character, and its redevelopment is capable of being supported where it maintains or enhances rural character, reuses existing buildings and delivers visual, landscape and economic benefits in accordance with adopted planning policy.
- 2.4 The site is located within Flood Zone 1. It is not located within a conservation area and there are no listed buildings onsite, or in close proximity.
- 2.5 Public transport accessibility is provided via nearby bus stops along Hophurst Lane.

Planning History

- 2.6 Falcon Park has a detailed planning history, including various consents from the late 1980s through to the mid-2000s for office, laboratory, storage and training uses. Below shows the existing layout of the site. The buildings are categorised Building A, Building B and Building C to reflect the plans that accompany the application.
- 2.7 Two permissions are particularly relevant: the 1997 consent (ref: WP/091/97), which formalised use of the site in connection with an aviation business, and the 2007 permission (ref: 07/00504/FUL), which introduced Building A and reaffirmed restrictions on the rest of the site. The 1997 consent allowed for demolition of older buildings, reconfiguration of parking, and reuse of the storage and office buildings. However, it placed clear limitations on what could take place in each part of the site. Conditions 10 and 11 stated:

Condition 10:

“The storage building adjoining the offices shall only be used for purposes ancillary to the office and training uses to be undertaken on the site and shall be limited to paper, archives and goods associated with the aviation business. There shall be no deliveries to and from the building or movement of stored goods within the site other than between the hours of 07.00 hours and 20.00 hours Monday – Friday and 08.30 hours and 13.00 hours on Saturdays.”



Reason: To comply with the terms of the submitted application, for the avoidance of doubt and to ensure no general B8 use is carried on at this site which is located in a sensitive rural area and adjacent to a residential property."

Condition 11:

"The existing office building shall only be used for the purposes specified in the application and for no other purposes without the prior permission of the Local Planning Authority."

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure the uses undertaken do not harm the amenities of the adjacent residential property."

- 2.8 These conditions are important in clarifying the lawful use of the site. The western building now proposed for demolition (Building C) appears to have only been permitted for ancillary storage related to the aviation business, rather than for general B8 use. The existing office building (Building B) was specifically tied to an office function associated with the aviation business as set out in the original application, and therefore does not appear to benefit from general or unrestricted office use.
- 2.9 In 2007, planning permission was granted to redevelop part of the site with a new storage building (Building A). This introduced a new B8 use for that part of the site, but again the Council imposed tight controls on the rest of the land. Condition 18 of the 2007 permission confirmed:
- "The existing buildings on the site (excluding the building the subject of this application) shall only be used in association with the existing aviation business on the site or as offices ancillary to the adjacent storage unit and for no other purpose."*
- 2.10 The committee report accompanying this decision explicitly refers to *"the existing use (B1) permits only ancillary storage in the rabbit shed"*, further clarifying the restricted lawful use of the wider site.
- 2.11 Taken together, these historic permissions suggest the following:
- Building A (erected under the 2007 permission) benefits from an unrestricted B8 storage use.
 - Building B (office building) is tied to aviation related use.
 - Building C was only permitted for ancillary storage or used in to association with aviation-related.
- 2.12 The 2007 permission was also restrictive on permitted development rights, ensuring that the Council had control with regard to specific future works at the site:
- "Condition 12. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 or as amended in the future, no extension or alteration of the building including the insertion of a mezzanine floor shall be carried out without the specific grant of planning permission from the Local Planning Authority.*
- Condition 13. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 or as amended in the future, no hardsurfacing (other than that shown on the plans hereby approved) shall be created on the application site without the specific grant of planning permission from the Local Planning Authority.*
- Condition 14. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 or as amended in the future, no further plant or machinery shall be erected on site without the specific grant of planning permission from the Local Planning Authority."*
- 2.13 The proposal has been informed by the site's detailed planning history to ensure the description accurately reflects the lawful use and established restrictions across the site.
- 2.14 A breakdown of the planning history of the site is outlined below:



Reference	Description	Decision/Date
08/02384/FUL	Retention of the existing simulator in its current position and also retention of the existing associated Training Building together with revisions to the surfacing of the existing car park. Amendments to scheme as approved under 07/00504/FUL.	Approved 27 August 2008
08/02305/FUL	Installation of Sweet Chestnut Cladding to front elevation only of the existing office building (to match the cladding on the new internet store) and addition of new curved polycarbonate glazed projecting canopy to proposed internet store (approved under ref: WP/07/504/FUL)	Approved 27 August 2008
07/00504/FUL	Demolition of existing former rabbit timber shed and proposed erection of single storey internet goods storage unit, linked to existing two storey office building. Additional supporting information (Stage 1 Safety Audit) received 4 th June 2006.	Approved 6 August 2007
03/00751/FUL	Installation of outside duct.	Approved 14 July 2003
WP/091/99	Part of aircraft fuselage to be used as a training simulator.	Approved 6 August 1999
WP/091/97	Proposed demolition of existing rabbit buildings and portakabin; external alterations to main office building; use of existing storage building for storage of goods associated with the aviation business and reinstatement of unrestricted working hours.	Approved 26 September 1997
WP/089/96	Lawful development certificate: application seeking confirmation that the use of the whole building for office use with standard office equipment to be installed (computers, typewriters etc), the office hours likely to be 0700 – 1900 hours Monday – Friday, is lawful.	Approved 17 December 1996
WP/064/94	Outline application: replacement of 5 no. Redundant rabbitry buildings with building of equivalent area, but with more stringent environmental standards.	Approved 01 Aug 1994
WP/130/76	Erection of mobile home for farm manager.	Approved 16 November 1976



3.0 Proposed Development

3.1 The section is intended to be a high-level summary of the proposal and should be read in conjunction with the detailed assessment set out within the submitted DAS.

3.2 The proposed description of development is:

“Use of Buildings A and B for storage and distribution (Class B8) along with external alterations to include a single storey front extension to Building A to create a lobby area, recladding, new windows and loading bays, demolition of Building C and construction of a replacement single storey office building (Class E).”

3.3 A breakdown of the proposal is provided below:

Building	Existing Area (sq.m)	Existing Use	Proposed Area (sq.m)	Proposed Use
Building A	629	Storage (Use Class B8)	629	Storage (Use Class B8)
Building B (including mezzanine level)	891	Office (Restricted Use Class E)	623	Storage (Use Class B8)
Building C (to be demolished)	175	Print area (Restricted Storage B8)	201	Office (Use Class E)
Lobby	-	-	33	Ancillary space associated with the proposed uses.
Total	1,695		1,486	

Layout

3.4 The proposal retains the existing vehicular and pedestrian access arrangements from Hophurst Lane, ensuring continuity with the established movement patterns to and from the site. The majority of the existing building fabric is retained, with the proposed development maintaining a footprint and scale that closely reflects the existing built form. This approach ensures the development remains proportionate and in keeping with the character, scale and density of the surrounding area.

3.5 Car parking provision is largely retained in its current configuration, with no material change to layout or capacity. This allows the site to continue to function efficiently while incorporating high quality soft and hard landscaping across the site. Existing trees around the perimeter and within the car park are retained, providing effective screening, reinforcing site security, and contributing positively to the overall landscape setting.

3.6 Internally, the scheme retains and enhances Buildings A and B, with the erection of a new office and lobby extension attached. This new lobby will act as a reception, providing a clear and legible main pedestrian entrance and serves both sides of the warehouse, improving circulation and wayfinding within the building.

3.7 Building A continues to operate as a Class B8 storage facility, with pedestrian and vehicular access provided via bifold doors to the front of Buildings A and B and a roller shutter door on the western



elevation of Building B. The existing external fire escapes are to be located on the east and west elevations of the building, providing an appropriate means of escape.

- 3.8 The first floor mezzanine level is accessed via a centrally located lift and staircase, ensuring inclusive access throughout the building. The mezzanine is set at a height that allows sufficient headroom for vehicles entering from the front and side access points. Building A and the rear portion of Building B retain a double height space, exposing the existing timber and concrete structural frames and reinforcing the utilitarian warehouse character of the building.

Scale and Massing

- 3.9 The scale and massing of the proposed development have been carefully informed by the form and arrangement of the existing buildings on site. The overall footprint and bulk of the warehouse buildings are retained, with the development structured around the two principal building masses connected by lower, single storey elements (Building C and the lobby). This approach ensures that the proposal remains consistent with the established built form and avoids the introduction of excessive or visually dominant development.
- 3.10 Building C is to be removed and replaced with a new office and reception element of a similar footprint and scale. The replacement building is deliberately modest in height and massing, ensuring that it sits comfortably alongside Buildings A and B and does not compete with the primary warehouse form. Its positioning reinforces the hierarchy of built elements on the site, with the larger warehouse volumes remaining the principal buildings.

External Appearance

- 3.11 The external appearance of the proposed development is centred on a clear and cohesive design approach that significantly enhances the quality and appearance of the existing buildings. The warehouse buildings are to be fully re-clad, transforming their external presentation and establishing a consistent and high quality architectural language across the site. The existing roofs are to remain and enhanced, if needed.
- 3.12 A carefully selected palette of materials is used to unify the development, combining contemporary detailing with references to traditional agricultural forms. The new office extension and reception incorporate a zinc flat roof, chosen for its durability, longevity and subtle finish, allowing the building to sit comfortably within its rural edge setting. Dark grey charred timber cladding is introduced to key elevations, adding texture and visual depth while providing a modern interpretation of vernacular materials. Glazed elements are used selectively to emphasise entrances and animate the elevations, without detracting from the robust character of the warehouse buildings.

Landscaping

- 3.13 The landscape strategy for the site is deliberately restrained and proportionate at this stage, reflecting the established and enclosed nature of the site. The proposals retain the majority of existing hardstanding and car parking areas, ensuring the site continues to function efficiently for its operational use without introducing unnecessary change.
- 3.14 Existing trees and vegetation along the site boundaries and within the car park are retained, maintaining established screening, visual containment and a clear site edge. This approach helps to soften views of the development, reinforce the rural edge setting and preserve the site's existing character. Where necessary, minor localised landscaping works will be undertaken to support the improved appearance of the site and complement the upgraded buildings, without altering the overall landscape structure. New paving and upgrades where needed are also proposed.



Access and Parking

- 3.15 Vehicular and pedestrian access to the site is taken from Hophurst Lane via the existing access point, which is retained as part of the proposals. No changes are proposed to the access arrangement, ensuring continuity with the established pattern of movement to and from the site.
- 3.16 The proposed site plan confirms that the number and location of parking is broadly the same with 31 parking spaces (including three accessible bays). Spaces are located in close proximity to the buildings and are supported by clear pedestrian routes between parking areas and entrances. A cycle shelter providing 10 spaces has been proposed close to the site entrance.

Refuse and servicing

- 3.17 Servicing and delivery activity will to be accommodated wholly within the site, ensuring that vehicle movements remain contained and do not adversely affect the surrounding highway network.

Sustainability

- 3.18 The proposals have been developed with sustainability as a key consideration, focusing on practical measures that deliver long term environmental benefits. The reuse and refurbishment of the existing buildings form an important part of this approach, significantly reducing embodied carbon when compared to wholesale redevelopment.
- 3.19 Photovoltaic panels are proposed on the roof of the buildings, enabling the generation of renewable energy on site. This will reduce reliance on grid supplied electricity and contribute to lower operational carbon emissions over the lifetime of the development. The flat and shallow pitched roof forms are well suited to accommodate PV panels without affecting the appearance of the buildings or their relationship with the surrounding area.
- 3.20 In addition, the proposals include upgraded building materials, which provide opportunities to improve thermal performance and energy efficiency. Taken together, these measures demonstrate a proportionate and positive response to sustainability objectives, supporting the delivery of a more efficient and resilient commercial development.



4.0 Planning Policy Context

- 4.1 The proposals have taken account of the relevant national and local planning policies that form the statutory and material context for this application. This section provides a summary of the planning framework relevant to the assessment of the development and preparation of this planning statement.
- 4.2 In accordance with Section 38(6) of The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Development Plan

- 4.3 For the purposes of this application, the relevant adopted development plan comprises the following documents:
- Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 (adopted March 2018)
 - Sussex Local Plan 2004 (saved Local Plan policies) (adopted May 2004)
 - Site Allocations Development Plan Document (adopted June 2022)
 - Crawley Down Neighbourhood Plan (adopted January 2016)
- 4.4 A summary of most relevant policies is detailed below:
- DP1: Sustainable Economic Development
 - DP2: Town centre development
 - DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside
 - DP13: Preventing Coalescence
 - DP14: Sustainable Rural Development and the Rural Economy
 - DP17: Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
 - DP26: Character and Design
 - CDNP01: Securing Sustainable Local Infrastructure
 - CDNP07: Retention of Existing Employment Sites and the Use of Vernacular Buildings
 - CDNP08: Prevention of Coalescence
 - DP6: Settlement Hierarchy
 - DP20: Securing Infrastructure
 - DP21: Transport
 - DP28: Accessibility
 - DP29: Noise, Air and Light Pollution
 - DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
 - DP38: Biodiversity
 - DP39: Sustainable Design and Construction
 - DP41: Flood Risk and Drainage
 - SA38: Air Quality
 - CDNP04.1: Building Extensions
 - CDNP06: Sustainable Drainage Systems
 - CDNP09: Protect and Enhance Biodiversity
 - CDNP10: Promoting Sustainable Transport

Emerging Local Plan

- 4.5 The Council is in the process of reviewing and updating its Local Plan. The new District Plan 2021–2039 will replace the currently adopted Plan. On 2 June 2025, the Inspector issued her findings following the Stage 1 Hearings held in October 2024. This outlined a failure to meet the Duty to Cooperate requirements, and subsequently recommended the Council to withdraw the Plan from examination. In response, the Council has launched a legal challenge against the Secretary of State after being advised by the Planning Inspectorate. In December 2025, a new Inspector, Jonathan Bore



MRTPI, was appointed to examine the Mid Sussex District Plan Review. The examination will restart under the transitional arrangements of the December 2024 NPPF, with new hearings programmed to commence from February 2026 and updated evidence requested from the Council. Given the position at this time, the emerging plan has limited weight in decision making. That said, the policies are outlined below to show the direction of future policy.

- 4.6 The emerging policies map shows the site designated as “*Proposed Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside*” (Policy DPC1).
- 4.7 Key emerging policies are set out below, many of which echo the adopted policy themes:
- DPS1: Climate Change
 - DPS2: Sustainable Design and Construction
 - DPS3: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Schemes
 - DPS4: Flood Risk and Drainage
 - DPN1: Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Nature Recovery
 - DPN2: Biodiversity Net Gain
 - DPN3: Green and Blue Infrastructure
 - DPN4: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
 - DPN6: Pollution
 - DPN7: Noise Impacts
 - DPN8: Light Impacts and Dark Skies
 - DPN9: Air Quality
 - DPC1: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside
 - DPC2: Preventing Coalescence
 - DPC6: Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC
 - DPB1: Character and Design
 - DPT1: Placemaking and Connectivity
 - DPT3: Active and Sustainable Travel
 - DPT4: Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure
 - DPE1: Sustainable Economic Development
 - DPE2: Existing Employment Sites
 - DPE8: Sustainable Rural Development and the Rural Economy

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.8 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was adopted in December 2024 and is a key material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The NPPF sets out the Government's objectives for achieving sustainable development.
- 4.9 The emerging draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was issued on 16 December 2025, alongside a formal public consultation running until 11.45pm on 10 March 2026. The consultation comprises various questions, reflecting the scale of what the government describes as the most significant rewrite of national planning policy in over a decade. The draft NPPF is accompanied by a Written Ministerial Statement and press release from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, which together set out the government's clear and deliberate policy direction. The government has stated that the revised Framework is intended to create a clearer, more predictable and faster planning system, moving away from one that has too often constrained development. The emphasis is firmly supporting sustainable, well-designed housing proposals that meet national standards.

Other Material considerations

- 4.10 Supplementary planning documents (SPDs) and guidance have been reviewed and considered in the preparation of the proposals. These include:
- National Planning Practice Guidance (various dates)



- National Design Guide, 2019

Mid Sussex Council's planning documents:

- Design Guide SPD
- Development Infrastructure and Contributions SPD
- Development Viability SPD
- Air Quality
- Parking Guidance
- Planning Noise Advice: Sussex
- Sustainable drainage systems



5.0 Considerations

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This section therefore assesses the proposal against the development plan policies outlined above and examines relevant material considerations where appropriate. The assessment draws upon the suite of application documents listed at Section 1 of this statement. The main planning considerations are:

- Principle of development;
- Design and landscape;
- Neighbouring amenity; and
- Transport and parking.

5.2 Other considerations also covered off in this section are:

- Flood risk;
- Biodiversity; and
- Sustainability and energy.

5.3 Each matter is considered below.

Principle of Development

5.4 Paragraph 85 of the National Planning Policy Framework places significant weight on the need for planning decisions to support economic growth and productivity and to create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Paragraph 88 further supports the sustainable growth and expansion of businesses in rural areas, including through the conversion and refurbishment of existing buildings. The proposed improvement and refurbishment of this established employment site responds directly to these objectives, supporting a prosperous rural economy and providing a mixed use offering, while respecting the character of the countryside.

5.5 The principle of the proposed development is strongly supported by the development plan and its associated evidence base. Policy DP1 seeks to promote a place where local enterprise thrives and where businesses are supported to invest, expand and adapt. The policy recognises the need to make effective use of existing employment land and to encourage high quality development that meets the needs of modern businesses, in order to support economic growth and deliver new jobs across the District. The site has a long established history as an employment location, as confirmed by its planning history, and forms part of the District's existing portfolio of employment land. However, the existing buildings and wider site are in a poor and dated condition, limiting their attractiveness, efficiency and suitability for contemporary business operations. The proposals provide a clear opportunity to reinvest in and upgrade a previously developed brownfield employment site, securing its continued use and enabling it to function more effectively in meeting modern operational requirements. This aligns directly with the objectives of Policy DP1 and with Policy CDNP07, which seeks to retain and enhance established employment sites within the rural area.

5.6 The approach is also supported by the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA), which forms part of the Council's evidence base for assessing land with the potential to support housing and economic development over the plan period. The SHELAA identifies and



assesses existing and potential employment sites in terms of their suitability, availability and achievability, recognising their role in meeting future economic needs. By reinvesting in and optimising an established employment site, the proposals align with the objectives of the SHELAA to make effective use of previously developed land and support the delivery of employment growth. Northern Growth Strategy (2014) advises the employment forecasts for Mid Sussex indicate a net increase across the B-use classes, including growth of approximately 4,020 jobs in office based employment and around 650 jobs in storage and distribution over the period to 2031. The Council's latest Authority Monitoring Report (2023/24)(December 2024) records a decrease in employment land delivered during the monitoring year, highlighting the importance of bringing existing and underutilised employment sites back into active and effective use to provide flexibility and resilience in the employment land supply, particularly where larger allocated sites may not come forward as anticipated. Furthermore, this evidence highlights the importance of safeguarding and making effective use of established employment land to accommodate changing business needs. The proposals respond positively to this context by intensifying Class B8 use on an existing out-of-centre employment site, where storage and distribution activity is most appropriately located, while reducing office floorspace. This ensures that employment growth is delivered in suitable locations, supports economic resilience, and aligns with both local and strategic economic objectives.

- 5.7 In accordance with Policy DP14, the proposals represent small scale economic development within the countryside that supports the vitality of the rural economy and makes effective use of a previously developed site. The development is also appropriate in countryside and coalescence terms. The proposals are confined entirely within the existing site and do not extend the developed area or encroach into open countryside. The enclosed nature of the site, together with the retention of existing, vegetation dense, boundaries and landscape features, ensures that the development does not contribute to ribbon development, settlement coalescence or an unacceptably urbanising effect. This accords with Policies DP12 and DP13, as well as Policy CDNP08, which collectively seek to protect countryside character and maintain the separation between settlements. The scheme therefore represents a sustainable form of rural employment development, making effective use of an underutilised brownfield site while safeguarding the character and identity of the surrounding area.
- 5.8 In relation to Policy DP2, the proposals include office accommodation, which can fall within the definition of a town centre use. However, the development results in a net reduction of office floorspace of approximately 690 sq.m when compared with the existing lawful position. In this context, a sequential test is not required, and the development does not conflict with the objectives of Policy DP2 or undermine the vitality and viability of nearby centres.
- 5.9 Overall, the proposals are acceptable in principle and represent a positive and sustainable redevelopment of an existing employment site, delivering economic, environmental and visual benefits in accordance with the development plan.

Design and Landscape

- 5.10 In accordance with the principles of Policy DP26 and Policy DP39, the proposed development has been carefully designed to respond positively to the character, form and appearance of the existing site and its wider rural edge context. The scheme is firmly grounded in an understanding of the established built form, retaining the overall footprint, scale and massing of the existing warehouse buildings and avoiding the introduction of visually dominant or incongruous development, in respect of new Building C and the lobby. The site is already enclosed and visually contained by existing buildings, boundary treatments and established vegetation, such that the proposals do not give rise to any material additional landscape or visual impact beyond the existing condition.



- 5.11 The layout and massing of the proposal are informed by the arrangement of the existing buildings, which are structured around two principal warehouse volumes connected by a lower scale element. This hierarchy is retained, with a replacement building for the new office area, and reception lobby element deliberately modest in height and footprint to ensure it remains clearly subordinate to the primary warehouse forms. The roof forms draw on shallow pitched and flat profiles that reflect the utilitarian and agricultural character of the site, ensuring the development maintains a low profile and sits comfortably within its setting.
- 5.12 The external appearance of the buildings is significantly enhanced through a coherent and high quality material palette. The existing warehouse buildings are to be fully reclad, creating a consistent architectural language across the site and improving the overall visual quality of the development. The existing roofs are to remain and enhanced, if needed. The introduction of zinc roofing and charred timber cladding to the new office and reception elements provides a contemporary yet restrained interpretation of traditional rural materials, adding texture and visual interest while remaining appropriate to the site's context. Selective use of glazing is employed to articulate entrances and improve legibility without undermining the robust character of the warehouse buildings. Design principles have been taken from the Design Guide SPD, particularly Principle DG44: Design of commercial buildings.
- 5.13 In sustainability terms, the proposals align with Policy DP39 by prioritising the reuse and upgrading of existing buildings, thereby reducing embodied carbon and making efficient use of previously developed land. The refurbishment works provide opportunities to improve thermal performance, while the incorporation of photovoltaic panels supports on site renewable energy generation and long term operational efficiency. The landscape approach, retaining existing vegetation and hardstanding, further reflects a proportionate and sustainable response to the site's established use.
- 5.14 Overall, the proposals deliver a clear enhancement to the appearance and functionality of the site, reinforcing local character, improving build quality and ensuring a sustainable form of development that fully accords with Policies DP26 and DP39 of the Adopted District Plan.

Neighbouring Amenity

- 5.15 In accordance with Policy DP29, the proposals are acceptable in neighbouring amenity terms, as the development is located on an established employment site, well separated from sensitive receptors, and will not give rise to unacceptable levels of noise, light or air pollution.
- 5.16 The site has a long established commercial use, including storage and distribution activities, and benefits from an existing lawful Class B8 use on part of the site. Historically, the site has operated in association with aviation, training and warehouse activities, generating a level of vehicle movement and day-to-day activity that is consistent with a commercial environment. The current proposals do not introduce a new or unfamiliar use, but rather represent an intensification and rationalisation of an existing B8 operation and reduction of office use, within an established commercial site.
- 5.17 The site is well separated from nearby residential properties, with no dwellings in close proximity. Existing boundary treatments, mature vegetation and the enclosed nature of the site provide a strong degree of screening, limiting opportunities for overlooking, noise or visual disturbance. The proposals retain this separation and include landscape and boundary improvements, further strengthening screening and helping to soften views of the development within its surroundings.
- 5.18 As the development is focused on the reuse and enhancement of existing buildings, with no significant increase in overall scale or outward expansion of activity, the proposals are not expected to give rise to



any material adverse impacts on neighbouring amenity. Overall, the scheme is considered appropriate for its location and capable of operating without detriment to the living conditions of nearby occupiers.

Highways and Parking

- 5.19 Local Policy DP21 seeks to ensure that development is supported by appropriate transport infrastructure, promotes safe and efficient movement, and avoids severe impacts on the local and strategic highway network. The proposal has been assessed against these requirements, having regard to the site context, existing lawful uses, and the nature of the development proposed. Policy CDNP10 sets out the neighbourhood requirements for promoting sustainable transport.
- 5.20 In this regard, vehicular and pedestrian access to the site is taken from Hophurst Lane via the existing access point, which is retained without alteration. The proposals therefore maintain an established and well understood access arrangement and do not introduce additional pressure on the local highway network through new or relocated access points. This approach accords with DP21 by making effective use of existing infrastructure and maintaining highway safety.
- 5.21 The proposal represents an intensification and rationalisation of existing B8 employment uses on a long established commercial site. While there is an increase in Class B8 storage floorspace, this is balanced by a reduction in office space compared with the historic and lawful use of the site. As a result, the development is not expected to generate materially greater vehicular movements, particularly during peak periods, given that B8 uses typically generate lower employment (staff) densities and more dispersed travel patterns than office uses. On this basis, the proposal does not give rise to severe additional traffic congestion, either individually or cumulatively, in accordance with Policy DP21.
- 5.22 Car parking provision has been assessed against the Council's adopted Parking SPD, which acknowledges that it should be used as an initial guide. The proposed development provides 31 car parking spaces, including three accessible bays, as shown on the proposed site plan. Based on the proposed floorspace, the SPD identifies a requirement of 13 spaces for the Class B8 use and seven spaces for the office unit, totalling 20 spaces. The proposed level of provision therefore exceeds the adopted standard and is considered appropriate, particularly given the site's close location the bus stop. Parking is well located in relation to the buildings and is supported by clear pedestrian routes, ensuring safe and convenient access for all users.
- 5.23 In terms of sustainable transport, cycle parking has been assessed in line with the adopted Guidance on Parking at New Developments (West Sussex, 2020 SPD). The development generates a requirement of 10 cycle spaces, comprising five spaces associated with the Class B8 use and five spaces associated with the office floorspace, to serve both staff and visitors. These can be accommodated within the site in a secure and convenient location, providing appropriate facilities for staff and visitors and meeting the requirements of Policy DP21 to promote alternative modes of travel where practicable.
- 5.24 Given the scale and nature of the proposals, and the absence of a significant increase in trip generation, the development is not considered to generate significant amounts of movement that would necessitate a Transport Assessment or Travel Plan. The proposals make efficient use of existing infrastructure, provide adequate parking, protect the safety of road users and pedestrians, and avoid harm to the wider transport network. Overall, the proposal is fully compliant with Policy DP21, and is acceptable in highways terms.



Flood Risk

- 5.25 In response to Local Policy DP41, the site is located within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore at low risk of flooding and the proposals do not involve a change in flood risk vulnerability and no increase in flood risk elsewhere is anticipated as a result of the development. Surface water drainage will connect to the existing on site drainage system. Previous planning permissions required measures to ensure that surface water runoff is managed within the site and does not discharge onto the public highway. It is anticipated that similar requirements will apply, and an updated drainage strategy will be provided at application stage to demonstrate that surface water will be appropriately managed in accordance with current standards. Overall, the proposals are capable of being accommodated within the existing drainage framework, with suitable measures secured through the planning process as necessary.

Biodiversity

- 5.26 The site comprises an established employment use that is largely hard surfaced, with existing buildings, access and parking areas, and limited areas of soft landscaping primarily located along the site boundaries. The proposals are confined to the reuse, refurbishment and modest alteration of existing buildings, with no material expansion of the developed footprint and no loss of undeveloped countryside. Existing boundary vegetation is retained, and the scheme does not result in habitat loss or fragmentation. In this context, the development protects existing biodiversity, avoids net loss and accords with Policy DP38 of the Adopted District Plan.
- 5.27 The site lies within the 7 km Zone of Influence of the Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area and Special Area of Conservation, as identified under Policy DP17. However, the proposals do not introduce residential development, do not increase recreational pressure, and are not expected to result in a material increase in traffic movements or air quality impacts when considered against the site's existing lawful use. As such, no likely significant effects on the integrity of the Ashdown Forest are anticipated, and the development is considered to comply with Policy DP17 without the need for further ecological or Habitats Regulations assessment.

Sustainability and Energy

- 5.28 The submitted Energy and Sustainability Statement confirms that the proposed development adopts a proportionate and policy compliant energy strategy, reflecting the nature of the scheme as the refurbishment and reconfiguration of an existing warehouse with ancillary office accommodation. The energy strategy follows the recognised Lean, Clean, Green and Seen hierarchy, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Approved Document Part L (2021) and Policies DP39 and DP42. A strong fabric first approach underpins the scheme. The existing timber and concrete warehouse frames are retained, with enhanced insulation proposed to all refurbished and new external envelope elements where feasible, achieving Part L compliant U-values. The new office accommodation is designed to meet or exceed current fabric performance standards, with improved airtightness and high performance glazing. Passive design measures, including maximised daylight, natural ventilation and shading, reduce reliance on mechanical systems and minimise overheating risk. Importantly, no active cooling systems are proposed at this stage. Given the low occupancy and operational nature of the warehouse, no fixed heating or hot water systems are proposed as standard. Where heating is required for specific work areas, efficient electric radiant or panel heaters may be installed. For the office element, heating provision will be proportionate to use, with air source heat pumps identified as the preferred low carbon solution where occupancy levels justify their installation. Hot water demand across the site is minimal and will be met via point of use electric heaters, avoiding distribution losses. The Statement confirms that the site is not located near any existing or planned district heat networks and therefore connection is not viable. However, the proposals actively incorporate on-site renewable



energy, with the roof of the new office building and sections of the existing warehouse roofs identified as suitable for photovoltaic panels. These will generate on-site renewable electricity, reduce reliance on grid energy and support long-term operational carbon reduction, subject to detailed design and feasibility. To ensure energy performance is realised in practice, the development will incorporate smart metering and energy monitoring, enabling real time feedback and ongoing management of energy use.



6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 The proposals represent a sustainable and policy compliant form of development that secures meaningful investment in an underutilised brownfield employment site. In line with Policies DP1 and CDNP07, the scheme safeguards and strengthens existing employment land through the refurbishment and upgrading of the buildings, delivering modernised Class B8 accommodation and significantly improving the functionality, appearance and long term viability of a site that is currently in poor condition. The development is appropriately contained within an established and enclosed site and, consistent with Policy DP12, does not involve any encroachment into the surrounding countryside.
- 6.2 In addition, the proposals are fully aligned with national planning policy objectives for economic growth. Paragraph 85 of the National Planning Policy Framework places significant weight on the need for planning decisions to support economic growth and productivity and to create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Paragraph 88 further supports the sustainable growth and expansion of businesses in rural areas, including through the conversion and refurbishment of existing buildings. The proposed refurbishment and intensification of this established employment site responds directly to these objectives, supporting a prosperous rural economy while respecting the character of the countryside. In this regard, the proposal also aligns with policy DP14. As such, the proposals attract significant weight in favour of approval under the NPPF.

Benefits of the proposal

- 6.3 The key benefits the proposal delivers are:
- Makes effective use of previously developed land with an established commercial and employment history, avoiding the need for greenfield development.
 - Rationalises the site layout through the demolition of poor quality and dilapidated buildings, resulting in a more coherent and efficient form of development.
 - Delivers high quality architectural improvements, including upgraded building elevations, new materials and a more legible entrance, enhancing the appearance of the site within its rural setting.
 - Secures landscape and visual enhancements, with retained boundary vegetation and opportunities for improved planting to strengthen screening and soften views of the site.
 - Safeguards the long term employment function of the site through continued commercial and employment use, supporting local jobs and the rural economy.
 - Improves operational efficiency and functionality of the buildings while respecting the scale and character of surrounding development.
 - Enhances accessibility and safety for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists through improved site layout and access arrangements.
 - Ensures the site is brought back into active and productive use, reducing the risk of vacancy and further deterioration.
- 6.4 The proposal complies with Section 38(6) of the Planning Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 which states the determination must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Planning Statement has demonstrated that the proposal is in accordance with the development plan. Without prejudice to this, if conflicts with policy were judged to occur, the range of benefits highlighted above are deemed to significantly weigh in favour of justifying the conflicts. It is therefore considered that planning permission should be granted.

PLANNING CLARITY FOR COMPLEX PLACES.

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