



Design and Access, Planning and Heritage Statement

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Statement has been prepared on behalf of the applicant, Rachel Bryant, in support of a full planning application and listed building consent at Heathfield House, High Street, Cuckfield. The proposal seeks a partial change of use at ground floor from commercial (Class E) to residential (Class C3), and the removal of a non-original single-storey rear extension and internal amendments.
- 1.2. The purpose of this statement is to provide an assessment of the planning and heritage considerations of the site and its surrounding area, identify any potential impacts of the proposed development including on the heritage assets, and set out measures to mitigate these impacts.
- 1.3. Importantly, the overwhelming majority of the proposed development has already been found to be acceptable in planning and heritage terms through the grant of planning permission and listed building consent under references **DM/25/2857** and **DM/25/2942**. Those decisions established the principle of the partial change of use, the retention of a viable commercial unit, the removal of the non-original rear extension, and the overall design and heritage approach as compliant with both national and local planning policy. As such, the acceptability of the scheme is firmly established. The current application does not seek to revisit those conclusions, but instead proposes a limited number of modest refinements, namely minor internal reconfiguration, a small number of internal wall removals, and a discreet amendment to the rear elevation in the form of an adjustment to the rear existing solid panelled modern door to a pair of glazed doors with glazing bars to match the windows and beaded lower panels. These changes are localised in nature, do not materially alter the character or impacts of the approved development, and should therefore be assessed within the context of an earlier already acceptable and consented scheme.
- 1.4. This statement has been prepared in accordance with national and local planning policies and guidance, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Mid-Sussex District Local Plan. The planning history of the site and the proposals have been considered. Overall, this Statement provides a comprehensive assessment of the planning and heritage considerations.
- 1.5. The application is supported by the following documents, plans and drawings:

Location Plan

Existing and Proposed floor plans and Elevations

Design and Access, Planning and Heritage Statement

Local Agent's Letter

"A three-storey building (with a basement) dating from the 19th century and Listed Grade II. It is stuccoed with a slate roof. There are fluted pilasters through the first and second floors and

a band between ground and first floors. There are three windows at first floor and three at second floor level, the outer windows being 16-pane sashes and splayed. To the north is an elegant mid-19th century shopfront with triple arched shop window. The doorcase of Heathfield House has a semi-circular fanlight and a four fielded panelled door up six steps from the street. To the south is a tripartite window with vertical mullions. Fronting the house are iron spear railings and stairs leading down to the basement.”

2.3. The appraisal goes on to note that:

“This is an important building as it visually terminates Broad Street and effectively signals the road junction to motorists arriving from the east. Road signs on the building direct motorists south to Burgess Hill and north to Balcombe via the B2036.”



2.4. The Official Listing (List Entry No. 1354943, dated 11 December 1987) similarly identifies Heathfield House and the adjoining Kingswood Chemists as a Grade II Listed Building of “special architectural or historic interest.” It describes the building as mid-19th century, stuccoed with a slate roof, comprising three storeys and a basement, and notes key features including:

- Fluted pilasters extending through the upper floors;
- A continuous band between the ground and first floors;
- 16-pane sash windows, with the two outer windows splayed;
- The right-hand mid-19th-century shopfront featuring a triple arched window; and
- The doorcase with semi-circular fanlight and four-fielded panelled door accessed by six stone steps.

2.5. The listing further records that the building includes iron spear railings to the front area and identifies it as “an important corner building,” contributing strongly to the architectural rhythm and visual enclosure of the High Street.

2.6. Collectively, these features establish Heathfield House as a heritage asset of high local significance, integral to both the architectural continuity and historic narrative of Cuckfield’s High Street. Its careful restoration and sensitive adaptation through this application will sustain and enhance its contribution to the Conservation Area.

2.7. To the rear, the property benefits from a small enclosed courtyard garden. A single-storey flat-roofed extension, constructed in render over blockwork with modern uPVC windows, projects from the rear elevation. The extension is of poor architectural quality and visually detracts from the historic rear elevation. Its removal forms part of this proposal, with the intention to reinstate the original form and proportion of the rear façade, thereby enhancing the building’s architectural integrity and setting.



2.8. The existing ground floor of Heathfield House is arranged in a linear plan form, extending from the High Street frontage to the rear courtyard. The layout reflects its historic mixed-use function, comprising a principal commercial frontage with ancillary storage and staff facilities to the rear.

- 2.9. The property is accessed via two separate doors from the High Street:
- A central doorway (shared between the house and shop) leading to an internal corridor and stairwell providing access to the upper-floor residential accommodation; and
 - A separate shop entrance to the north side of the frontage, serving the former Lloyds Pharmacy.
- 2.10. The internal shop area occupies the right-hand (northern) side of the building and consists of a main retail space extending approximately two-thirds of the building's depth. The shop is divided into two sections by a slight change in floor level, reflecting the building's stepped topography.
- 2.11. To the left-hand (southern) side, the floor plan shows a series of smaller interlinked rooms previously used as ancillary storage and a former dispensary area associated with the pharmacy. These spaces can only be accessed internally from the shared residential entrance corridor, meaning they are not functionally independent from the domestic accommodation above.
- 2.12. Beyond the main retail and storage areas, the plan extends to a staff zone at the rear of the building comprising:
- A staff room and toilet facilities;
 - A narrow internal corridor leading to the rear courtyard; and
 - The modern single-storey flat-roofed extension, which houses the W.C. and ancillary workspaces.
- 2.13. The external courtyard, accessed via a door from the staff area, is enclosed by a tall brick wall and contains a modest garden area. The space provides potential for reinstatement as a private amenity area associated with the residential accommodation.

3. Planning History

- 3.1. Pre-application advice was sought from Mid Sussex District Council in respect of proposals for a partial change of use at ground floor level from commercial (Class E) to residential (Class C3), and the demolition of the existing single-storey rear extension.
- 3.2. The pre-application response, issued by the Council's Planning Officer, confirmed that planning permission and listed building consent would be required for the works, noting the site's location within the Cuckfield Conservation Area, Archaeological Notification Area, and Article 4 Direction area, as well as the property's status as a Grade II listed building.
- 3.3. The Officer identified the following policies as relevant to the determination of any future application:
 - Mid Sussex District Plan: DP1 (Sustainable Economic Development), DP3 (Village and Neighbourhood Centre Development), DP26 (Character and Design), DP34 (Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets), and DP35 (Conservation Areas); and
 - Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan: CNP1 (Design of New Development and Conservation) and CNP11 (Cuckfield Village Centre).
- 3.4. The advice emphasised the importance of demonstrating that the retained commercial unit would remain viable and continue to contribute to the vitality of the village centre, in line with Policies DP1 and DP3. The Council recommended that supporting evidence be provided by a local commercial agent confirming the suitability of the reduced unit for continued business use.
- 3.5. In heritage terms, the Officer advised that the demolition of the existing rear extension was likely to be acceptable, subject to careful reinstatement of the original rear elevation, and that internal and external alterations should be sympathetic to the building's listed status.
- 3.6. The pre-application response also highlighted the need for any formal submission to include a full suite of supporting documents, including a Heritage Statement, Design and Access Statement, and Planning Statement addressing the justification for the change of use.
- 3.7. Following this pre application advice, an application for planning permission and listed building consent were made under DM/25/2857 and DM/25/2942 for the proposed part change of use of the ground floor shop to residential, removal of a 1970's rear flat roof extension, minor alterations internally, and change of external building colour.
- 3.8. These applications have been approved.
- 3.9. This new application seeks to replicate and repeat most of those changes previously approved, whilst amending the internal arrangements alongside some minor elevation amendments, as set out in the following sections.

4. Proposed Development

- 4.1. The proposals include most of the amendments as those approved under **DM/25/2857** and **DM/25/2942** including a series of alterations to the ground floor of Heathfield House, the removal of an existing single-storey rear extension, internal reconfiguration of rooms, and the change of use of part of the ground floor from commercial (Class E) to residential (Class C3). The northern portion of the ground floor will remain as a commercial unit retaining its own independent entrance from the High Street.
- 4.2. The existing ground floor is currently divided into two primary areas:
- the northern side, comprising the shop unit associated with the former Lloyds Pharmacy; and
 - the southern side, comprising ancillary storage, a former dispensary, and a series of small service rooms which can only be accessed from the residential hallway rather than the shop.
- 4.3. Under the proposals, the northern commercial unit will be retained albeit reduced in size. This space will continue to operate as a self-contained retail or service premises, accessed via the existing shop entrance on the road frontage.
- 4.4. The southern section of the ground floor, currently comprising the “former drug storage” room and store areas, will be incorporated into the residential accommodation. As with the approved scheme, this will be achieved by formalising its use as domestic space, accessed directly from the existing central residential entrance on the High Street. Within this area, the approved scheme showed a new study occupying the front room overlooking the street, and a utility room to the rear.
- 4.5. The amended scheme now shows the removal of non-original internal walls, a pair of matching panelled doors to be inserted, and provision of a separate dining room and a separate kitchen in place of the study and utility room previously approved.
- 4.6. In addition, a new pair of half glazed doors are proposed to the rear of the building, to replace an existing modern solid panelled door, in the new proposed kitchen area.
- 4.7. Within the rear portion of the building, where ancillary staff and storage facilities are presently located, the internal arrangement will be simplified. The staff room, currently located within the rear extension, will be relocated to the rear of the shop. This was approved under the previous scheme.
- 4.8. A proposed store area between the shop and rear rooms will be created. The existing door opening to the residential side will be blocked up to clearly delineate between commercial and residential functions. This was approved under the previous scheme.
- 4.9. A W.C. will be created within the commercial element. This was approved under the previous scheme.
- 4.10. As part of the works:
- A new pair of half-glazed doors with glazing bars and lower solid panels within the rear elevation, will be introduced to compliment the original sash windows with glazing bars, which will create a balance to the fenestration on the rear elevation;

- The new lintels, cills, and reveals will carefully match those of the existing windows;
- 4.11. No new structures are proposed to replace the demolished extension. The resulting space will form a modest enclosed courtyard garden, reinstating the building's traditional rear aspect and allowing natural light and ventilation to reach the reinstated elevation, as approved, enhanced by the introduction of a new pair of half-glazed doors with glazing bars, serving the new dining area.
 - 4.12. The High Street (front) elevation will remain entirely unaltered. The distinctive 19th-century shopfront, including the triple arched window and recessed doorways, will be retained. The central residential doorway, with its semi-circular fanlight and panelled door, will also remain unchanged.
 - 4.13. At the rear, the building will return to a simple and symmetrical form. The proposed elevation includes a pair of half-glazed doors with glazing bars.
 - 4.14. Internally it is proposed to remove non-original internal walls, which clearly indicates the original ground floor wall positions when the building was constructed. In our view we think a chimney breast was removed when part of the ground floor was converted to a shop and so we are looking to obtain consent for the removal of a non-functioning chimney, within the proposed residential area on the ground floor.

5. Policy Context

- 5.1. The proposed development has been assessed against the relevant policies of the Mid Sussex District Plan (2014–2031), the Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan (2014–2031), and national guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023). The Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD (2022) and the Cuckfield Conservation Area Appraisal (2005) provide supplementary local guidance.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 5.2. The relevant sections of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, July 2023) are concentrated within Chapter 6 (Economy), Chapter 7 (Town Centres), Chapter 12 (Design), and Chapter 16 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment). They have been taken into account in the appraisal of this proposed development.

Mid Sussex District Plan

- 5.3. **Policy DP1 – Sustainable Economic Development.** This policy seeks to promote a thriving local economy by supporting existing businesses, encouraging inward investment, and protecting employment premises unless it can be demonstrated that their loss is justified. Development must contribute to the vitality of local communities and provide opportunities for people to live and work locally.
- 5.4. **Policy DP3 – Village and Neighbourhood Centre Development.** DP3 supports development within village centres that maintains and enhances the range of shops and services available to local communities. Changes of use that reduce commercial provision are resisted unless the existing use is no longer viable, and the proposal contributes positively to the vitality and character of the centre.
- 5.5. **Policy DP26 – Character and Design.** DP26 requires all development to achieve high-quality design that reflects the distinctive character and form of the surrounding area, protecting valued townscapes and ensuring that proposals contribute positively to local identity, amenity, and sense of place.
- 5.6. **Policy DP34 – Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets.** DP34 requires that alterations to listed buildings respect their historic form, scale, materials, and setting, ensuring that significance is preserved while securing a viable long-term use. Proposals must demonstrate a proportionate understanding of the building's heritage value and employ traditional materials and detailing.
- 5.7. **Policy DP35 – Conservation Areas.** This policy seeks to conserve or enhance the special character and appearance of conservation areas. It requires sensitive design in terms of scale, materials, and detailing, protecting traditional shopfronts and boundary features and preserving key views into and out of the area.

Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan

- 5.8. **Policy CNP1 – Design of New Development and Conservation.** CNP1 requires that new development is designed to a high quality, responding to the distinctive character and heritage of Cuckfield. Proposals must:
- Respect the height, scale, layout, materials, and orientation of surrounding buildings;

- Be sympathetic to the setting of heritage assets and follow the guidance within the Cuckfield Conservation Area Appraisal;
- Create safe, accessible environments;
- Avoid unacceptable environmental impacts; and
- Make efficient and appropriate use of the site.

5.9. **Policy CNP11 – Cuckfield Village Centre.** CNP11 supports a mix of compatible uses within the village centre (including retail, professional, hospitality, and community uses). The loss of business premises will be resisted unless the unit is demonstrated to be no longer viable or an equivalent replacement is provided. The policy also encourages the retention and reintroduction of residential uses on upper floors, reinforcing the traditional mixed-use character of the High Street.

Supplementary Guidance

- 5.10. **The Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD (2022)** promotes context-led design, use of traditional materials, and sensitive integration of new development within historic townscapes.
- 5.11. **The Cuckfield Conservation Area Appraisal (2005)** identifies Heathfield House as a landmark building that terminates views along Broad Street and contributes significantly to the character and rhythm of the High Street. The appraisal emphasises the preservation of architectural detailing, original shopfronts, and materials as integral to the area's special interest.

6. Planning and Heritage Appraisal

6.1. The following matters are considered to be the principal considerations in the determination of this application:

- **Principle of Development and Commercial Viability**
- **Design and Character**
- **Heritage and Conservation**

Principle of Development and Commercial Viability (DP1, DP3, CNP11)

6.2. The proposal seeks a partial change of use at ground floor level from Class E (commercial) to Class C3 (residential), alongside the removal of a non-original rear extension. The northern part of the ground floor will remain in commercial use, ensuring that an active frontage and business presence are maintained on the High Street. This has been established under the extant permissions.

6.3. The retained shop area, including the prominent 19th-century shopfront, will continue to contribute to the vitality and economic function of Cuckfield's village centre. The areas proposed for conversion, principally ancillary storage and staff facilities, are not integral to the unit's operational viability and are surplus to contemporary commercial requirements. This is concisely summarised in the Local Agent's letter which accompanied the previous applications and stated:

I am writing to confirm that in my opinion the removal of the existing modern single storey extension to the rear, and the subsequent relocation of the existing kitchen area and staff toilet into the existing raised rear section of the main shop area would not significantly impact on the achievable rental value and level of demand for a local village shop at Heathfield House.

In addition to the above, the proposed incorporation of the existing unserviceable ground floor shop store areas, separated from the main shop area by the main entrance hall to the existing residential accommodation, would not harm the achievable rental value and level of demand for a local village shop at Heathfield House.

There is always high demand for commercial premises in Cuckfield, and the size of the unit would be perfect for an array of tenants, given the footfall and demographic of the villagers.

6.4. This demonstrates that the retained floorspace remains viable for a small-scale retail or service use, consistent with comparable premises nearby. Accordingly, the proposal accords with DP1, DP3, and CNP11, which collectively seek to maintain viable commercial uses within village centres while supporting adaptable mixed-use premises that meet modern needs.

6.5. Furthermore, the reintroduction of domestic accommodation at ground floor level reinstates the building's historic mixed-use pattern, reflecting the traditional "shop and dwelling" typology that characterises much of Cuckfield's historic core. This approach supports local sustainability objectives by allowing people to live and work within the community.

Design and Character (DP26, CNP1)

- 6.6. The proposed alterations have been designed with sensitivity to the architectural hierarchy and character of Heathfield House. The removal of the modern rear extension will restore the building's original form, proportion, and symmetry, revealing historic fabric currently obscured.
- 6.7. The reinstatement of original sash window openings, use of traditional materials, and careful repair of existing rendered façades will enhance the building's integrity and ensure compliance with DP26 and CNP1(a–d). These policies emphasise contextually appropriate design that reinforces local distinctiveness, utilises high-quality materials, and conserves natural and built features that define local character. The very minor addition of an additional window at ground floor beyond those amendments already approved is concerned to be entirely acceptable. The new amendments internally are also considered to be entirely acceptable.
- 6.8. The unchanged High Street frontage retains the elegant arched shopfront and pilastered façade identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal as key visual elements of Cuckfield's village centre. The proposal will therefore make a positive contribution to the public realm and preserve the building's landmark role within the townscape.

Heritage and Conservation (DP34, DP35, CNP1)

- 6.9. The proposals have been informed by a detailed understanding of the building's significance, derived from its Grade II listing and its contribution to the Conservation Area. The removal of the later rear addition will enhance both the building and the wider townscape, reinstating historic architectural integrity and improving views from adjoining properties.
- 6.10. The internal reconfiguration is minimal. Works will retain the original plan form, stairwell, and key structural elements with non-original walls proposed for removal. The proposed interventions therefore represent an appropriately conservative approach to adaptation, consistent with DP34 and national heritage guidance within the NPPF.
- 6.11. Within the Conservation Area context, the proposal preserves the established pattern of active ground-floor uses and traditional façades that characterise the High Street. It protects the setting and architectural rhythm of the street scene, aligning with DP35 and CNP1. The removal of unsympathetic modern additions constitutes a tangible enhancement to the conservation area's character and appearance.
- 6.12. The statutory list description (List Entry No. 1354943) identifies the property as "a house with basement, and shop attached", with the shopfront positioned to the north and the domestic doorway and tripartite window to the south. This confirms that the southern part of the ground floor historically formed part of the dwelling rather than the retail premises. The Cuckfield Conservation Area Appraisal (para. 15.3.16) repeats this description. The current internal arrangement, with the southern rooms accessed solely from the residential hallway, accords with this original configuration. The proposed reinstatement of residential use in this section therefore reflects the building's historic mixed-use plan form and preserves its architectural hierarchy.

Overall Planning Balance

- 6.13. The proposal achieves a careful balance between commercial viability, heritage conservation, and design quality. It ensures the continued presence of an active ground-floor use, restores the architectural integrity of a prominent listed building, and reinforces the character and vitality of Cuckfield's historic village centre.
- 6.14. The development is consistent with the objectives of the Mid Sussex District Plan (DP1, DP3, DP26, DP34, DP35) and the Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan (CNP1, CNP11). It also accords with the NPPF (2023), which promotes the conservation of heritage assets and supports sustainable mixed-use development within existing settlements.
- 6.15. In reaching an overall planning balance, it is critical to afford significant weight to the fact that the substance of the scheme has already been approved by the Local Planning Authority under applications **DM/25/2857 and DM/25/2942**, confirming that the principle, scale, use mix, and heritage approach are acceptable. The current proposals amount only to minor amendments to the internal layout and a limited alteration to the rear elevation, all of which remain entirely consistent with the design philosophy and heritage rationale previously endorsed by the Council. These changes do not give rise to any new or additional planning or heritage harm, nor do they undermine the viability of the retained commercial unit or the character and appearance of the listed building or conservation area. Accordingly, when assessed in the context of the extant permissions, the proposed amendments should be found acceptable, and planning permission and listed building consent should be granted without hesitation.