

Delegated Decision

Sign off Sheet

Ref. No:	DM/26/0769	Case Officer:	Rachel Richardson
Application Type:	Full Application		
Proposal:	Extension to existing Visitor Reception Building within main car park to make provision for staff and volunteer welfare facilities		
Site:	Visitors Centre, Standen, West Hoathly Road, East Grinstead, West Sussex, RH19 4NE, ,		
Validation Date	31 Mar 2026	Overall Expiry Date:	10 Jun 2026
Pre-Commencement Conditions Required:		Pre-Com Conditions Date Agreed:	
Recommendation:	Permission	Recommendation Date:	2 Jul 2026
Target Date:	26 May 2026	Recommending Officer Signature:	Rachel Richardson

Date Legal Agreement Completed: (if applicable)		No of Representations:	0
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Signed and Agreed By:	Joanne Fisher	Date:	3 Jul 2026
Comments:			

MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL

DM/26/0769

**Visitors Centre, Standen, West Hoathly Road, East Grinstead, West Sussex, RH19 4NE,
Extension to existing Visitor Reception Building within main car park to make provision for staff
and volunteer welfare facilities
Wiseman**

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

None.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTEES

MSDC Conservation Officer - no objection and recommends conditions.

Historic Environment Consultant - no comment, refer to Council's Conservation Officer.

Southern Water - The site is not within Southern Waters supply area.

TOWN COUNCIL OBSERVATIONS

No comment.

INTRODUCTION

Permission is sought to extend the visitor reception building within the car park to make provision for staff and volunteer welfare facilities.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

Standen is located off an extended access road off the southern side of West Hoathly Road, within the countryside and High Weald AONB. Standen House itself is Grade I listed with a number of surrounding Grade II listed buildings including No. 5 and 6 Standen Cottages. The site is also located within Standen Registered Park and Gardens.

The visitor reception building is within the main car park to the south of Standen House.

The wider locality is characterised by open fields and areas of woodland with sporadic residential and agricultural properties, which contributes to the rural landscape and character.

APPLICATION DETAILS

The application seeks permission for an extension to the visitor reception building.

The proposed extension measures 3m by 3.78m (depth of existing building). It would have the same height and pitched roof profile as the existing building and be constructed from materials to match existing comprising timber clad walls and clay tile roof. Also timber casement windows.

The application is accompanied by:

- o Planning, Heritage and Design and Access Statement
- o Sustainability Statement
- o Tree Survey and AIA
- o Biodiversity Net Gain Exemption Statement and
- o Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND LIST OF POLICIES

Planning legislation holds that the determination of a planning application shall be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Specifically Section 70 (2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 states:

'In dealing with such an application the authority shall have regard to:

- a) The provisions of the development plan, so far as material to application,*
- b) Any local finance considerations, so far as material to the application, and*
- c) Any other material considerations.'*

Section 38(6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 provides:

'If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.'

The requirement to determine applications "in accordance with the plan" does not mean applications must comply with each and every policy, but is to be approached on the basis of the plan taken as a whole. This reflects the fact, acknowledged by the Courts, that development plans can have broad statements of policy, many of which may be mutually irreconcilable so that in a particular case one must give way to another.

Under section 38(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 if a policy contained in a development plan for an area conflicts with another policy in the development plan, the conflict must be resolved in favour of the policy which is contained in the last document to be adopted, approved or published.

Using this as the starting point the development plan for this part of Mid Sussex consists of the District Plan, Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) and the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan.

National policy (which is contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Policy Guidance) does not form part of the development plan but is an important material consideration.

Mid Sussex District Plan

The District Plan was adopted at Full Council on 28th March 2018.

Relevant policies:

- DP1 - Sustainable Economic Development
- DP12 - Protection and Enhancement of Countryside
- DP16 - High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- DP26 - Character and Design
- DP34 - Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets
- DP36 - Historic Parks and Gardens
- DP37 - Trees Woodland and Hedgerows

Site Allocations DPD

The SADPD was adopted on 29th June 2022. It allocates sufficient housing and employment land to meet identified needs to 2031.

There are no relevant policies.

East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan (made November 2016)

Relevant policies:

EG1 - High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
EG2 - Areas of Development Constraint
EG3 - Promoting Good Design
EG4 - Designated and Non Designated Heritage Assets

Other Legislation

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Other Material Considerations

Mid Sussex District Plan 2021 - 2039 - Submission Draft (Regulation 19)

The District Council is reviewing and updating the District Plan. Upon adoption, the new District Plan 2021 - 2039 will replace the current District Plan 2014-2031 and its policies will have full weight. In accordance with the NPPF, Local Planning Authorities may give weight to relevant policies of the emerging plan according to the stage of preparation; the extent to which there are unresolved objections to the relevant policies; and the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the NPPF. The draft District Plan 2021-2039 (Regulation 19) is currently at Examination and hearings were concluded on the 19th March 2026. The District Plan remains at Examination until the Inspector has published his report, until that time only minimal weight can be given to the Plan and this planning application has been assessed against the policies of the adopted District Plan.

Relevant policies:

DPE1: Sustainable Economic Development
DPN5: Historic Parks and Gardens
DPC1: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside
DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
DPB1: Character and Design
DPB2: Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets
DPN4: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

Mid Sussex Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

The Council has adopted a 'Mid Sussex Design Guide' SPD that aims to help deliver high quality development across the district that responds appropriately to its context and is inclusive and sustainable. The Design Guide was adopted by Council on 4th November 2020 as an SPD for use in the consideration and determination of planning applications. The SPD is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2024-2029

The legal framework for AONBs in England and Wales is provided by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000 which at Section 82 reaffirms the primary purpose of AONBs: to conserve and enhance natural beauty. Section 84 of the CRoW requires Local Planning Authorities to 'take all such action as appears to them expedient for accomplishment of the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB'.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024)

The NPPF sets out the government's policy in order to ensure that the planning system contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 sets out the three objectives to sustainable development, such that the planning system needs to perform an economic objective, a social objective and an environmental objective.

Paragraph 12 of the NPPF states '*The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision-making. Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood plans that form part of the development plan), permission should not usually be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed.*'

Paragraph 39 of the NPPF states '*Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.*'

With specific reference to decision-taking paragraph 48 states that planning decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

ASSESSMENT

It is considered that the main issues that need to be considered in the determination of this application are as follows;

- Principle
- Design and Character
- Impact on the National Landscape/AONB
- Impact on the setting of Listed Buildings and Registered Park and Gardens
- Trees
- Biodiversity Net Gain
- Planning Balance and Conclusion

Principle

Policy DP1 allows for sustainable economic development and in part states that it seeks to:

'encourage the high quality development of land and premises to meet the needs of 21st century businesses; supports existing businesses and allows them room to expand, and allows small scale economic development in the countryside (in accordance with development in the countryside policies).'

Policy DP1 also allows for effective use of employment land and premises by protecting existing employment land and premises, permitting appropriate intensification, conversion, redevelopment and or extension for employment uses (subject to complying with other policies in the plan), and gives priority to the re-use and adaptation of rural buildings for business and to the diversification of activities on existing farm units (in accordance with development in the countryside policies).

Policy DP12 of the Mid Sussex District Plan states:

'The countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty. Development will be permitted in the countryside, defined as the area outside of built-up area boundaries on the Policies Map, provided it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District, and:

- *it is necessary for the purposes of agriculture; or*
- *it is supported by a specific policy reference either elsewhere in the Plan, a Development Plan Document or relevant Neighbourhood Plan.'*

Neighbourhood Plan policy EG2 states:

'Planning permission will normally be granted for the sympathetic conversion of redundant rural buildings, limited small-scale new development and extensions to existing buildings within the Countryside Areas of Development Constraint provided they comply with the following criteria: (1) In the case of replacement dwellings, the proposal is no more obtrusive than the dwelling it replaces and is of an appropriate design for its location and setting;
(2) In the case of extensions, the proposal is subservient in scale and form to the original dwelling along with the coherent use of materials;
(3) In the case of converted buildings, the new use has minimal impact on the openness of the countryside, in terms of the new curtilage, and parking; in the case of outdoor sport, recreation and community uses of land, the proposals support the objective of keeping land open;
(4) The proposal comprises essential small-scale proposals for agricultural or sport and recreation such as pavilions and changing rooms; or
(5) It is essential to meet specific necessary utility infrastructure needs and no alternative feasible site is available.'

The NPPF is also relevant and at paragraph 85 states that *'significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.'*

Paragraph 88, states that *'planning policies and decisions should enable: The sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, beautiful new buildings.'*

The development proposal is considered to be acceptable in principle and there is policy support for economic development in rural locations. The proposed development supports an existing business and is small scale to maintain the intrinsic character of the countryside.

Design and Character

One of the objectives of achieving sustainable development is to ensure that proposals *'contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment'* (para 8, NPPF). In addition, the NPPF states that policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by *'recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside'* (para 180).

As the proposed development is located within the countryside the proposal, Policy DP12 of the District Plan is relevant. The principal aim of Policy DP12 of the District Plan states the: *'countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty.'*

Policy DP26 in the District Plan seeks to ensure a high standard of design in all new development and requires new development to demonstrate a sensitive approach to urban design by respecting the character of the locality in which they take place.

Neighbourhood Plan policy EG3 requires: *'The form of the proposed development is proportionate and in keeping with the scale, height, materials and site coverage of the surrounding area;*

The layout of the proposed development respects the topography and character of the site, protects important landscape features and does not harm adjoining amenity;

The proposal does not result in the loss of buildings or spaces that would have an unacceptable impact on the character of the area;

The proposal ensures satisfactory means of access for vehicles and pedestrians and provides adequate parking, cycle storage and refuse facilities on site;

The design of new buildings and the layout of spaces, including footways, car and cycle parking areas, should be permeable and provide connectivity with neighbouring areas;

New development must be inclusive and where appropriate make satisfactory provision for the safe and easy access for those with mobility impairment; and

The design of new developments must result in the creation of a safe and secure environment and incorporate adequate security measures and features to deter crime, fear of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour; and

Proposals make provision for green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancement.'

The proposed extension is modest in its proportions and in terms of its appearance has been designed to the same profile as the existing building. It would also use matching materials. The extension is considered to maintain the character of the countryside in this location of the district.

The Sustainability Statement confirms that the proposed extension will be insulated and use recycled materials and will be of breathable construction.

As such and in design terms, the proposed extension is in accordance with the relevant policy criteria.

Impact on National Landscape/AONB

The site is with the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, also referred to as the High Weald National Landscape. The legal framework for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in England and Wales is provided by the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023. Section 245(6)(a) sets out the primary purpose of AONBs: to conserve and enhance natural beauty. It also requires Local Planning Authorities to 'further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty'.

Policy DP16 of the Mid Sussex District Plan relates to the AONB and states that:

'Development within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), as shown on the Policies Maps, will only be permitted where it conserves or enhances natural beauty and has regard to the High Weald AONB Management Plan, in particular:

- o the identified landscape features or components of natural beauty and to their setting;*
- o the traditional interaction of people with nature, and appropriate land management;*
- o character and local distinctiveness, settlement pattern, sense of place and setting of the AONB; and*
- o the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage'.*
- o Conversion of redundant buildings;*
- o Replacement, on a like for like basis, of existing buildings; or*
- o Extension of an existing dwelling house, relate to agricultural development or some other minor recreational use; '*

This is reflected in policy EG1 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan, the High Weald Management Plan and paragraph 189 of the NPPF.

In terms of visual amenity the proposed extension is considered to be acceptable in terms of its scale and appearance and would not detract from the visual qualities and essential characteristics of the AONB. The proposal thereby complies with the above policies.

Impact on setting of listed building

S. 66 (2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that *'In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.'*

Policy DP34 states that development will be required to protect listed building's and their settings and this will be achieved by ensuring that:

- o 'A thorough understanding of the significance of the listed building and its setting has been demonstrated. This will be proportionate to the importance of the building and potential impact of the proposal;*
- o Alterations or extensions to a listed building respect its historic form, scale, setting, significance and fabric. Proposals for the conversion or change of use of a listed building retain its significance and character whilst ensuring that the building remains in a viable use;*
- o Traditional building materials and construction techniques are normally used. The installation of uPVC windows and doors will not be acceptable;*
- o Satellite antennae, solar panels or other renewable energy installations are not sited in a prominent location, and where possible within the curtilage rather than on the building itself;*
- o Special regard is given to protecting the setting of a listed building;*
- o Where the historic fabric of a building may be affected by alterations or other proposals, the applicant is expected to fund the recording or exploratory opening up of historic fabric.'*

Policy EG4 in the Neighbourhood Plan states:

'Other Heritage Assets

Development that retains buildings which are not listed but are of architectural or historic merit, or which make a significant and positive contribution to the street scene will be permitted in preference to their demolition and redevelopment.

The Council will seek to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the character and quality of life of the District. Significance can be defined as the special interest of a heritage asset, which may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic.

Proposals affecting such heritage assets will be considered in accordance with the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and current Government guidance.'

'Applications affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets must be supported by an appropriately detailed assessment of their heritage significance and the impact of the proposals on that significance.'

Para's 112 - 115 of the NPPF are also relevant.

The Council's Conservation Officer has commented as follows:

'Standen is a Grade I listed building located in a rural position outside East Grinstead. It dates from 1892-4 and is an outstanding example of an Arts and Crafts country house designed by noted architect Philip Webb. The farmhouse and farm buildings of the farmstead which previously occupied the site were retained and incorporated into the scheme by Webb; these buildings are now Grade II listed. The grouping is set within extensive gardens created when the house were built and which are registered Grade II. The estate is now owned and managed by the National Trust.

The current proposal relates to the visitors' centre which is located within the visitors' car park to the east of the house. This area is not within the registered garden, but is within its immediate setting, and within the wider setting of the listed buildings of Standen House and the former farmstead. The proposal is for an extension to the building, which was recently constructed following a planning permission granted in 2019, to allow for facilities for staff and volunteers.

Firstly, I note that a listed building consent application has been submitted. However, given the modern date of the building concerned, this will not in fact be required.

Secondly, I note that Historic England have not been consulted on the application despite the Grade I listing of Standen House. This should be corrected.

The existing visitor centre is a relatively modest structure and is reasonably discretely located in terms of impact on views from/towards the RPG and the listed buildings. It is also of a sensitive design and materials which relates reasonably well to the rural character of the broader setting of the assets. The proposed extension is to the building's northern end and will therefore be shielded in views from these assets and from the main access running between them and the visitors' car park by the existing building and adjacent planting. There will be some impact on the bulk and visual prominence of the structure in terms of views looking eastwards from within the car park, but given the relatively small scale of the addition and the context of the car park this is not considered to adversely affect the settings of the affected assets, their special interests, or the manner in which these are appreciated.

The proposal is therefore considered to meet the requirements of District Plan Policies DP34 and DP36, and the relevant paragraphs of the NPPF.'

The Conservation Officers' comments are agreed with. As said above, in terms of design and character the proposed extension is small scale and in keeping with the existing building. It is set away from the main Grade 1 listed house and is not considered to materially harm the setting of the listed house or curtilage listed buildings.

Trees

DP37 seeks to protect trees, woodland and hedgerows.

The Council's Tree and Landscape Officer has expressed no objection to the proposed development subject to a planning condition be added to any permission which ensures the development follows the recommendations of the AIA.

No trees will need to be removed to facilitate the proposal.

As such, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in this respect.

Ashdown Forest

Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (the 'Habitats Regulations'), the competent authority - in this case, Mid Sussex District Council - has a duty to ensure that any plans or projects that they regulate (including plan making and determining planning applications) will have no adverse effect on the integrity of a European site of nature conservation importance. The European site of focus is the Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The potential effects of development on Ashdown Forest were assessed during the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) process for the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031. This process identified likely significant effects on the Ashdown Forest SPA from recreational disturbance and on the Ashdown Forest SAC from atmospheric pollution.

An overall Habitats Regulations Assessment has been undertaken for the planning application which includes the type of development proposed.

Recreational disturbance

Increased recreational activity arising from new residential development and related population growth is likely to disturb the protected near-ground and ground nesting birds on Ashdown Forest.

In accordance with advice from Natural England, the HRA for the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031, and as detailed in District Plan Policy DP17, mitigation measures are necessary to counteract the effects of a potential increase in recreational pressure and are required for developments resulting in a net

increase in dwellings within a 7km zone of influence around the Ashdown Forest SPA. A Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) mitigation approach has been developed. This mitigation approach has been agreed with Natural England.

This planning application does not result in a net increase in dwellings within the 7km zone of influence and so mitigation is not required.

Atmospheric pollution

Increased traffic emissions as a consequence of new development may result in additional atmospheric pollution on Ashdown Forest. The main pollutant effects of interest are acid deposition and eutrophication by nitrogen deposition. High levels of nitrogen may detrimentally affect the composition of an ecosystem and lead to loss of species.

It is considered that the proposed development will not lead to a significant increase in traffic across Ashdown Forest. There is not considered to be a significant in combination effect on the Ashdown Forest SAC by this development proposal.

Conclusion of the Habitats Regulations Assessment

The Habitats Regulations Assessment concludes that there would be no likely significant effects, alone or in combination, on the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC from the types of development identified which includes this proposed development.

No mitigation is required in relation to the Ashdown Forest SPA or SAC.

A full HRA (that is, the appropriate assessment stage that ascertains the effect on integrity of the European site) of the proposed development is not required.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity net gain is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain this application comprises development below the de-minimis threshold meaning that this development is exempt from providing biodiversity net gain.

PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

Planning legislation requires the application to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. It is therefore necessary for the planning application to be assessed against the policies in the Development Plan and then to take account of other material planning considerations including the NPPF. The Development Plan in this instance consists of the Mid Sussex District Plan, the Site Allocations Development Plan Document and the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan.

Courts have confirmed that the Development Plan must be considered as a whole, not simply in relation to any one individual policy. It is therefore not the case that a proposal must accord with each and every policy within the Development Plan.

The proposed extension is considered to be modest and for the reasons set out above is acceptable and would be in accordance with the criteria of relevant policies. As such, it is recommended that permission be granted.

Decision: Permission

Case Officer: Rachel Richardson