

DM/26/1259 – Hillsborough House, 118 High Street, Hurstpierpoint

Dear Caroline,

Thank you for your email regarding the above application and for the opportunity to clarify the rationale for the proposed change of use.

I appreciate the Council's concern regarding the proposed reduction in the number of residential units, particularly in light of the current position on the Council's five-year housing land supply. However, I respectfully submit that the planning context extends beyond a simple comparison between six existing flats and one proposed dwelling.

Whilst the lawful existing use of Hillsborough House is as six self-contained flats (Use Class C3), the property also benefits from planning permission **DM/25/2550** for its use as a **Class C2 Children's Residential Home**. That permission is a material planning consideration because it establishes a lawful alternative use of the property as a single residential institution rather than six independent Class C3 dwellings.

The significance of this is that the planning assessment should not be confined solely to the existing six-flat arrangement. The site already benefits from an extant planning permission for a lawful alternative residential use which, if implemented, would not provide six independent Class C3 dwellings contributing to the Council's housing stock. Accordingly, the current proposal should be considered within the context of the site's complete planning history, including the extant Class C2 permission.

Following the grant of planning permission DM/25/2550, discussions took place with Mid Sussex District Council regarding the operation of the approved Class C2 use. Those discussions highlighted uncertainty over the council tax treatment of the property, with the Council confirming that responsibility for council tax banding rests with the Valuation Office Agency and that it could not provide certainty as to whether the property would be assessed as a single dwelling or multiple dwellings for council tax purposes. The Council further advised that, whilst it was likely that no council tax premium would apply if the Valuation Office Agency assessed the property as a single dwelling, no assurance could be given, particularly in light of the forthcoming local government reorganisation.

Whilst these council tax matters are not determinative planning considerations, they demonstrate that there remains genuine uncertainty regarding the practical implementation of the approved Class C2 use. They therefore form part of the wider factual background against which the current application should be considered.

The current application seeks to retain the building in mainstream residential use by restoring it to a single Class C3 dwelling. Hillsborough House was originally constructed as a single residence, and the proposal would return the building to that purpose whilst ensuring its continued occupation and long-term stewardship as a family home.

I fully acknowledge the importance of maintaining an adequate supply of housing. However, this application does not result in the loss of residential use from the site. Rather, it seeks to retain the property in residential use through a sustainable and deliverable Class C3 family dwelling, whilst recognising that the site already benefits from an extant permission for an alternative Class C2 residential use.

In my respectful submission, planning permission **DM/25/2550** is a material consideration that should be afforded appropriate weight in the overall planning balance. When considered in the round, the proposal represents a sustainable and appropriate form of development, preserves the residential function of Hillsborough House, secures its long-term future as a family home, and is compatible with both the character of the building and the surrounding area.

I trust this clarifies the reasons for the application. Should you require any further information or wish to discuss any aspect of the proposal, I would be pleased to assist.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Machan