MME PLANNING SERVICES

Use of garden land for the siting of a mobile ‘pod’ for holiday accommodation (Part-Retrospective).

at

Crescent Place, Storrington Road, Thakeham, West Sussex, RH20 3ED

Planning Statement

Ref: P-014a

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Version 1

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Figure 1: Site Location

Contents

Contents.....

1. Introduction 1

2. Site, Surroundings and Background..... 1

3. Planning History..... 3

4. Proposals 3

5. Planning Policy 4

6. Planning Considerations..... 6

7. Summary and Conclusion 11

1. Introduction

1.1 MME Planning Services is instructed to prepare this planning statement in support of a full planning application for the use of garden land for the siting of a mobile 'pod' for holiday accommodation (part-retrospective) at Crescent Place, Storrington Road, Thakeham, West Sussex, RH20 3ED.

1.2 This statement sets out the proposed scheme in detail with regard to the following aspects: the planning history of the site, the development proposals, the relevant planning policy, the planning merits of the scheme and how the proposals comply with the Council's policies.

2. Site, Surroundings, and Background

2.1 The application site relates to the existing property of Crescent Place, located on the eastern side of Storrington Road (B2139). The application site currently comprises part of the residential garden space of Crescent Place, where the 'pod' which is the subject of this application has been stationed on site since summer 2021. The site directly adjoins the defined built-up area boundary of Storrington and Sullington, however is classed as a countryside location for planning and policy purposes, as defined by the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) (HDPF).

2.2 Although designated as a countryside location, the site is surrounded by residential development, with existing dwellings located to the north and continuing built form away from the defined built-up area boundary. As such, the site is not considered to be in an isolated rural location.

2.3 The site is located in close proximity to local shops, services and amenities. The site is close to existing public transport links including the bus stops located approximately 340m to the south of the site, which provide links to Storrington, Horsham and surrounding areas.

2.4 Neighbouring and surrounding residential dwellings are generally characterised by detached properties set within similarly sized plots when compared plot at Crescent Place. The properties to the south within the built-up area are of a higher density, as is common within settlement boundaries, however these are also predominantly detached, with a mixture of heights.

2.5 The HDPF settlement hierarchy identifies Storrington as being within the category of Smaller Towns and Larger Villages. This is the second category of settlement in the settlement hierarchy of the District, behind the main town of Horsham, and these settlements are considered to have a good range of services and facilities. Given the location of the site and its setting in relation to the built-up area, it is therefore considered that the site is in a sustainable location.

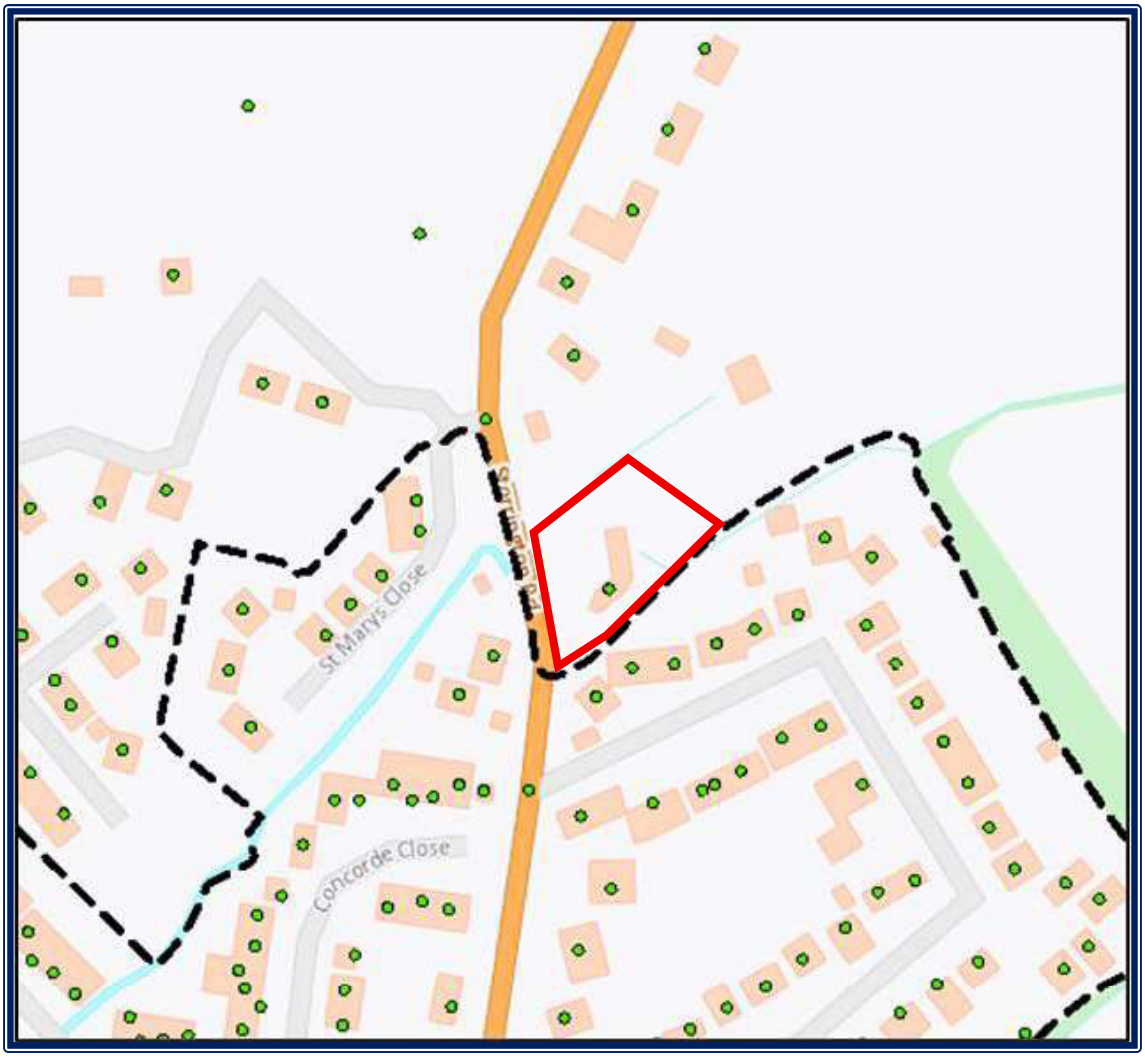

Figure 2: Plan showing relationship of the site with the Built-Up Area Boundary (dashed black line)

2.6 The proposed red line area extends to approximately 0.16ha. There is an existing access / entrance to the site from Storrington Road which serves Crescent Place. A large hardstanding / parking area is present providing parking for the main dwelling, as well as the existing holiday let 'pod'.

3. Planning History

3.1 Planning Application – Ref: DC/19/1093 – Description: Erection of 2.No detached dwellinghouses with associated parking and landscaping – Decision: Refusal, 18/07/2019.

3.2 Planning Application – Ref: DC/24/0015 – Description: Erection of a detached 4no. bedroom chalet bungalow including detached garage / car port – Decision: Refusal, 16/05/2024.

3.3 Planning Application – Ref: DC/26/0121 – Description: Erection of 1no. detached dwelling, together with a detached garage and associated works – Decision: Approval, 14/05/2026.

4. Proposals

4.1 As detailed above, planning permission is sought for the use of the garden land for the siting of a mobile 'pod' for use as holiday accommodation. The 'pod' is already located on site and has been in use as holiday accommodation since August 2021. The proposal seeks to retain the 'pod' and continue its existing use, with a slight repositioned eastwards within the garden. The application is therefore partly retrospective.

4.2 The holiday accommodation 'pod' consists of a lounge / kitchen area, an open sleeping area and a shower room. The holiday let is occupied on average 20 nights a month and is offered at a nightly rate of between £115 and £125, however this can vary depending on the time of year.

4.3 The holiday let is advertised online via the Airbnb website. The holiday let can sleep up to two people. No alterations are proposed to the 'pod' or the accommodation, with the only change being its modest repositioning within the rear garden of Crescent Place. In addition, the site has sufficient parking for vehicles, given the extent of the hardstanding available and the level of holiday accommodation provided.

4.4 Given the nature of the development and positioning of the 'pod' within the rear garden area, there is considered to be minimal impact on the setting, with no impact on neighbouring amenity or the surroundings. It is noted that there have been no issues associated with the holiday let and the applicant is not aware of any complaints raised with the Council.

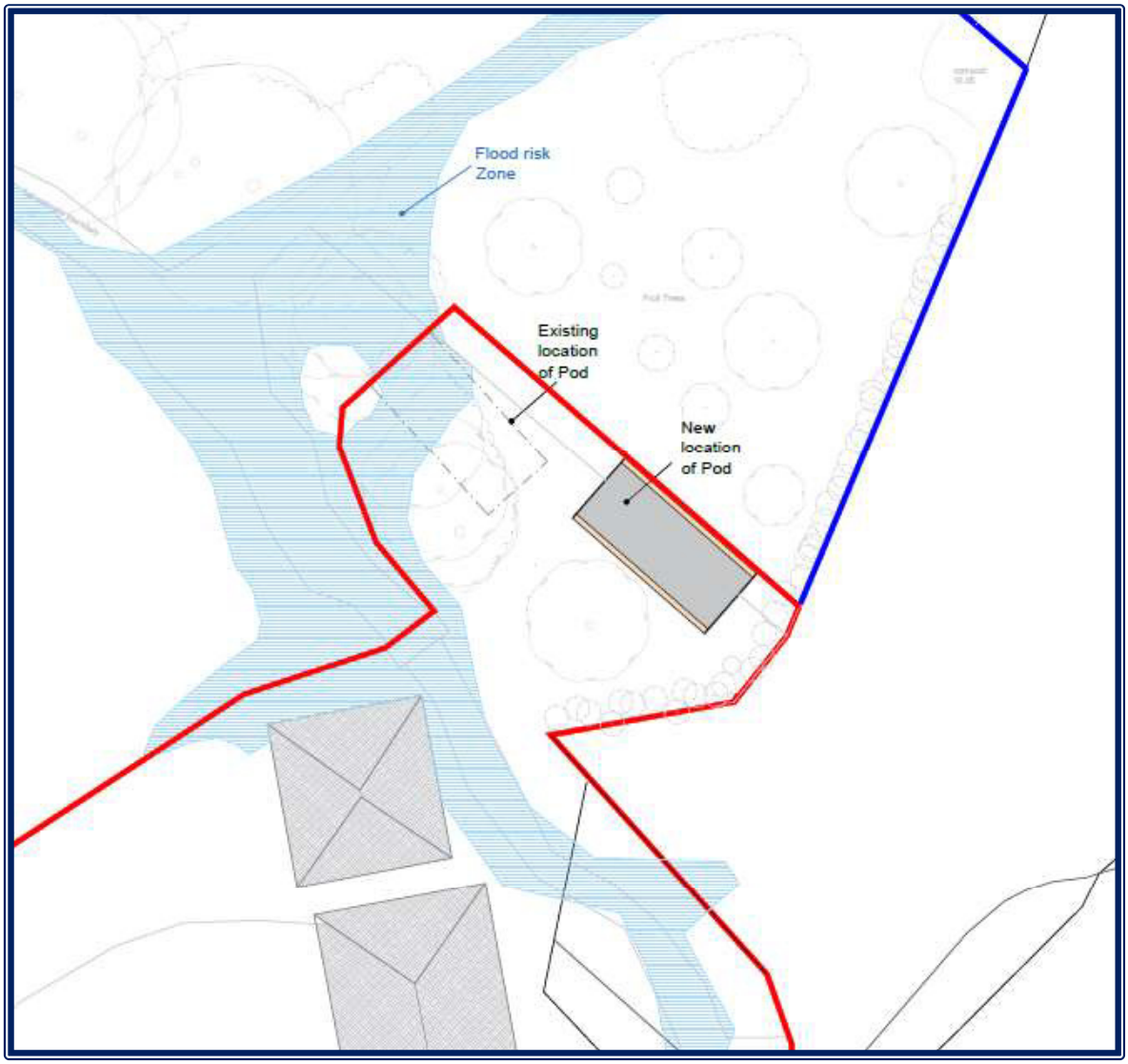

Figure 3: Proposed Block Plan

5. Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2026) and National Guidance

5.1 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework for the preparation of local plans for housing and other development. The NPPF should be read as a whole.

5.2 Running throughout the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Sustainable development is achieved through three main objectives: economic, social and environmental.

5.3 Policy S3 of the NPPF establishes the presumption in favour of sustainable development and development proposals that accord with both an up-to-date development plan and the decision-making policies in the NPPF should be approved without delay. Where development is proposed outside a settlement, Policy S5 of the NPPF identifies the categories of development which should be approved, subject to the same assessment of benefits and adverse effects.

Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) (2015)

5.4 The NPPF also requires local planning authorities to maintain an effective and up-to-date development plan. Policy PM2 sets out the framework for the preparation and review of local plans and spatial strategies and that preparation of a new local plan must be commenced no later than five years after adoption of the current plan. Horsham District Council has submitted its new local plan for examination, however at this stage, the emerging policies carry only limited weight in decision-making.

5.5 A Local Development Scheme (LDS) was published in February 2025 by the Council. The LDS sets out the production timetable for the New Local Plan anticipated to be adopted in April 2026. Notwithstanding the above, as the HDPF is now over 5 years old, the most important policies for determining this application are now considered to be 'out-of-date'. Proceedings for the new Local Plan have now re-opened, with adoption targeted in 2027 however, as detailed above, the new local plan carries limited weight in decision-making at this stage.

5.6 While considered to be out of date, the main HDPF policies relevant to this application are as follows:

- Policy 1 - Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development
- Policy 2 - Strategic Policy: Strategic Development
- Policy 3 - Strategic Policy: Development Hierarchy
- Policy 4 - Strategic Policy: Settlement Expansion
- Policy 7 - Strategic Policy: Economic Growth
- Policy 10 - Rural Economic Development
- Policy 11 - Tourism and Cultural Facilities
- Policy 25 - Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
- Policy 26 - Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection
- Policy 31 - Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
- Policy 32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development
- Policy 33 - Development Principles

- Policy 40 - Sustainable Transport
- Policy 41 - Parking
- Policy 43 - Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation

Thakeham Neighbourhood Plan (TNP) (2017)

5.7 While also considered to be out of date, the Neighbourhood Plan policies relevant to this application are as follows:

- Thakeham 1: A Spatial Plan for the Parish
- Thakeham 6: Design
- Thakeham 9: Development in the Countryside

Planning Advice Notes (PANs)

5.8 Relevant PANs to this application are as follows:

- Shaping Development in Horsham District
- Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

6. Planning Considerations

Principle of Development

6.1 Policy 7 of the HDPF states that sustainable employment development in Horsham District will be achieved by the promotion of the District as an attractive place to stay and visit to increase the value of the tourism economy.

6.2 Policy 10 of the HDPF supports sustainable rural economic development and enterprise within the District which maintain the quality and character of the area, whilst sustaining its varied and productive social and economic activity. The policy requires development to contribute to the diverse and sustainable farming enterprises within the district or, in the case of other countryside-based enterprises and activities, contribute to the wider rural economy and/or promote recreation in, and the enjoyment of, the countryside.

6.3 Policy 11 of the HDPF states that measures which promote tourism and enhance local cultural facilities, including recreation-based rural diversification, will be encouraged.

6.4 Any development should be of a scale and type appropriate to the location, and should increase the range, or improve the quality of accommodation, attraction or experiences for tourists, day visitors, business visitors, and residents in the District.

6.5 Policy 26 of the HDPF requires that development in the countryside must be essential to its location, of an appropriate scale, and must not result in a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside. Policies supporting rural economic activity and tourism seek to encourage appropriate diversification, particularly where proposals make use of existing buildings and contribute to the local economy without undermining countryside character.

6.6 The Horsham District Visitor Accommodation Study (July 2016) outlines that the District is well-placed to capitalise on the projected growth in domestic short break and overseas tourist markets and the increasing demand for family and friend get-togethers, celebrations, and weekends away. The study concludes that there is insufficient provision of all forms of visitor accommodation in the District.

6.7 Significantly, the NPPF 2026, which post-dates the HDPF and TNP, establishes a new national decision-making framework for development proposals. Policy S3 establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development and specifically directs that, outside settlements, Policy S5 should be applied.

6.8 This represents a significant change from the previous NPPF and is therefore the appropriate national policy framework against which the principle of the proposed development should now be assessed.

6.9 Policy S5 identifies certain forms of development which should be approved outside settlements unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by adverse effects, when assessed against the national decision-making policies as a whole. This includes, at Policy S5(1)(b), “Development for rural businesses and services, including tourism” and at Policy S5(1)(d), “The redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed-use including residential)”.

6.10 It is considered that the proposed development would comply fully with the above categories, providing tourist accommodation in a sustainable location and utilising previously developed land.

6.11 The principle of the development must therefore be assessed against the positive framework established by Policy S5, rather than solely by reference to the settlement boundaries set out within the HDPF. Whilst the proposal is outside the defined built-up area, national policy expressly identifies this type of development as an appropriate form of development.

6.12 Furthermore, and as detailed above, the site adjoins the built-up area of Storrington and is located in very close proximity to the centre of Storrington and its associated facilities. There is a pedestrian pavement outside the site on the opposite side of Storrington Road which provides a pedestrian link to the facilities and services within the village centre. The site is close to existing public transport links including the bus stops located near the junction of Storrington Road and Thakeham Road, providing links to Storrington, Horsham and other surrounding areas. In terms of its location, the site is therefore considered to be highly sustainable. It is therefore considered that there is opportunity for users of the holiday accommodation to utilise the footpath and access the centre of the village by alternative methods of transport and would not be unduly reliant on private vehicles to access facilities and services during their stay.

6.13 The proposed holiday accommodation would provide small-scale visitor accommodation, supporting tourism in the district, makes efficient use of previously developed land and the accommodation increases the quality of holiday accommodation within the District.

6.14 In addition to Policy S5, the proposal is also considered to comply with Policies L2 (Making Effective use of land) and E4 (Rural business development) of the new NPPF 2026, given the nature of the proposals and location of the site.

6.15 In policy terms, it is considered that the principle of the proposal would be acceptable. The proposed scale and nature of the accommodation are considered to be appropriate to the character and location of the area, whilst improving the range and quality of facilities for visitors. The occupancy rates suggest that the holiday accommodation is desirable and sought after in this sustainable location, with the use operating successfully since August 2021. In addition, the site has an established vehicular access and a suitable parking area.

6.16 Taking the above into account, it is considered that in this context, the proposed holiday accommodation would be acceptable in principle, in accordance with the NPPF 2026 and Policies 11 and 26 of the HDPF.

Design, Appearance and Impact on the Setting

6.17 Policy 25 of the HDPF seeks to protect the natural environment and landscape character of the District, including the landform, development pattern, together with protected landscapes and habitats. Development will be required to protect, conserve, and enhance landscape and townscape character, taking account of areas or features identified as being of landscape importance, individual settlement characteristics and settlement separation. In addition, development will be supported where it maintains and enhances the Green Infrastructure Network.

6.18 Policies 32 and 33 of the HDPF require development to be of a high standard of design and layout. Development proposals must be locally distinctive in character and respect the character of their surroundings. Where relevant, the scale, massing and appearance of development will be required to relate sympathetically with its built-surroundings, landscape, open spaces and to consider any impact on the skyline and important views.

6.19 The holiday accommodation 'pod' would be positioned in the rear garden of Crescent Place, and has been the case for a number of years. The site is enclosed with extensive and mature vegetation and foliage. As such, the 'pod' would not be visible from public vantage points and there would be no impact on the setting or surroundings. The development would therefore be in accordance with Policies 25, 26, 32 and 33 of the HDPF.

Neighbouring Amenity

6.20 Policy 33 of the HDPF states that permission will be granted for development that does not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of the occupiers/users of nearby properties and land.

6.21 As detailed above, the holiday let has operated for a number of years with no apparent issues or complaints. Given the small scale and nature of the proposals and the use, which is similar to that of the surrounding residential uses, it is not considered that the development would cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers. It is therefore considered acceptable in this regard.

Parking and Highways

6.22 Policies 40 and 41 of the HDPF require that development provides safe and suitable access and adequate parking and facilities to meet the needs of anticipated users, with consideration given to the needs of cycle parking, motorcycle parking and electric/low emission vehicles.

6.23 As set out above, the development is part-retrospective and no alterations are proposed to the existing vehicular access arrangement, with the site served by an existing access. Sufficient parking is provided on site which serves the main dwelling and the holiday accommodation. Given the nature and scale of the development, together with opportunities to access the site by public transport and on foot, the holiday use is not considered to result in a material intensification of the use of the existing access.

6.24 Therefore, there are no transport or parking grounds to resist the development and the proposal would be in accordance with the above policies.

Trees and Ecology

6.25 Policy 25 of the HDPF seeks to protect important landscape features, including trees and woodland. Policy 33 of the HDPF requires development to respect the natural characteristics of the site and its surroundings. Policy 31 of the HDPF states that development will be supported where it can demonstrate that it maintains or enhances the existing network of green infrastructure.

6.26 The proposal relates to the siting of a lightweight, moveable structure within an existing residential garden. The site is not covered by any tree preservation orders (TPOs) and no trees would be removed or impacted as a result of the proposal. Similarly, with regard to ecology and potential impacts on habitats, given the nature of the proposals, and existing residential use of the site, no detrimental effects are anticipated. Indeed, it is noted that a permanent incidental structure could be erected in the location of the proposed 'pod' under current residential permitted development rights, and it is considered that the proposal would have less of an impact when compared to what could be achieved without the need for planning permission.

6.27 Given the limited scale of the proposal, the low-intensity nature of holiday accommodation, and the absence of any requirement for new access routes, the development is not considered likely to result in unacceptable harm with regard to the above material matters.

7. Summary and Conclusion

7.1 Overall, the proposal represents an appropriate form of development within this sustainable location, supporting the local tourism economy. The proposals would be acceptable in terms of design and impact on the surroundings, given the scale and positioning within the existing rear residential garden. The development is also acceptable in terms of neighbouring amenity and transport and parking.

7.2 The development would be in accordance with Policies 11, 25, 26, 32 and 33 of the HDPF and the NPPF and therefore, the Local Planning Authority is respectfully asked to grant planning permission accordingly.