

**PLANNING STATEMENT IN RESPECT
OF A CHANGE IN ACCESS
ARRANGEMENTS**

AT

**LAND AT CHANDOS,
BILLINGHURST ROAD, COOLHAM
RH13 8QN**

MLP REF: BR/21/288

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. This statement sets out relevant planning policies and the application of those policies in seeking to establish Planning in Principle (PIP). In so doing, the following conclusions are reached:

- The proposal falls to be considered in the context of the relevant development plan policies and all other material planning considerations. In pre-application correspondence it is stated that the principle of development whilst in a countryside location is acceptable.
- The loss of the existing hedgerow is shown to be acceptable in so far as it does not have any historic status and forms part of the landscape character. Importantly it is proposed to be replaced and supplemented with native species and trees which has the dual benefit of visual enhancement as well as achieving BNG requirements.
- The function of the proposed development is to achieve a highway safety gain having regard to the near zero visibility of the existing arrangements and the clear benefits of the improvement. In setting this out, the adjoining highway is of straight configuration and subject to relatively high traffic speed.

- 2.1. In light of the foregoing, the proposal is acceptable on its merits and planning permission should be granted.

2.0 Pre-application response

- 2.1. Under reference DC/25/0504 planning permission was granted for the demolition of existing rear extension and garden room, and erection of a two-storey rear and a side extension. This has been largely implemented.

- 2.2. In April 2026 a response to pre-application request pertaining to a rearrangement of the access to the dwelling was received - PE/26/0066 refers. The response helpfully set out the pertinent matters as follows:
- The relevant policies of the development plan
 - It would be considered that the proposal to relocate the existing driveway would be acceptable subject to other considerations including design and appearance, trees and hedgerow and highways impacts
 - Whilst implicating the change of use of part of an agricultural field it is considered that with suitable design and replacement landscaping, the proposal would be policy compliant and not result in material harm
 - Whilst leading to the loss of a hedgerow which may be of historic significance, the proposal may be acceptable subject to replacement native species being detailed.
 - There may be a requirement for BNG in accordance with the legislation
 - The matter of highway safety is material and would need to form part of the planning balance
- 2.3. Paragraphs 39 onwards of Framework24 encourage pre-application engagement with the local authority and in this case the response is both positive and helpful by way of guidance.
- 3.0 **Relevant planning policy**
- 3.1. The relevant development plan policies are set out in the adopted Local Plan, (2015) and Made Neighbourhood Plan (2021) as follows:

Horsham District Planning Framework

Policy 1	Sustainable development and compliance with the principles relating to sustainable development in the NPPF
Policy 25	The natural environment and landscape character
Policy 26	Countryside protection outside of built-up areas
Policy 30	Protected landscapes
Policy 32	High standards of design and quality
Policy 33	Development principles

The Neighbourhood Plan (Slinfold NP)

Policy 3	The safeguarding and enhancement of green infrastructure
Policy 4	Conserve and enhance biodiversity
Policy 5	Development which meets the objectives of the Design Statement will be supported

- 3.2. Framework24 is relevant in regard to the following principles:
- The principles of sustainable development (7-8)
 - Design principles (131-onwards)
 - Conserving and protecting the natural environment (section 15)
 - Protecting and promoting biodiversity interests (186-onwards)
 - Promoting highway safety (115)
- 3.3. The following section applies these policies to consideration of this development proposal.

4.0. Applying planning policy

- 4.1. In considering the relevant planning policies, we refer to the following:

1. Is the development acceptable in principle?
2. Would the proposal harm valued landscape?
3. Is there scope for landscape and bio-diversity enhancement?
4. The planning balance and highway safety

The principle of development

- 4.2. The site lies outside of a defined settlement boundary and, as such, it falls within the “countryside” designation. The change of use of land is commonly resisted in light of this policy designation. However, in the pre-application process, as is detailed above, the balanced judgement of visual effect and the gain in highway safety was considered and it was concluded that on this occasion the proposal was acceptable as a matter of principle.
- 4.3. The acceptance of the principle of development is reliant on visual impact and the replacement planting which should be of indigenous species and replace that which is to be lost.
- 4.4. It is not a site which is allocated for housing and the case for exception to these policies needs to be properly applied. The following matters apply:
1. Are policies of the development plan up to date in terms of housing provision?
 2. Is the site isolated for housing development purposes?
 3. Does the site constitute PDL?
 4. What weight should be afforded to landscape impact?
 5. Are there any other material planning considerations?

The status of the existing landscape

- 4.5. The landscape is not of any national or special local designation. In accordance with Framework24 policy set out at paragraph 188 a lower level of weight should be afforded to determination where the lower level in the hierarchy applies.

- 4.6. This aside, the pre-application response refers as follows:

The proposal includes the loss of a significant amount of historic hedgerow which Officer's indicated should be resisted unless strong justification was evidenced to do so. Whilst no concern is raised in relation so far regarding the principle of development or the effect on the character of the area, notable concern is raised in relation to the loss of historic hedgerow.

- 4.7. This matter has been considered and the hedgerow proposed for removal lies along the A272 (locally known as 'New Road'), which does not appear on the 1813 Ordnance Survey mapping and was constructed and improved in the early 19th century as part of Knepp Castle estate road works (c.1820s-1830s). It is therefore a post-medieval estate boundary feature rather than an ancient hedgerow. Furthermore, the hedge is species-poor and heavily influenced by its location immediately adjacent to the busy A272 carriageway. There has been a vehicle accident which involved the loss and damage to some of the hedge. This along with roadside pollution and nutrient enrichment have resulted in a ground flora dominated by common ruderal species, significantly reducing its ecological value.

- 4.8. It follows that there is no overriding heritage or valued landscape basis for retaining the frontage hedgerow.

Landscape and biodiversity gains

- 4.9. In respect of the visual effect of the development, it is accepted in the pre-application response that the visual effect of the proposed development can be ameliorated by the proposed replacement landscape. The Council's Landscape Officer has further commented:

The Council's Arboricultural Officer also recommended that a scheme of landscape mitigations would be required that sustains a rural boundary to the property and include details relating to native tree and hedgerow plantings.

- 4.10. The proposed plans show the replacement of the hedges with indigenous mix and trees which reflect the character of the locality and its semi-rural feel. This character includes extensive areas of hedgerows along the common boundaries with through roads and this is reflected in the proposal.
- 4.11. This can be achieved with a mix of a native species as is shown on the submitted plans and this can be supplemented with native trees on the northern boundary of the site.

- 4.12. This approach dovetails with the BNG legislative requirements whereby habitat loss is both replaced and extended so that the 10 per cent gain is achieved. This is shown on the BNG plan and in the small-sites Metric which accompanies the application.

The planning balance and highway safety

- 4.13. The matter of highway safety is at the centre of the proposal and the pre-application response states as follows:

Whilst it still may be possible to achieve development, strong justification is needed. As noted in the covering letter, the reason for development is to create a safer entry and exit point related to horse box movements. Whilst this is considered, further evidence would be required in respect of movements to evidence the necessity of the development.

- 4.14. As can be seen on site and from the photographs below, there is limited visibility on egress from the subject dwelling.



Views from the existing access looking along the A272 looking to the south-east. The poor-quality landscape of conifers further obstructs visibility



Views from the existing access along the A272 looking to the north-west. These show that the hedge which is proposed to be removed causes virtually zero visibility

- 4.15. At this point the Billingshurst Road (A272) is of straight configuration and the levels are such that there is a downhill trajectory from the northwest. This and the straight configuration of the highway are such that traffic speed is perceived as being higher than stated limit of 30mph. Anecdotally, the occupiers of the host dwelling perceive difficulty and danger on egress from the existing driveway and the proposal seeks to address this situation. It is clear that on highway safety grounds the position will be enhanced and provide adequate visibility to and from the subject property.
- 4.16. The other aspect of highway safety is that the applicant has purchased the adjoining horse paddocks and has an interest in recreational equine activities. There is no access to the paddocks save for use of the existing residential access. Where horse boxes are used by way of trailers, vehicles need to use both sides of the A272 when manoeuvring out of the paddocks and this can be improved by use of the proposed access. Whilst not a regular occurrence, the proposal represents a gain in highway safety for this land use.

Other material planning considerations

- 4.17. There are no other material planning considerations which would militate against the grant of planning permission.

5.0 The planning balance

- 5.1. By way of summary, the following matters are set out:

- The applicant has engaged in the pre-application process and the local authority has issued a positive response along with guidance in respect of the matters to be considered. These issues have been addressed in the submission.
- The policies of the development plan specifically refer to the rural location and designation. The proposal, whilst in this designation of restraint is one which relates to visual effect, landscape and biodiversity gains and the critical matter of highway safety.
- The loss of the existing hedgerow is shown to be acceptable in so far as it does not have any historic or heritage status and forms part of the landscape character.
- On the planning balance, it is shown that the gain in highway safety along with replacement indigenous planting is an acceptable response to planning policy and all other material planning considerations.

- 5.2. In light of the foregoing, the proposal represents sustainable development and a positive decision should be issued.