

Planning Statement

Retrospective Planning Application
Creation of an Outdoor Customer Seating Area
Little Bean Café
35 High Street, Billingshurst, West Sussex RH14 9PP

1. Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a retrospective planning application for the creation of an outdoor customer seating area at Little Bean Café, 35 High Street, Billingshurst.

The proposal has enabled the reuse of an underutilised area to the rear of the property, providing additional seating for customers and supporting the continued operation of an established independent café within Billingshurst village centre.

A separate Heritage Statement accompanies this application and considers the impact of the proposal on the significance of the listed building.

2. Site and Existing Use

Little Bean Café occupies an established premises on Billingshurst High Street. To the rear of the building is an existing covered car port which had historically been used for storage and was not actively used by customers.

The rear area was functional in nature and made little positive contribution to either the operation of the business or the appearance of the site.

3. The Proposal

The application seeks retrospective planning permission for the creation of an outdoor customer seating area through the sensitive adaptation of the existing rear space.

The works include:

- Retention of the existing covered car port as a sheltered seating area.
- Installation of timber fencing to define the seating area.
- Installation of a freestanding gazebo to provide additional weather protection.
- External tables and chairs for customer use.
- Two substantial planted containers introducing soft landscaping and greenery.

No extension to the principal building has been constructed and the proposal makes effective use of an existing area that was previously underutilised.

4. Design and Character

The proposal has been designed to create an attractive and welcoming outdoor environment whilst remaining sympathetic to its surroundings.

The seating area is positioned to the rear of the property where it has limited visibility from the High Street. The introduction of timber fencing and planting creates a well defined and attractive space without appearing intrusive.

The planters soften the overall appearance of the area, introduce greenery into what was previously a hard surfaced service space and provide a more pleasant setting for customers.

Overall, the proposal represents a visual improvement to the site.

5. Supporting a Local Business

The additional seating allows Little Bean Café to better accommodate customers throughout the year by providing both covered and open air seating.

This enhances the viability of an established independent business and contributes positively to the vitality of Billingshurst High Street.

The proposal makes efficient use of existing space without requiring significant new built development.

6. Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

The seating area is ancillary to the existing café use and operates during normal business hours.

Its location to the rear of the property, together with the modest scale of the works, means there is no unacceptable impact on neighbouring residential amenity.

The proposal does not result in overlooking, loss of privacy or overshadowing. Customer seating is managed responsibly by the café, ensuring the area remains a pleasant environment for both customers and neighbouring occupiers.

7. Highway Safety

The proposal does not alter existing access arrangements or affect the public highway.

No additional parking demand is created beyond that associated with the existing café use, and pedestrian movement within the site remains safe and unobstructed.

8. Planning Policy

The proposal supports the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework by making effective use of previously developed land, supporting the vitality of local centres and enabling the continued success of a small independent business.

The proposal also accords with the relevant policies of the Horsham District Planning Framework relating to good design, sustainable development, protection of amenity and support for the local economy.

Heritage matters are addressed separately within the accompanying Heritage Statement.

9. Conclusion

The proposal represents a modest and sympathetic enhancement to an existing café through the reuse of an underutilised storage area.

The works have created an attractive outdoor seating area that supports the ongoing success of a valued local business whilst improving the appearance and functionality of the rear of the site.

The development preserves neighbouring amenity, has no adverse impact on highway safety and complies with the relevant planning policies. Heritage considerations have been fully assessed within the accompanying Heritage Statement.

For these reasons, it is respectfully requested that retrospective planning permission be granted.