

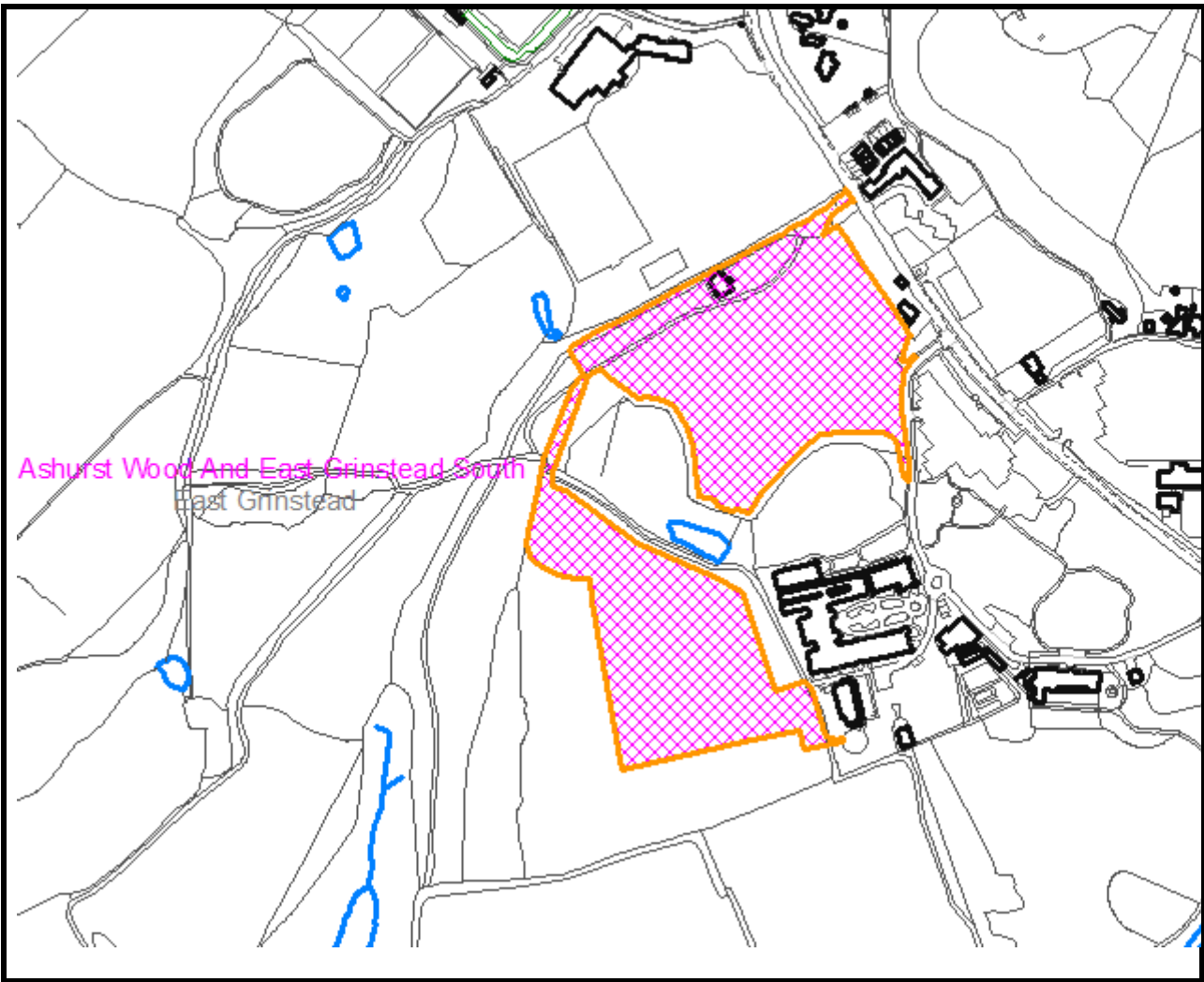
Planning Committee



Recommended for Permission

9th July 2026

DM/25/2223



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Site:	Juhring And Hobbs Field At Saint Hill Manor Saint Hill Road East Grinstead West Sussex
Proposal:	Change of use of vacant land to event area for use with installation of permanent infrastructure and reinforced ground surfacing (cellular paving grid) to facilitate the erection of annual marquee structures including ground level alterations, wash block and toilets, generator enclosure and concrete ring together with the erection and dismantling of the temporary marquee structure themselves (for a total maximum period of 84 days per year) and overflow car parking for the Church and neighbouring sports clubs consisting of reinforced ground surfacing (cellular paving grid) for up to 683

	car spaces (comprising up to 113 cars (Area A) for no more than 30 days per annum, 313 cars (Areas A & B) for no more than 13 days per year and up to 683 cars (Areas A, B & C) for no more than 7 days per year), construction of a new access and internal road, sustainable surface water and foul drainage provision, associated landscaping and ecological enhancements. (Further information received 28th May)
Applicant:	Mr Rob Thompson
Category:	Largescale Major Other
Target Date:	29th May 2026
Parish:	East Grinstead
Ward Members:	Cllr John Belsey /
Case Officer:	Stephen Ashdown

Link to Planning Documents:

<https://pa.midsussex.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=T1YYHJKT04L00>

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To consider the recommendation of the Interim Assistant Director for Planning and Sustainable Economy on the application for planning permission as detailed above.

2.0 Executive Summary

- 2.1 Planning permission is sought for a change of use and associated works on two vacant grass fields adjacent to Saint Hill Manor to form a car parking area of up to 683 spaces and to form an events area for a single event related to the Church, including the annual erection of temporary marquees with supporting infrastructure.
- 2.2 The site is located within the Countryside Area of Development Restraint, as defined by the Development Plan, where policy DP12 of the Mid Sussex District Plan (MSDP) permits development where it maintains, or enhances (where possible) the quality of the rural landscape and is for purposes of agriculture or supported by other policies within the Development Plan. While the proposal is not related to the purposes of agriculture, the intended use does support extended cultural/community activities associated with the permitted religious use of Saint Hill Manor, which lies immediately adjacent to the application site, and such expansion is capable of being supported in principle (policy DP25 of MSDP). While there is no objection in principle to the proposals, should it be found that it fails to maintain, or enhance, the quality of the rural landscape then the proposal would be contrary to policy DP12 of MSDP.
- 2.3 The site also lies within the High Weald National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), where the Council are under a duty (in exercising or performing any functions) to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape. Important components of the High Weald National Landscape, as identified within the High Weald Management Plan includes its wildlife, ecological value and

quality, geological and physiographical features, water environment, cultural heritage, dark skies, tranquillity, opportunities for access to nature, and landscape character for which the area was designated.

- 2.4 Having regard to all the submitted information it is considered that the proposed development will result in harm, albeit limited, to the landscape and visual character of the National Landscape, by virtue of the intended change of use of the land. This harm is considered to be negligible, due to the use of the cell pave structure and the limited days of use, meaning that the existing fields will maintain a vacant appearance (as existing) for the majority of any given year. Given the harm that has been identified, which can be characterised as definitional harm, it is considered that the application fails in its strictest terms to comply with policy DP16 of the MSDP and policy EG1 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan (EGNP).
- 2.5 There are a number of designated and non-designated heritage assets that have been identified in the vicinity of the site, whose settings would be adversely impacted as a result of the proposal, contrary to policy DP34 of the MSDP.
- 2.6 In respect to highway matters it is considered by your Planning Officers and the Local Highway Authority that the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety or the local highway network. On the basis that a proposed park and ride service to serve the annual event the use can be secured through a s106 Legal Agreement, it is considered that all reasonable measures have been taken to facilitate accessibility by means other than the private car. In addition, the use and availability of the car park can also be secured through the s106 Legal Agreement. As such, it is considered that the application complies with policy DP21 of the MSDP, policies EG11 and EG12 of the EGNP and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 2.7 In respect to flood risk and drainage matters the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) have raised no objection subject to appropriate conditions. On the basis of the information contained within the application it is considered that the application complies with policies DP41 and DP42 of the MSDP.
- 2.8 It is not considered that the proposal would have any adverse impact on protected species and suitable mitigation can be secured by condition where appropriate. As such it is considered that the application complies with policy DP38 of MSDP.
- 2.9 In respect of matters associated with the impact on nearby residential amenities and sustainable construction, these matters can be addressed through the use of suitable planning conditions and as such the application complies with policies DP26, DP29 and DP39 of the MSDP in respect of these issues.
- 2.10 The applicant intends to provide biodiversity net gain (BNG) on land within their ownership, although outside the redline of the application boundary. The statutory BNG condition will secure in excess of the minimum statutory 10% BNG.
- 2.11 Having regard to the above, given the limited harm identified to the High Weald National Landscape and to the setting of the designated and non-designated heritage assets, it is considered that the proposal does not comply with the Development Plan, when read as a whole. Given this, consideration needs to be given to any other material considerations that would indicate that a decision should be taken other than in accordance with the Development Plan. The NPPF is a material consideration that needs to be taken into account in the determination of this application.
- 2.12 In respect of the impact on the High Weald National Landscape consideration has been given to whether the proposal represents major development in the National Landscape, as

this is important in identifying the test against which any proposal would need to be considered. Having regard to the scale, character and nature of the proposed development, it is not considered, notwithstanding the overall size of the site, that the proposal does not constitute major development in the High Weald National Landscape (HWNL). This being the case paragraph 189 of the NPPF requires that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of National Landscapes, which includes the ecology and cultural heritage of the landscape. It makes it clear that National Landscapes have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.

- 2.13 It is your Planning Officer's view that there are specific circumstances relating to the proposed form of development, the religious significance and importance of the site and the impact of the event on the local economy which lend weight to supporting the development in the HWNL.
- 2.14 In NPPF terms less than substantial harm has been identified to the designated heritage assets and having regard to paragraph 215, it is considered that a scheme for a single annual event and no more than 50 calendar days for parking, along with the established economic benefits means there are sufficient public benefits that would outweigh the harm identified. Similarly, in respect of paragraph 216 and the non-designated heritage assets, it is considered that there are sufficient benefits that would outweigh the harm identified.
- 2.15 With regard to the Council's legal duty under Section 85 of the Countryside and Right of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act) (as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act in December 2023), it requires 'relevant authorities', in exercising or performing any function that affect AONBs in England, to "seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty". It should be noted that 'seek to further the purpose of conserving the natural beauty of the AONB' does impose a requirement that development must conserve or enhance the natural beauty of the AONB. The High Weald National Landscape has been fully considered in this planning application, and the proposal will have a negligible impact on the natural beauty of the National Landscape and therefore the application in its strictest terms interferes with these purposes. In such circumstances considerations need to be given if a grant of planning permission is justified having regard to the specific matters of this case, as set in this report and considered in the planning balance and conclusions section, your Officers' advice is that a grant of planning permission is justified in this instance.
- 2.16 When weighing all matters up, your Planning Officer identifies the following impacts associated with scheme and the weight attached to them;

Benefits

- Economic benefit to local economy: significant weight
- Increase in biodiversity net gain above statutory requirement: moderate weight
- Removal of overflow parking from public highway: limited weight

Neutral Impacts

- Highway matters
- Drainage and flood risk
- Impact on residential amenity
- Air quality
- Light pollution

- Noise pollution
- Impact on protected species
- Impact on ancient woodland
- Impact on trees

Harms

- Conflict with the Development Plan: limited weight
- Negligible harm to High Weald National Landscape: great weight
- Less than substantial harm to designated heritage assets: significant weight

- 2.17 In considering the overall planning balance, the fact that proposal is contrary to Development Plan is a matter that is given limited negative weight. Furthermore, the identified less than substantial harm to the setting of the designated heritage assets is matter that should be given significant weight, notwithstanding the fact that in this instance your Officer is satisfied that the public benefits of granting the scheme outweigh the harm, in the context of paragraph 215 of the NPPF. While the proposal does result in some negligible harm to the High Weald National Landscape, which in accordance with paragraph 189 of the NPPF should be given great weight, the extent of permanent, physical, above ground features is extremely limited and the intended limited use of the fields mitigates the extent of harm caused.
- 2.18 Notwithstanding the above identified harms, it is considered that the proposal will result in an economic benefit to the local economy and will help support local businesses (as evident from the representations received) and this can be given significant weight. There are also benefits arising from an increase in biodiversity net gain, above the statutory minimum requirement, which result in direct enhancements on land within the national landscape, which is considered attracts moderate positive weight. The use of the proposed car park by local sports clubs in association with their busiest events, will help ensure that unauthorised parking along Saint Hill Lane (and the associated highway safety implications) can be mitigated. This matter is given limited positive weight.
- 2.19 It is acknowledged that this case is finely balanced but having regard to all matters, notwithstanding the conflict with the Development Plan, it is considered that there are other material considerations that provide sufficient grounds, based upon the specifics of this case, to support this proposed development in the High Weald National Landscape. As such, it is considered that there are other material considerations that justify and decision being made other than in accordance with the Development Plan.
- 2.10 It is recommended that planning permission be granted subject to the suggested conditions set out in Appendix A of this report

3.0 Recommendation

Recommendation A

- 3.1 It is recommended that permission be granted subject to completion of a S106 Legal Agreement to secure off-site Biodiversity Net Gain, a Travel Plan, the Travel Plan monitoring fee, provision of an event bus service and the use and availability of the car park.

Recommendation B

- 3.2 In event that the the s106 Legal Agreement is not completed by the 9th October 2026 discretion falls to the Interim Assistance Director of Planning and Sustainable Economy to refuse the application for the following reason:

'Measures to facilitate sustainable means of travel to the site by alternative modes to the private car have not been secured and as such the application fails to comply with policy DP21 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2018-2031.'

4.0 Summary of Representations

18 Letters of objection have been received to the proposals on the following grounds:

- Impact on AONB.
- Impact on landscape character of area with such large structures.
- Noise Disturbance.
- Adverse impact on wildlife.
- Increase in traffic puts undue pressure on local roads.
- The marquee is an unauthorised use that does not benefit from planning permission.
- The application contains conflicting information regarding the duration the temporary structures will be in place, the application fails to specify clear limits on how long the 'temporary structures' will be in situ each year, offering no guarantee they will not remain for extended, near-permanent periods
- Adverse impact to the ground when the tent is removed.
- No reference to impact on burrowing animals such as field voles wood mice common shrews.
- Development will destroy field habitat for these animals.
- Presumption against major developments in the AONB.
- Any condition limiting development are likely to be ignored.
- Event and infrastructure could be held elsewhere outside the AONB.
- Increase in traffic on a non-paved road insufficiently lit and there is no paved footpath on either side of the road for pedestrians to use. There is also no pedestrian crossing, will create pollution and congestion problems.
- Adverse impact on listed building and conservation area.
- Design, appearance and materials.
- Disabled persons' access.
- Previous planning decisions (including appeal decisions).
- Conserving the ancient woodland flora and fauna affected by the huge construction works, as well as ongoing higher vehicle and foot traffic.
- The event and use of the field as a car park have already done damage to the environment.
- No assessment of the environmental impacts of erecting the marquee
- Will create adverse impacts for local residents for weeks.
- Licence allows operations at the church into the early hours the additional car parking will therefore be detrimental to local residents.
- This is not just an application for a new car park; this is a full-scale redevelopment of a rural landscape into a venue for one of Scientology's largest gatherings in their annual events calendar.
- No CBR testing has been undertaken to determine ground conditions to ensure cell paves will not move.

- Lack of details on the platform bases.
- The proposal constitutes major development in the National Landscape and there are no exceptional circumstances that would justify approval based upon para 190 of the NPPF.
- The economic information provided is based on the church's own figures does not mention the donations made to the church from parishioners nor the closed-loop economy created by the event.
- The money handed out to local charities is not sufficient to justify the proposal and the harm it causes to the National Landscape.
- Due to the construction of an event venue in USA, it is likely that the proposal would only be used for a few years at most.
- There is no reason why this event cannot be held elsewhere, outside the National Landscape.

A letter of objection has been submitted by CPRE to the application setting out the proposed development is inappropriate in the countryside and High Weald National Landscape, represents major development in the National Landscape where there are no exceptional circumstances to justify and incompatible with the Council's duty under s85 (as amended) of CROW Act 2000.

In total 271 letters of support have been received in relation to the proposals citing the following reasons:

- Economic and cultural benefits to local community
- Events are well attended and bring large numbers of visitors
- Improve and address existing parking issues from the church events and support Rugby and Sports Clubs
- No adverse impact on biodiversity
- Improve event safety
- Facilitate the international event

5.0 Summary of Consultees (full comments can be found on the planning file)

MSDC Tree Officer

No objection subject to conditions.

MSDC Environmental Protection

No objection subject to planning condition relating to noise management plan for events construction hours, car parking hours, air quality.

MSDC Landscape Consultants

No objection. Accepts the conclusion of the submitted landscape visual impact assessment which has been undertaken in accordance with the required guidelines.

This states that:

“Overall, it is considered that the magnitude of the landscape effects on the National Landscape as a whole, would be Slight adverse, which would be of Moderate-Minor significance”

MSDC Ecology Consultant

There are no ecological grounds for refusal. No objection subject to maintenance of a 15 m buffer zone from the ancient woodland and condition requiring ecological mitigation and biodiversity.

WSCC Highways

No objection.

MSDC Conservation Officer

Object to the application on grounds of adverse impact on the setting of adjacent designated and non-designated heritage assets. The proposal would result in less than substantial harm to the setting of both designated and non-designated heritage assets.

Southern Water

No objection to the scheme subject to conditions.

Nature Space (Great Crested Newts)

No objection.

WSCC Waste and Minerals

No objection subject to the LPA being satisfied that there is an overriding need for the development that outweighs the safeguarding of the mineral resource.

WSCC Lead Local Flood Authority

No objection subject to conditions being attached to any consent.

6.0 East Grinstead Town Council Observations

The Committee re-considered the application and the changes made to the proposals, and resolved to support approval of the application.

7.0 Introduction

- 7.1 Planning permission is sought for a change of use and associated works on two vacant grass fields adjacent to Saint Hill Manor to form a car parking area of up to 683 spaces and an events area for a single event related to the Church, including the annual erection of a temporary marquee with supporting infrastructure.
- 7.2 The site currently forms open fields not within the curtilage of a building, therefore the land presently benefits from the permitted development right which permits 28 days temporary use as detailed in The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 Part 4 Temporary buildings and uses (Class A and B). The site has been utilised for a number of events under this permitted allowance for several years.

- 7.4 However, the event which utilises the marquee does not benefit from this permitted development allowance, as the period that the fields are in use exceeds 28 days. This is due to the set-up and breakdown of the associated facilities, which the courts have held can be included in the 28 day period permitted for temporary events.
- 7.2 The application has been amended since its original submission with the applicant removing a hard surfaced element of parking, along with associated lighting columns, in addition to clarifying the intended use of the event area and parking areas, in response to officer concerns and advice in order to mitigate the potential harms of the development.

8.0 Relevant Planning History

- 8.1 DM/25/1292 – Lawful development application for the annual erection of large temporary marquees. Refused 25th July 2025.

9.0 Site and Surroundings

- 9.1 The site of Saint Hill Manor is located to the south-west of East Grinstead, adjoining Saint Hill Green on the junction of Saint Hill Road and West Hoathly Road (refer to Figure 1). To the north-east of Saint Hill Road is East Grinstead Rugby Club with three pitches, floodlit training area, car park and clubhouse. To the north is the East Grinstead Sports Club. This has a full-sized, high quality cricket pitch, a floodlit and fenced 4G soccer and multi-use sports pitch, a floodlit, full-sized, high-quality water-based hockey pitch and nine other floodlit and fenced hard surfaced outdoor sports facilities for tennis, netball etc. It has two smaller and one large hard surfaced car parks and a substantial clubhouse and indoor sports building. Both sports clubs occupy the slightly higher and flatter ground at the top of this High Weald ridge, whilst Saint Hill Manor occupies the land as it slopes away from the ridgeline, down to the south-east and south.
- 9.2 The Saint Hill Manor grounds and associated land extend from the high ground of the spur from the East Grinstead ridge at Saint Hill in the north and through to the local valley floor in the south. The manor house is set part way down this slope, sited below the horizon line, and faces due south, benefitting from long views across its grounds and across the High Weald to a major ridge to the south at Sharpthorne.
- 9.3 The manor house is a Grade II Listed Building built in the early 18th Century of ashlar stone to three-storeys with two and single-storey flanking wings and a projected front on stone columns. It is set on broad formal landscaped terracing surrounded by its grounds and gardens. A stone-built lodge and gates mark the original drive approach from the east from Saint Hill Road. A more contemporary drive alignment continues west then north from the manor, looping back to Saint Hill Road
- 9.4 The grounds comprise landscaped areas planted with non-native parkland species contemporary with the house, based around the 'original' pre-manor landscape of native woodland. The parkland trees include the mature cedars on the rise behind the house, as well as more relatively recent additions of more exotic species and shrubberies. The grounds fall down from the manor house to a minor valley where a lake feature has been created by damming the stream and valley.
- 9.5 Within the grounds, The Castle is the largest single building other than the manor house, and there are a number of smaller buildings clustered in groups throughout the site based around former uses such as the stables for example. The 20th Century Castle building complex is a substantial predominantly single storey but with some two-storey elements, built in a U-shaped form set around a central landscaped courtyard. It has a castellated parapet with a flat roof. To the south of The Castle is the contemporary café pavilion (or Refectory, as it is known) set into the south-facing lawns.

- 9.6 The existing car park located to the southeast of the site is hard surfaced, lit and landscaped. It has capacity for 132 cars.
- 9.7 The manor house and The Castle can be seen from within the wider landscape to the south and, together with the prominent evergreen trees within the landscaped grounds, form a horizon line within the landscape in. Generally, the manor house, The Castle and grounds are visually well contained by the woodland within the grounds to the north and east and by the wooded nature of the local landscape generally.
- 9.8 The application covers approximately 5.07ha and is made of two fields, Juhring Field and Hobbs Field respectively, which form part of the Saint Hill Manor landholding but have only been acquired in relatively recent times and are not part of the grounds and parkland that are contemporary with the 18th Century manor house. Both fields have been used on a temporary unauthorised basis by the applicant for events for a number of years, including the provision of car parking in relation to those events.
- 9.9 Juhring Field lies between the drive and the northern boundary with the East Grinstead Sports Club cricket pitch. The field itself is relatively featureless, laid to grass, with a lone semi-mature oak tree located about centrally within the field. The topography is slightly domed and rises to the south where the field adjoins woodland within the landholding, part of which is Ancient Woodland.
- 9.10 The land slopes away more steeply to the west where some more scrubby woodland is establishing itself on this steeper landform. The northern boundary with the Sports Club includes a track which joins Saint Hill Road, some self-seeded trees, and a line of tall, clipped evergreen cypresses aligned along the boundary with the Sports Club. The eastern boundary is against, what is called the Lodge and its gardens, a residential building within the landholding that runs parallel with Saint Hill Road. Close to the northern edge of Juhring Field is a disused timber framed barn building.
- 9.11 Juhring Field can be seen from Saint Hill Road and from the Sports Club, but the views are partial and filtered through the vegetation along its northern edge. The field is largely screened from wider long-distance views.
- 9.12 Hobbs Field lies to the west of The Castle. It slopes from the north, down to its south-western corner, and quite steeply along the western edge. It is set to the south of the woodland that borders Juhring Field to the north. Like Juhring Field, it too is relatively featureless with strong vegetated boundaries to the west and south. The boundary to the east with the grounds of Saint Hill Manor is more open with only sporadic vegetation along this edge and the western elevation of The Castle overlooks the field.
- 9.13 Hobbs Field is more visually open in the local landscape than Juhring Field with long views from it and back to it from the wooded High Weald and elevated topography to the west, south and south-east.

10.0 Application Details

- 10.1 The application seeks permission for works to, and the change of use of, land to create an event area (for use associated a single 3-day event) and car parking for 683 vehicles for use in association with this event, in addition to its use for wider church events and for use by the adjacent sports clubs, on a restricted basis.
- 10.2 To facilitate the change of the use of the land for the events area (Hobbs Field) and car parking (Juhring Field) it is proposed that a plastic cellular paving grid system (cellpave) be

laid on the ground (following the stripping of the top surface). The system will be back filled and sown with grass.

- 10.3 The site will be served by new vehicular and pedestrian access along the western and northern boundary of the site to access the car park and the event area. This access includes new visibility splays on to Saint Hall Road. The access road within the site will also be created by the use heavy duty cellpave. Where the cellpave is used to create vehicular tracks, this will be back filled with gravel.
- 10.4 In respect of the works to the event area, in addition to the cellpave, a concrete ring is proposed to sunk into the ground to facilitate the erection and dismantling of 3 temporary marquee structures for the annual event. The event marquee is approx. 50m x 85m x 17.5m, with a catering marquee measuring approx 25m x 65m x 8.5m and a seminar marquee measuring 25m x 65m x 8.5m. Although the actually annual event only lasts for 3 days, the application seeks consent for a maximum period of 84 days per year for the marquee structures to allow sufficient set-up and take-down time either side of the event.
- 10.5 In addition, a washroom block is proposed to be constructed, measuring approximately 15.m by 9.5m, under a flat roof structure with an overall height of approximately 3.2m. The washroom block will be located in the southeastern corner of Hobbs Field, close to existing buildings that make up the main complex to the Saint Hill Manor site. A generator enclosure is proposed to south of the washroom block, which will be formed by 2.8m high fencing, enclosing an area 20m by 9.1m. This enclosure will not have a roof. Both of these structures will be permanent features.
- 10.6 In respect of the car park, the application identifies three distinct areas – A, B and C – with the total of days for each area defined with the decription of the development. The proposed use of the car park is as follows:
- Up to 30 days in any calendar year with use of up to 113 spaces in Area A
 - Up to 13 days in any calendar year with use of up to 313 spaces in Areas A and B, and
 - Up to 7 days in any calendar year with use of up to 683 spaces in Areas A, B and C.

The overall maximum time period within the any calendar year that the proposed car parking will be in use is 50 days.

- 10.7 The submitted information contains a parking schedule identifying a list of events that would utilise the proposed parking and this includes sixteen days associated with events at neighbouring sports clubs or other community sports events within the local area.

11.0 Legal Framework and List of Policies

- 11.1 Planning legislation holds that the determination of a planning application shall be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 11.2 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, and*
- b) Any local finance considerations, so far as material to the application, and*
- c) Any other material considerations.'*

11.3 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.'

11.4 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.

11.5 Under section 38(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 if a policy contained in a development plan for an area conflict 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.

11.6 The Development Plan for this part of Mid Sussex consists of the Mid Sussex District Plan (MSDP), Site Allocations Development Plan Document (SADPD) and the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan (EGNP).

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

Mid Sussex District Plan (MSDP)

11.8 The District Plan was adopted at Full Council on 28th March 2018. Relevant policies:

DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside

DP16: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

DP19: Sustainable Tourism

DP21: Transport

DP25: Community Facilities and Local Services

DP26: Character and Design

DP29: Noise, Air and Light Pollution

DP34: Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets

DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

DP38: Biodiversity

DP39: Sustainable Design and Construction

DP41: Flood Risk and Drainage

DP42: Water Infrastructure and the Water Environment

Site Allocations DPD

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

SA38: Air Quality

East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan (EGNP)

11.10 The site falls within the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan area. The Plan was 'made' by the Council on in November 2016. The Plan forms part of the 'Development Plan' for the district and should be given full weight in the determination of this application.

The following policies are therefore relevant.

Policy EG1- High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Policy EG2 – Areas of Development Constraint

Policy EG 4 – Designated and Non-Designated Heritage Assets

Other Legislation

- 11.11 *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*
Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000

Other Material Considerations

- 11.12 *High Weald Management Plan 2024 – 2029 (HWMP)*

The Plan is adopted by all the relevant local authorities with land in the High Weald National Landscape as their policy for the management of the area and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it and is a material consideration for planning applications affecting the HWNL.

The Plan contains a number of objectives that are relevant to the proposal, and these are:

- G4 – Restore soil health.
- S1 – Protect the historic pattern and character of settlements.
- S3 – Conserve the distinct built heritage of the High Weald.
- W1 – Maintain the existing extent of woodland and particularly ancient woodland.
- W3 – Protect the archaeology and historic assets of AONB woodlands.
- FH3 – Protect and enhance the ecological function of field and heath.
- DS1 – Preserve the dark skies of the AONB.
- DS2 – Protect wildlife and habitats from light pollution.
- PQ2 – Protect the unspoilt rural landscape.

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

- 11.14 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 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

DPE8 - Sustainable Rural Development

DPS1 - Climate Change

DPS2 - Sustainability and Construction

DPS4 - Flood Risk and Drainage

DPC1 - Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside

DPC4 - High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

DPB1- Character and Design

DPB2 - Listed Buildings and Heritage Assets

DPT3 - Active and Sustainable Travel
DPN1 - Biodiversity
DPN2 - Biodiversity Net Gain
DPN3 - Blue and Green Infrastructure
DPN4 - Trees Woodland and Hedgerows
DPN6 - Pollution
DPN7 - Noise
DPN8 - Lights and Dark Skies
DPN9 - Air Quality

11.15 *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024)*

11.16 The NPPF sets out the government's planning policies. Paragraph 8 sets out the three overarching objectives to sustainable development, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives). The three objectives are economic, social and environmental.

11.17 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF sets out that presumption in favour of sustainable development should apply to decisions. This means approving development that accords with an up-to-date development plan or where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, grant permission unless the application of policies within the NPPF that protect areas/particular assets provide a strong reason for refusal or any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

11.18 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.'

11.19 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.

11.20 The following sections of the report will identify specific paragraphs relevant to the determination of the application.

11.21 *National Planning Policy Guidance (PPG)*

12.0 Assessment

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

- Principle of the development
- Impact on the High Weald National Landscape
- Transport (including Sustainability of the Location)
- Flood Risk and Surface Water Drainage
- Residential Amenity
- Noise, Light and Air Pollution
- Impact on Designated Heritage Assets

- Impact on Trees and Ancient Woodland
- Ecology
- Biodiversity Net Gain

Principle of development

12.2 In terms of policy designations, the starting point for this assessment is that the application falls within the countryside as defined by the District Plan.

12.3 Policy DP12 of the MSDP refers to the protection of the countryside and 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.*

Agricultural land of Grade 3a and above will be protected from non-agricultural development proposals. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, detailed field surveys should be undertaken and proposals should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of higher quality.

The Mid Sussex Landscape Character Assessment, the West Sussex County Council Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape, the Capacity of Mid Sussex District to Accommodate Development Study and other available landscape evidence (including that gathered to support Neighbourhood Plans) will be used to assess the impact of development proposals on the quality of rural and landscape character.

Built-up area boundaries are subject to review by Neighbourhood Plans or through a Site Allocations Development Plan Document, produced by the District Council.

Economically viable mineral reserves within the district will be safeguarded.’

12.4 Policy DP25 of MSDP provides support for the provision or improvement of community facilities and local services that contribute to creating sustainable communities.

12.5 Policy EG2 of the EGNP relates to areas of development restraint and sets out that planning permission will normally be granted for sympathetic conversion of redundant rural buildings, limited small-scale new development and extensions to existing buildings within the countryside.

12.6 There is conflict between policy DP12 of the MSDP and policy EG2 of EGNP. The latter is more permissive in the range of development that it suggests would be acceptable. Section 38(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out that if to any extent a policy contained in a development plan for an area conflict 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 become part of the development plan. In this case the MSDP is the last adopted document and therefore the most relevant policy for determining the application against is policy DP12.

- 12.7 In respect of policy DP12, development within the countryside is permissible where it maintains, or enhances (where possible) the quality of the rural landscape and is either for the purposes of agriculture or supported by another policy within the Development Plan. While the proposal is not related to the purposes of agriculture, the intended use does support extended cultural/community activities associated to the permitted religious use of Saint Hill Manor, which lies immediately adjacent to the application site, and such expansion is capable of being supported in principle (policy DP25), subject to the assessment of impact on the rural landscape quality, along with other relevant material planning considerations.
- 12.8 It is considered that the principle of improved facilities to the support events as part of the wider Saint Hill Manor site use is acceptable subject to detailed assessment of the proposals against the relevant Development Plan policies and other material planning considerations, where appropriate. This detailed assessment is set out in the following paragraphs of the report.

Impact on the High Weald National Landscape

- 12.9 The site is located within the High Weald National Landscape, a nationally designated landscape formerly known as the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. As set out in section 82 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, the primary purpose of the AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 further sets out the legal framework for AONBs.
- 12.10 Section 84(4) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 confirms the powers of local planning authorities to 'take all such action as appears to them expedient for the accomplishment of the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty'.
- 12.11 Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023) places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities, including a local planning authority such as Mid Sussex District Council, that in *'exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, they must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB'*. This includes land both within the landscape designation and within its setting.
- 12.12 Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires local authorities to *'prepare and publish a plan which formulates their policy for the management of the area of outstanding natural beauty and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it'*. The High Weald AONB Management Plan has been adopted by Mid Sussex District Council, and it is a material consideration in the planning process including decisions on planning applications.
- 12.13 Policy DP16 of the MSDP is relevant, and states:
- '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.*
- *the identified landscape features or components of natural beauty and to their setting.*
 - *the traditional interaction of people with nature, and appropriate land management.*

- *character and local distinctiveness, settlement pattern, sense of place and setting of the AONB; and*
- *the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage.*

Small scale proposals which support the economy and social well-being of the AONB that are compatible with the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty will be supported.

Development on land that contributes to the setting of the AONB will only be permitted where it does not detract from the visual qualities and essential characteristics of the AONB, and in particular should not adversely affect the views into and out of the AONB by virtue of its location or design.'

12.14 Policy EG1 of the EGNP also relates to the AONB area and states:

'Within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty planning permission will be refused for major development proposals unless the development is demonstrably required in the public interest and meets the exceptional circumstances criteria outlined in the NPPF.

Planning permission for other forms of development will be granted where the proposals are for the:

- (i) Conversion of redundant buildings;*
- (ii) Replacement, on a like for like basis, of existing buildings; or*
- (iii) Extension of an existing dwelling house, relate to agricultural development or some other minor recreational use;*

Provided that for each of the above (i, ii and iii) all of the following criteria are met:

- *The highest standards of Design are achieved;*
- *The natural and scenic beauty of the landscape is conserved or enhanced;*
- *The proposals do not result in an obtrusive feature in the landscape.*

The onus is on the applicant to demonstrate that the scheme would not negatively impact on the existing quality of the protected landscape and its setting taking account of locally important features. Proposals that have not fully considered and addressed the impact on the AONB will normally be refused.'

12.15 Furthermore, paragraphs 189 and 190 of the NPPF are relevant, and state:

'189. Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas and should be given great weight in National Parks. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality. and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas''.

190. When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes, as stated permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the

development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

- a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy.*
- b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and*
- c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.'*

12.16 Another material consideration is the High Weald Management Plan, which sets out the policy for looking after the High Weald National Landscape (a designated landscape) in order to achieve the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the High Weald. The Plan contains a number of objectives that are relevant to the proposal, and these are;

- G4 – Restore soil health.
- S1 – Protect the historic pattern and character of settlements.
- S3 – Conserve the distinct built heritage of the High Weald.
- W1 – Maintain the existing extent of woodland and particularly ancient woodland.
- W3 – Protect the archaeology and historic assets of AONB woodlands.
- FH3 – Protect and enhance the ecological function of field and heath.
- DS1 – Preserve the dark skies of the AONB.
- DS2 – Protect wildlife and habitats from light pollution.
- PQ2 – Protect the unspoilt rural landscape.

12.17 Prior to the consideration of the potential impact of the proposal on the National Landscape, it is important to consider whether the proposal is 'major development'. If the proposal conflicts with the Development Plan and is considered to be 'major development', then the application would need to be determined in the context of para 190 of the NPPF (set out above). Conversely, if the development is not 'major', then para 189 of the NPPF provides the relevant context for determining the application.

12.18 Case law has established that the consideration of whether or not a development is 'major development' is a matter of planning judgement based on the local context for the specific case. Furthermore, the natural meaning of the word major in the English language is important, so therefore the dictionary definition which is "important, serious or significant" is relevant. The HWMP recommends that, in forming that judgement, specific consideration is given to the following;

- 'The potential of the proposal to have a significant adverse impact on the natural beauty for which the AONB is designated and defined, as set out in this Management Plan, for example, where the nature, scale and setting of the proposal could significantly harm any of the character components.

- The potential for such adverse impact from cumulative development.'

12.19 In considering whether the proposal has the potential to have a significant adverse impact on natural beauty within National Landscape, this does not require an in-depth consideration of whether the proposal would have such an impact. A *prima facie* assessment of the potential for such impact, in light of the scale, character or nature of the proposed development is sufficient.

- 12.20 Taking into account the above, while it is recognised that the application site covers approximately 5 hectares, the amount of above ground permanent works are limited, and the proposed uses are intended to be restricted to specific number of days within any calendar year. As such, apart from any construction period associated with the proposed works and outside the proposed periods of use, the open fields would appear as open fields, as they currently do, save for the access track along the northern boundary (a feature that is not necessarily alien in rural locations). In addition, as the proposed annual marquee structures are to be temporary features (erected and dismantled on a yearly basis within the defined time period) and the cellpave proposed to be used to create the car park (along with the access road and event area) could be removed (if no longer required), any impact on the landscape will not be permanent and could be reversed. It is accepted that there are permanent structures proposed, however these are minor in scale and form and consist of a washroom block and plant enclosure, along with a concrete ring that will be below ground. Having regard to the scale, character and nature of the proposed development, it is considered, notwithstanding the overall size of the site, that the proposal does not constitute major development in the HWNL, therefore paragraph 190 of the NPPF does not apply in this case.
- 12.21 In determining the proposal however, great weight does need to be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of the HWNL, as required by paragraph 189 of the NPPF.
- 12.22 The application has been supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), which provides the applicant's assessment of the proposals impact on the surrounding landscape character. The conclusions of this assessment include the following:
- "There would be some minor adverse landscape and visual effects, but these would be both limited in degree, restricted to the site itself and only a small part of the local landscape context. These would represent negligible harms to the character and appearance of the National Landscape and the countryside. "*
- 12.23 The Council's Visual Landscape Consultant agrees with the submitted conclusions of the LVIA.
- 12.24 Whatever 'value' is attached to the site itself, it still forms part of the overall high value protected landscape of the High Weald National Landscape Natural Landscape and the site cannot be developed without a change to the baseline situation, even if the physical (above ground) intervention and proposed extent of use are limited, as in this case.
- 12.25 Having regard to the requirements of policy DP16 of the MSDP and policy EG1 of the EGNP, the proposals are not considered to represent major development within the National Landscape. The applicant's LVIA accepts that there will be harm, albeit negligible, to the character and appearance of this designated landscape. Officers agree. On that basis, it is considered that the development fails to conserve or enhance the natural beauty of the area and there is conflict with the Development Plan policies in this regard.
- 12.26 In addition to the Development Plan, consideration also needs to be given to the HWMP, which is a material consideration for planning applications affecting the HWNL. It contains various objectives and actions set against each of the key character components of natural beauty described within the HWMP and the main relevant objectives, as identified by your Planning Officers, have been identified at paragraph 11.12 above. In assessing the application proposal against these objectives, your Planning Officers provide the following views:

G4 – While the proposals would lead to some disturbance of existing soils and the loss of topsoil, this could potentially be re-used elsewhere within the wider land ownership of the applicant. Slight negative impact.

S1 – The proposal will not impact on the historic pattern and character of settlements. Neutral impact.

S3 – The proposal would potentially have an adverse impact on the setting of adjacent designated and non-designated heritage assets. Slight negative impact.

W1 – The proposal would provide an appropriate buffer to retained adjacent ancient woodland, enabling it to be maintained at its current value. Neutral impact.

W3 – The proposal would not result in any direct loss of archaeology and historic assets of the AONB woodland. Neutral impact.

FH3 – The proposal would provide for both on-site and off-site ecological/bio-diversity enhancements that would increase the value of the impacted land within the High Weald. Positive impact.

DS1 – The proposal does not contain any lighting and as such the dark skies of the High Weald AONB will be preserved. Neutral impact.

DS2 – Again, given that the proposal does not contain any lighting proposals wildlife and habitats would be protected from light pollution. Neutral Impact.

PQ2 – The proposal would result in some minor loss of intrinsic sense of naturalness by the virtue that some development will take place. However, this limited to the site and it is not considered that the wider value of the AONB would be impacted, especially given the restricted nature of the uses within any calendar year. Slightly negative impact.

12.27 It is the view of your Planning Officers that the proposal can be considered to comply with the HWMP, when read as a whole. In reaching this view, the identified negative impacts have been weighed against the positive impacts.

12.28 Taking this into the account, while it is considered that the proposal can be viewed as being in compliance with the HWMP (when read as a whole), it is considered that the proposal fails to comply with policy DP16 of MSDP and policy G1 of the EGNP, as a level of harm, albeit it negligible, has been identified.

12.29 Given the above, consideration needs to be given to any other material considerations that might indicate that this form of development within the National Landscape is otherwise acceptable. To this end regard needs to be given to the NPPF.

12.30 Para 189 of the NPPF requires that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of National Landscapes, which includes the ecology and cultural heritage of the landscape. It makes it clear that National Landscapes have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.

12.31 In respect of the impact of the development on the landscape and scenic beauty of the HWNL, it is accepted that there would be negligible harm to the openness and ruralness of the site. The use of grass back filled cell pave for the majority of the site, along with the intended limited use and retained landscaping, will help mitigate this harm, although it is

acknowledged that it will not remove it. It is accepted that during the construction phase there will be some visual harm, but this will be over a relatively short period of time and cease on completion of the works. The proposed permanent concrete ring will be below ground, and covered by grass when not in use, and as such it is considered that this element in isolation does not have any material impact on the HWNL.

- 12.32 The proposed permanent structures, namely the washroom block and plant enclosure, are located close to the existing building complex on the site and as such are viewed in that context, rather than isolated structures. Therefore, given their modest size and scale, and overall design, it is not considered that these structures would have any material impact on the HWNL, in their own right.
- 12.33 In addition to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty within the National Landscapes, paragraph 189 of NPPF also sets out that the conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations. The proposal would conserve, through the securing of appropriate mitigation, protected species and wildlife value of the site. Furthermore, the provision of additional biodiversity net gain, above the statutory 10%, would ensure that a significant enhancement can be secured. This adds positive weight to the proposals. It is accepted that the proposals would result in some limited harm to the setting of adjacent designated and non-designated heritage assets and this is a matter that needs to be weighed against the development.
- 12.34 In support of their application the applicant has outlined the importance of the Saint Hill site to the scientologist religion, as not only is it the largest of their churches within Europe, but it is also, perhaps more importantly, the home of its founder, which holds special importance and interest within the order. The information outlines that there is a large community of scientologists living within the local area and the Saint Hill site forms their place of worship and annual event provides an opportunity to commune with scientologists from around the world.
- 12.35 In this context, it is accepted that the site holds a considerable significance to scientologists and the scientology religion, which adds weight to the need to be able to provide facilities to support the annual event in this location, which cannot be replicated at alternative venues within the wider local or regional area.
- 12.36 Furthermore, to support the need for the proposal the applicant has submitted an Economic and Employment Impact Assessment to demonstrate the impact that the 2025 international event had on the economy. In addition to a Comparator Report of the event against other large scale international events within the UK.
- 12.37 The economic impact report concludes that the 2025 international event generated a gross positive impact of £6.96 million within East Grinstead, £11.3 million across Sussex (including East Grinstead) and £21.71 million nationally. The submitted information also sets out that the event attracts a high proportion of international attendees (over 47%) which is higher than the UK event average, which is 33%. It also sets out, that due to the higher proportion of international visitors, the delegate spend in the economy is significantly higher than other comparable international events within the UK.
- 12.38 It is noted that representations have been made that question the findings of the report and its true impact on the local economy. However, there is no alternative evidence before officers on this matter.

- 12.39 The submitted reports are based upon first hand data gathered from visitors to the 2025 event, although it is recognised that the submissions do not include copies of the gathered primary data, which does make it difficult to fully interrogate. However, notwithstanding the limitations of the report and in the absence of any alternative economic assessment, it is your Planning Officers' view the international event has a positive effect on the local economy, and this is supported by letters from local businesses. It is considered that this is a matter that can be weighed in support of the proposal.
- 12.40 Having regard to the above, it is your Planning Officers' view that there are specific circumstances relating to the proposed form of development, the religious significance and importance of the site and the impact of the event on the local economy which lend weight to supporting the development in the HWNL. Notwithstanding the acknowledged conflict with relevant Development Plan policies, this is a matter that needs to be considered in the overall planning balance.

Statutory Duty under the CRoW Act

- 12.41 In regard to development in National Landscape areas, section 245 (Protected Landscapes) of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) amended the duty in the CROW Act on relevant authorities in respect of their functions which affect land in National Parks, National Landscapes, and the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads (collectively referred to as Protected Landscapes) in England.
- 12.42 Section 85 of the Countryside and Right of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act) (as amended by LURA) requires 'relevant authorities', in exercising or performing any function that affect AONBs in England, to "seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty". Prior to the amendment, the statutory duty was only to "have regard to" the statutory purposes. You should note that the duty is a qualified duty and if the application does not conserve and enhance the National Landscape that cannot in itself be determinative of the application. It is simply a matter which falls to the planning balance.
- 12.43 The Council's duty to seek to further the purposes of the National Landscape requires a council when considering development proposals to consider whether the application proposes development which interferes with the fulfilment of the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape. Your Officers' advice is that the application has an impact, albeit negligible on the natural beauty of the National Landscape and therefore the application interferes with these purposes, although the proposed provision of additional biodiversity enhancement on land within the applicant's control, and also in the HWNL, will contribute to furthering its purpose. In such circumstances consideration needs to be given if a grant of planning permission is justified.

Access and Transport

- 12.44 Policy DP21 of MSDP deals with the transport matters and seeks development to support the objectives of the West Sussex Transport Plan 2011-2026. The policy sets a number of matters that should be considered in determining development proposals, which include:
- *'The scheme is sustainably located to minimise the need for travel noting there might be circumstances where development needs to be located in the countryside.*
 - *Appropriate opportunities to facilitate and promote the increased use of alternative means of transport to the private car, such as the provision of, and access to, safe and*

convenient routes for walking, cycling and public transport, including suitable facilities for the secure and safe cycle parking, have been fully explored and taken up.

- The scheme avoids severe additional traffic congestion, individually or cumulatively, taking account of any proposed mitigation.

- The scheme protects the safety of road users and pedestrians.

- The scheme does not harm the special qualities of the South Downs National Park or the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty through its transport impacts.

- The scheme provides adequate car parking for the proposed development taking into account the accessibility of the development, the type, mix and use of the development and the availability of opportunities for public transport.'

12.45 Policy EG11 of the EGNP deals with mitigating highway impact and requires all new housing and business development proposals to be supported by an appropriate assessment of the impact of the proposal on the highway network, amongst other things.

12.46 Policy EG12 of the EGNP deals with car parking provision and requires it accord with adopted WSCC standards, unless in exceptional circumstances.

12.47 In respect of the NPPF, paragraph 115 sets out that in considering a development proposal it should ensure (amongst other things) that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users. Furthermore, paragraph 116 sets out:

'Development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios.'

12.48 The application is supported by a Transport Assessment which sets out the justification for the proposed access arrangements and assess the impact of proposed traffic generation on the local highway network. In addition, a draft Travel Plan has been submitted that sets out potential actions to promote alternative sustainable means of travel to the site.

12.49 The application has been considered by the Local Highway Authority (LHA) and their full comments can be found on the public planning register.

12.50 The site is proposed to be accessed by two new points of access, the first via an altered existing access point to Saint Hill Road. To facilitate this access, some limited tree removal is required to enable appropriate visibility splays to be provided. The second access point will be taken from the existing main entrance drive for the church and does not require any alterations to the public highway.

12.51 The LHA have considered these details, and they are content that the proposed access arrangement will not give rise to any highway safety issues.

12.52 There is no alternative evidence in front of Officers to suggest that the views of the LHA should not be supported.

12.53 In considering the potential impact of the development on the local highway network, the LHA considers that the proposal would not result in 'severe' cumulative impacts on the

operation of the local highway. Again, there is no alternative technical evidence before Officers to suggest that this is not the case and as such your Officers accept the LHA's position on this. It is suggested by the applicant's that the use of the car parking by local sports clubs for certain events will help alleviate unauthorised parking on the highway. The use and availability of the proposed car parking for these purposes can be secured with a s106 Legal Agreement.

- 12.54 In support of the application, and to promote the uses of alternative means of sustainable transport, a draft Travel Plan has been submitted. It identifies that for the existing events held on the field a park and ride strategy is utilised to pick visitors up from the station. In addition the document includes strategies that seek to promote the bus service, car sharing and cycling and walking to the site.
- 12.55 The LHA have not raised any objections in relation to the general strategies identified within the draft Travel Plan and your Planning Officers are content that this draft document is sufficient to identify that the proposed development can be considered to be sustainable from a transport perspective and a final Travel Plan document can be secured within the s106 Legal Agreement. In addition to the Travel Plan, your Officers will secure the proposed park and ride scheme within the s106 Legal Agreement.
- 12.56 Given the above, your Officers consider that the proposed development will not have an unacceptable impact on the local highway network or give rise to unacceptable highway safety issues. Furthermore, it is considered that subject to the securing of a proposed park and ride scheme, the proposed annual event is considered to be sustainable, from a transport perspective. As such, it is considered that the application complies with policy DP21 of the MSDP, policies EG11 and EG12 of the EGNP and the NPPF.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 12.57 Policy DP41 of the MSDP seeks to ensure that development proposals are safe (from flooding) and not increase flooding elsewhere.
- 12.58 Policy DP42 of the MSDP requires developments, amongst other things, to demonstrate sufficient capacity exists for off-site foul and water provision.
- 12.59 The site is located within Flood Zone 1, however any development within this area where the application site exceeds 1 hectare requires a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA).
- 12.60 The applicant has submitted the required Flood Risk Assessment, which has been considered by the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), who's full comments can be found on the planning file. They have no objections subject to appropriate condition to ensure implementation and management of the surface water systems. Without any evidence to the contrary, your Planning Officer agrees with the views of the LLFA and the proposal is therefore considered to comply with Policy DP41.
- 12.61 In regard to drainage details these are given in the FRA and submitted drainage strategy plans.

Surface Water Drainage

- 12.62 The flood risk and drainage plans advise that infiltration testing was undertaken and showed that drainage by infiltration is not a feasible means of surface water drainage for the site.

- 12.63 The proposed surface water drainage will be via drainage into attenuation tanks to control the rate of discharge to an acceptable level, before being discharged to a private watercourse outside the red line of the application site to the west of the site.
- 12.64 The LLFA have considered the submitted details and have not raised an objection subject to the imposition of suitable conditions.

Foul Drainage

- 12.65 In regard to foul sewage the intention is to connect to the existing package treatment plant within the church, located in land in the same ownership as the applicant, which then disposes to the mains. Again, no objections have been raised within the consultations to this element of the scheme, and these elements can be secured by the imposition of suitable conditions.
- 12.66 In light of the above, your Planning Officer considers that the proposed development complies with policies DP41 and DP42 of the MSDP.

Impact on Residential Amenities

- 12.67 Policy DP26 of the MSDP seeks to ensure that proposals do not cause significant harm to the amenities of nearby residents, including taking account of the impact on privacy, outlook, daylight and sunlight, noise and light pollution.
- 12.68 Policy DP29 of the MSDP seeks to protect the environment from unacceptable levels of noise and light pollution.
- 12.69 Policy SA38 of the SADPD requires applicants to demonstrate that proposals would not have an unacceptable impact on air quality.
- 12.70 The application that has been submitted seeks permission for an events area and parking area. These along with the proposed annual event and use, albeit limited, of the car parking has the potential to generate noise and pollution that could be detrimental to the residential amenities of the area. In addition, the proposed plant enclosure has the potential to generate noise.
- 12.71 The Council's Environmental Protection team consider potential noise impact can be mitigated to an acceptable degree by the use of appropriate planning conditions. They recommend that if the Council is minded to approve the application, that it is subject to conditions limiting the parking hours of the site, noise levels and air quality mitigation.
- 12.72 Previous proposed lighting columns have been removed from the car park proposals and as such there are no concerns regarding potential for light pollution in relation to the development.
- 12.73 Having regard to the above, it is considered that the proposal would not result in significant harm to the residential amenities of nearby residents, with the use of suitable planning conditions, by means of noise, light and air pollution. As such the application can be considered to comply with policies DP26 and DP29 of the MSDP and policy SA38 of the SADPD, in respect of these issues.

Impact on Heritage Assets

- 12.74 The LPA is under a duty by virtue of s.66(1) of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990 (LBCA) (General duty as respects listed building in exercise of planning functions):

'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.'

- 12.75 Policy DP34 of the MSDP states, in relation to Listed Buildings and other heritage assets, the following:

'Listed Buildings Development will be required to protect listed buildings and their settings. This will be achieved by ensuring that:

- 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;*
- 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;*
- Traditional building materials and construction techniques are normally used. The installation of uPVC windows and doors will not be acceptable;*
- 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;*
- Special regard is given to protecting the setting of a listed building;*
- 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.*

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.'

- 12.76 Policy EG4 of the EGNP requires an application affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets to be supported by an appropriately detailed heritage assessment.

12.77 Section 16 of the NPPF is of particular relevance in relation to the application and the most relevant paragraphs are set out below:

'208. Local Planning Authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal of heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

210. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

212. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

213. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

- a) Grade II listed buildings, or Grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;*
- b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, Grade I and II* listed buildings, Grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.*

214. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and*
- b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and*
- c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.*

215. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

216. The effect of an application of the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in the determining an application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.'

12.78 The proposal is considered to affect the settings of a number of heritage assets, including both listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs). The proposals have been considered by your Conservation Officer, and their comments can be found in full on the planning file.

12.79 It should be noted that in considering the impact of the proposal on adjacent designated and non-designated assets, your Planning Officer has reached the conclusion that the proposal would not have an adverse impact on the setting of the assets identified by your Conservation Officer at Saint Hill Green. The significance and assessment of each asset, where your Planning Officers consider harm to the setting will be caused is set out in the following paragraphs:

Saint Hill Manor

12.80 A Grade II listed neo-classical country house. The building is set within landscaped gardens, which include a number of other buildings of varying dates. Beyond these immediate grounds, the setting of the house remains largely rural in character.

12.81 The house also has group value with surviving historical buildings around it within the manor grounds, including the former stables to the southeast, and the lodge building adjacent to the entrance driveway to the north, as well as a further lodge building to the east, which would be regarded as curtilage listed.

12.82 As such, the surviving rural setting of the Manor would be considered to make a strong positive contribution to its special interest and the manner in which this is appreciated, in particular those parts of that interest which are drawn from historical illustrative and aesthetic values. The proposed development affects fields constituting the immediate rural setting of the Manor to the north and west of its gardens.

North Lodge

12.83 North Lodge is a characterful small building located to the north of the Manor, adjacent to the principal entrance to the gardens. Given its date of construction, proximity to the Manor, common ownership, and historical and continuing functional relationship, the building is regarded as curtilage listed.

12.84 In terms of setting, the relationship of the Lodge with the entrance drive, which largely retains its historical configuration, and the remainder of the grounds of the Manor will be significant in contributing to an understanding of its historical function. However, the wider rural setting, including the field directly to the west (Juhring Field), also make a strong positive contribution to the special interest of this curtilage listed building, in particular its historical illustrative value as part of a country estate, and its aesthetic value.

Rockwood Park

- 12.85 This building formerly known as Fonthill, and originally as Rockwood, is a substantial building located opposite to the northern part of the site, on the eastern side of Saint Hill Road
- 12.86 Based on its age and its surviving architectural character, it is considered that Rockwood Park should be regarded as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA). This designation should include a small building surviving to the road frontage just to the northwest of the house, which would appear to be a former stable or similar, as well as the former school chapel which survives as a residential conversion a short distance to the southeast within this designation
- 12.87 The surviving wider rural setting of the house and associated buildings makes a positive contribution in this respect. Juhring Field, being the greater part of the setting to the east and southeast of the former house and stables, will be of particular importance in this respect.
- 12.88 The impact of the proposed development on the identified heritage assets is set out in the following paragraphs.

Juhring Field

- 12.89 With regard to the development and use of Juhring Field, it is considered by your Conservation Officer that the proposed introduction of car parking throughout the space will have a marked impact on its character when in use, which will be altered from an open field to a car park of a total of 683 car spaces.
- 12.90 In considering the harm to each of the identified, your Planning Officer has considered all the relevant information, including the views of your Conservation Officer, and has identified the following degree of harm to the assets:
- Saint Hill Manor: Less than substantial harm, at the mid end of that scale.
 - North Lodge: Less than substantial harm, at the mid-end of that scale.
 - Rockwood Lodge: A high level of harm to an NDHA of a mid-level of interest in the local context.

Hobbs Field

- 12.91 This field is set away from Saint Hill Road and screened from it by woodland and existing buildings around Saint Hill Manor and it is not considered that the proposed works and use would affect the setting of the majority of heritage assets identified, except for the Manor itself.
- 12.92 The proposed works and use within this field, including the introduction of the large areas of cell-pave surfacing, concrete ring beams and pads for the erection of a large marquee, as well as new built form consisting of a washroom block, generator and substation to the eastern side of the field, will have a potentially cumulative impact on the character of the space, even when the marquee is not present. In combination, these works will detract from the historic appearance of the area as an agricultural field.

- 12.93 It is considered by your Officers that the proposals will detract from the positive contribution which the site currently makes through setting to Saint Hill Manor and the harm is identified as less than substantial, at the mid-range of that scale.
- 12.94 Cumulatively, the impact of the works to both fields on Saint Hill Manor are considered by your Officers to be the mid end of the less than substantial scale. Accordingly, great weight must be given to the conservation of the heritage assets.
- 12.95 It should be noted that the heritage impact assessment submitted with the application only assess the impact of the proposal on Saint Hill Manor and concludes that there is no negative impact on the significance of this heritage asset and that the proposals comply with local and national policies in this regard.
- 12.96 Your Planning Officer agrees with the comprehensive assessment of the identified heritage assets provided by your Conservation Officer, to the extent that has been set out in the above paragraphs and that as a result it is evident that the application proposal will have an adverse impact on designated and non-designated heritage assets and as such the proposal conflicts with policy DP34 of MSDP.
- 12.97 Given the identified conflict with policy DP34, regard does need to be given to the NPPF and in particular paragraphs 215 and 216, which are set out above.
- 12.98 As less than substantial harm has been identified in relation to designated heritage assets, this harm needs to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In addition, in enacting section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the desirability of preserving the settings of listed buildings should be given 'considerable importance and weight' when the decision taker carries out the balancing exercise, thus properly reflecting the statutory presumption that preservation is desirable. In this instance it is recognised that the annual event does make an economic contribution to the local economy and provides opportunities and support for local businesses (evidenced in the letters of representation received). In addition, the proposed use of the car park to support popular events at the neighbouring sports club will enable the potential of any overflow parking to be contained off the public highway. It is considered that these are public benefit that are sufficient to outweigh the harm that has been identified.
- 12.99 In relation to the NDHA, paragraph 216 requires a balanced judgement to be made having regard to the scale of the harm and the significance of the asset. It is recognised that the annual event does make an economic contribution to the local economy and provides opportunities and support for local businesses (evidenced in the letters of representation received). In addition, the proposed use of the car park to support popular events at the neighbouring sports club will enable the potential of any overflow parking to be contained off the public highway. It is considered that the level of harm identified to Rockwood Lodge is outweighed in this balancing exercise and that the impact on the NDHA is acceptable, in the context of paragraph 216 of the NPPF.

Trees and Ancient Woodland

- 12.100 Policy DP37 of the MSDP relates to trees, woodland and hedgerows and supports the protection and enhancement of trees and woodland. In particular ancient woodland will be protected, and the policy sets out that development should be set as far away from ancient woodland as possible, with a minimum buffer of 15m maintained.

- 12.101 Policy DP38 of the MSDP seeks to protect and enhance biodiversity by, amongst other things, avoid damage to and protect and enhance the special characteristics of ancient woodland.
- 12.102 The development will, according to the submitted arboricultural report require the removal of 6 category C trees and 5 category B trees. This will include two at the entrance to the site, which pose a constraint to development. Your Tree Officer considers that the loss will impact, to an extent, on the character of the road and increase visibility of the development along the road, however no objection to their loss has been raised.
- 12.103 The trees in question are not covered by Tree Preservation Orders and it is not considered that they are worthy of TPOs in their own right. While the loss of any trees as part of a development is regrettable, there is the potential, as part of any future landscaping scheme, to secure replacement planting as mitigation.
- 12.104 In the middle of the site, between the two fields but outside the red line of the application site is an area of ancient woodland, which is known as Northwood. In addition, and directly abutting the site to the northeast, is an area of woodland which is covered by a Tree Preservation Order (ref TP/15/0007).
- 12.105 In relation to development and ancient woodland, the government guidance sets out that *'proposals should have a buffer zone of at least 15m from the boundary of the woodland to the avoid damage'*. This is reflected in requirements of policy DP37 of the MSDP.
- 12.106 The planning application demonstrates there will be a 15m buffer to ancient woodland, and arboricultural safeguards. Accordingly, it is considered that the proposal will not adversely impact on ancient woodland
- 12.107 The Council's Tree Officer has not raised an objection to the scheme.
- 12.108 Having regard to the above it is considered that the development is compliant with Policies DP37 and DP38 of the MSDP

Ecology

- 12.109 Policy DP38 of MSDP deals with biodiversity and states, in part:

'Biodiversity will be protected and enhanced by ensuring development:

- *Protects existing biodiversity, so that there is no net loss of biodiversity. Appropriate measures should be taken to avoid and reduce disturbance to sensitive habitats and species. Unavoidable damage to biodiversity must be offset through ecological enhancements and mitigation measures (or compensation measures in exceptional circumstances); and*
- *Minimises habitat and species fragmentation and maximises opportunities to enhance and restore ecological corridors to connect natural habitats and increase coherence and resilience; and*
- *Promotes the restoration, management and expansion of priority habitats in the district;'*

- 12.110 Paragraph 187 of the NPFF sets out the ways planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. Paragraph 193 sets out a

number of principles that should be applied in the determination of planning applications, which include;

'a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;

12.111 The applicant has submitted a Preliminary Ecological Assessment of the site, which has been considered by the Council's Ecology Consultants. Their comments can be found in full on the planning file.

12.112 The existing base value of site which mainly forms two areas of grassland is considered low and while the extensive ground reinforcement will impact on this value. This can be largely offset and enhanced by the provision of ecological enhancements, as detailed in the submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.

These being:

- Creation of a pond designed and managed for wildlife.
- Provision of bat boxes
- Provision of bird nest boxes
- Creation of areas of species-rich meadow grassland within the Site, ideally within wide 'natural buffer strips' along the Site boundaries
- Planting of native species rich hedgerows and/or 'natural buffer strips' along the access roads and plot boundaries
- Incorporation of dead wood habitat piles within areas of retained suitable habitat for example underneath tree canopies and along pond margins

12.113 The Council's Ecology Consultant has not raised an objection to the scheme subject to appropriate conditions securing the enhancements of the site.

12.114 In regard to Great Crested Newts, which are a European Protected species, the submitted Ecological Appraisal advises there are four waterbodies within proximity of the site. The first is adjacent to the northern boundary of Hobbs Field, with the others located within woodland parcels approximately 40m north, 180m south-west, and 170m north-west of the Site, respectively. All waterbodies were located within woodland parcels connected to the site via grassland.

12.115 The applicant has submitted information that demonstrates the impacts of the proposed development can be addressed through Mid Sussex Council's District Licence. This can be secured through appropriate conditions.

12.116 Subject to appropriate conditions to secure the appropriate mitigation, it is considered that the proposal will protect the ecological value of the site and complies with policy DP38 of the MSDP.

Sustainability

12.117 Policy DP39 relates to sustainable design and construction and seeks to improve the sustainability of all developments. While the policy encourages the inclusion of sustainability measures, it does not prescribe a particular method, or standard.

12.118 The applicant has provided a sustainability assessment to demonstrate how the building and operation will ensure an appropriate level of sustainability through;

- the use of green roofs
- sustainable drainage system.
- construction waste management plan
- Air source water heater
- water efficiency management including greywater harvesting.

12.119 The application is not proposing any form of renewable energy generation.

12.120 Having regard to the above, the applicant has demonstrated that sustainability has been considered as part of the design stage for the proposals and appropriate measures can be secured by the use of appropriate conditions, The development is considered to comply with Policy DP39 of the MSDP.

Biodiversity Net Gain

12.121 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 is deemed to have been granted subject to the biodiversity net gain condition for development to deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat.

12.122 The biodiversity net gain condition is set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Schedule 7A, Part 2, 13 (2). It states:

‘The condition is that the development may not be begun unless—

(a) a biodiversity gain plan has been submitted to the planning authority (see paragraph 14), and

(b) the planning authority has approved the plan (see paragraph 15)’

12.123 The information submitted in support shows that the proposal would result in the net loss on site of 4.04 habitat units, which equates to a 31% loss compared to the current baseline habitat. To address this, additional habitat units need to be provided, and the submitted information indicates that the applicant intends to provide a net increase of 13.25 habitats on off-site land (outside the red line of the application) within their ownership. This would result in a net increase of 102.93% in habitat units.

12.124 The applicant has submitted sufficient information details to show compliance with the requirements to achieve biodiversity net gain. Indeed, the information shows that it is the applicant’s intention to provide significantly more biodiversity net gain that is statutorily required. The net gain will be secured via the statutory planning condition to ensure that prior to commencement of development a biodiversity net gain plan is submitted for

approval and agreed by with the Council. The off-site land indicated for the biodiversity net gain can be secured with a s106 Legal Agreement.

Other Matters

- 12.125 In respect of the permanent structures proposed above ground, namely the washroom block, and generator enclosure, your Planning Officer is content that their location, design, scale and form are acceptable and comply policy DP26 of the MSDP and that these elements, within the scheme and the wider context of the site, will not have an unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the area.
- 12.126 The site is located within the Brick Clay (Wadhurst Clay) and Building Stone Safeguarding Area as identified in the WSCC Joint Minerals Local Plan 2018. The applicants have submitted a Mineral Safeguarding Assessment that broadly concludes the prior extraction of the mineral resource across the site would not be practical due in part to its location in the National Landscape and proximity to a designated heritage asset. WSCC, the minerals authority, have not raised an objection providing that LPA are satisfied that there is an overriding need for the development that outweighs safeguarding the mineral resource. It is your Officer's view that given the nature of the proposal, the mineral resource will be safeguarded as the amount of permanent physical works are limited and the cellpave that is be laid across most the site could be removed, should the mineral resource be required.

13.0 Planning Balance and Conclusion

- 13.1 The Development Plan in this instance consists of the Mid Sussex District Plan (MSDP), the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (SADPD) and the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan (EGNP).
- 13.2 Case law has 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.
- 13.3 The site is located within the countryside, as defined by the Development Plan, where policy DP12 of MSDP permits development where it maintains, or enhances (where possible) the quality of the rural landscape and is for the purposes of agriculture or supported by other policies within the Development Plan. While the proposal is not related to the purposes of agriculture, the intended use does support extended cultural/community activities associated to the permitted religious use of Saint Hill Manor, which lies immediately adjacent to the application site, and such expansion is capable of being supported in principle (policy DP25). While there is no objection in principle to the proposals, should it be found that it fails to maintain, or enhance, the quality of the rural landscape then the proposal would be contrary to policy DP12 of MSDP.
- 13.4 The site also lies within the High Weald National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), where the Council are under a duty (in exercising or performing any functions) to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB. Important components of High Weald National Landscapes, as identified within the High Weald Management Plan includes its wildlife, ecological value and quality, geological and physiographical features, water environment, cultural heritage, dark skies, tranquillity, opportunities for access to nature, and landscape character for which the area was designated.

- 13.5 Having regard to all the submitted information it is considered that the proposed development will result in harm, albeit it limited to the landscape and visual character of the National Landscape, by virtue of the intended change of use of the land. This harm is considered to be negligible, due to the use of the cell pave structure and the limited days of use mean that the existing fields will maintain a vacant appearance (as existing) for the majority of any given year. Given the harm that has been identified, it is considered that the application fails in its strictest terms to comply with policy DP16 of the MSDP and policy EG1 of the EGNP.
- 13.6 There are a number of designated and non-designated heritage assets that have been identified in the vicinity of the site, whose settings would be adversely impacted as a result of the proposal, contrary to policy DP34 of the MSDP.
- 13.7 In respect to highway matters it is considered by your Planning Officers and the Local Highway Authority that the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety or the local highway network. On the basis that a proposed park and ride service to serve the annual event can be secured through a s106 Legal Agreement it is considered that all reasonable measures have been taken to facilitate accessibility by means other than the private car. In addition, the use and availability of the car park can also be secured within the S106 Legal Agreement. As such, it is considered that the application complies with policy DP21 of the MSDP, policies EG11 and EG12 of the EGNP and the NPPF.
- 13.8 In respect to flood risk and drainage matters the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) have raised no objection subject to appropriate conditions. On the basis of the information contained within the application it is considered that the application complies with policies DP41 and DP42 of the MSDP.
- 13.9 It is not considered that the proposal would have any adverse impact on protected species and suitable mitigation can be secured by condition where appropriate. The application is considered to comply with Policy DP38 of the MSDP.
- 13.10 In respect of matters associated with the impact on nearby residential amenities and sustainable construction, these matters can be addressed through the use of suitable planning conditions and as such the application complies with policies DP26, DP29 and DP39 of the MSDP in respect of these issues.
- 13.11 The applicant intends to provide BNG on land within their ownership, although outside the redline of the application boundary. The statutory BNG condition will secure in excess of the statutory 10% BNG.
- 13.12 Having regard to the above, given the limited harm identified to the High Weald National Landscape and to the setting of the designated and non-designated heritage assets, it is considered that the proposal does not comply with the Development Plan, when read as a whole. Given this, consideration needs to be given to any other material considerations that would indicate that a decision should be taken other than in accordance with the Development Plan. The NPPF is a material consideration that needs taken into account in the determination of this application.
- 13.13 In respect of the impact on the High Weald National Landscape consideration has been given to whether the proposal represents major development in the National Landscape, as this is important identifying the test against which any proposal would need to be considered. Having regard to the scale, character and nature of the proposed development,

it is considered, notwithstanding the overall size of the site, that the proposal does not constitute major development in the High Weald National Landscape (HWNL). In this respect paragraph 189 of the NPPF requires that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of National Landscapes, which includes the ecology and cultural heritage of the landscape. It makes it clear that National Landscapes have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.

- 13.14 It is your Planning Officer's view that there are specific circumstances relating to the proposed form of development, the religious significance and importance of the site and the impact of the event on the local economy which lend weight to supporting the development in the HWNL.
- 13.16 In NPPF terms less than substantial harm has been identified to the designated heritage assets and having regard to paragraph 215, it is considered that a scheme for a single annual event and no more than 50 calendar days for parking, along with the established economic benefits means there are sufficient public benefits that would outweigh the harm identified. Similarly, in respect of paragraph 216 and the non-designated heritage assets, it is considered that there are sufficient benefits that would outweigh the harm identified.
- 13.17 With regard to the Council's legal duty under Section 85 of the Countryside and Right of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act) (as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act in December 2023), it requires 'relevant authorities', in exercising or performing any function that affect AONBs in England, to "seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty". The High Weald National Landscape has been fully considered in this planning application, and the proposal will have a negligible impact on the natural beauty of the National Landscape and therefore the application in its strictest terms interferes with these purposes. In such circumstances consideration needs to be given if a grant of planning permission is justified. Having regard to the specific matters of this case, as set in this report and considered through this planning balance and conclusions section, your Officers' advice is that a grant of planning permission is justified in this instance.
- 13.18 When weighing all matters up, your Planning Officer identifies the following impacts associated with scheme and weight attached to them;

Benefits

- Economic benefit to local economy: significant weight
- Increase in biodiversity net gain above statutory minimum requirement: moderate weight
- Removal of overflow parking from public highway: limited weight

Neutral Impacts

- Highway matters
- Drainage and flood risk
- Impact on residential amenity
- Air quality
- Light pollution
- Noise pollution
- Impact on protected species
- Impact on ancient woodland
- Impact on trees

Harms

- Conflict with the Development Plan: limited weight
- Negligible harm to High Weald National Landscape: Great weight
- Less than substantial harm to designated heritage assets: significant weight

- 13.19 In considering the overall planning balance, the fact that proposal is contrary to Development Plan is a matter that limited negative weight. Furthermore, the identified less than substantial harm to the setting of the designated heritage assets is matter that should be given significant weight, notwithstanding the fact that in this instance your Officer is satisfied that the public benefits of granting the scheme outweigh the harm, in the context of paragraph 215 of the NPPF. While the proposal does result in some negligible harm to the High Weald National Landscape, which in accordance with paragraph 189 of the NPPF should be given great weight, the extent of permanent, physical, above ground field features are limited and the intended limited use of the fields does help mitigate the extent of the harm caused.
- 13.20 Notwithstanding the above identified harms, it is considered that the proposal will result in an economic benefit to the local economy and help support local businesses (as evident from the representations received) and this can be given significant weight. There are also benefits arising from an increase in biodiversity net gain, above the statutory requirement, which result in direct enhancements on land within the national landscape, which is considered attracts moderate positive weight. The use of the proposed car park by local sports clubs in association with their busiest events, will help ensure that unauthorised parking along Saint Hill Lane (and the associated highway safety implications) can be mitigated. This is a matter can be given limited positive weight.
- 13.21 It is acknowledged that this case is finely balanced but having regard to all matters, notwithstanding the conflict with the Development Plan, it is considered that there are other material considerations that provide sufficient grounds, based upon the specifics of this case, to support this proposed development in the High Weald National Landscape. As such, it is considered that there are other material considerations that justify and decision being made other than in accordance with the Development Plan.
- 13.22 It is therefore recommended that planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

APPENDIX A – RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

Conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the plans listed below under the heading "Plans Referred to in Consideration of this Application".

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interest of proper planning.

3. Pre - Commencement Conditions

Prior to the commencement of development, construction drawings of the surface water drainage network, associated sustainable drainage components and flow control mechanisms and a construction method statement shall be submitted and agreed in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall then be constructed as per the agreed drawings, method statement, FRA & Drainage Strategy as listed at the start of this letter and remaining in perpetuity for the lifetime of the development unless agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. No alteration to the agreed drainage scheme shall occur without prior written approval from the Local Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the development achieves a high standard of sustainability and to comply with the NPPF and policies DP41 and DP42 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 - 2031.

4. No development hereby permitted shall take place except in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Council's Organisational Licence (WML-OR117, or a 'Further Licence') and with the proposals detailed on plan "Juhring and Hobbs Field at Saint Hill Manor: Impact plan for great crested newt District Licensing (Version 1), dated 19th May 2026.

Reason: In order to ensure that adverse impacts on great crested newts are adequately mitigated and to ensure that site works are delivered in full compliance with the Organisational Licence (WML-OR177, or a 'Further Licence'), section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Circular 06/2005 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

5. No development hereby permitted shall take place unless and until a certificate from the Delivery Partner (as set out in the District Licence WML-OR177, or a 'Further Licence'), confirming that all necessary measures regarding great crested newt compensation have been appropriately dealt with, has been submitted to and approved by the planning authority and the authority has provided authorisation for the development to proceed under the district newt licence. The delivery partner certificate must be submitted to this planning authority for approval prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved.

Reason: In order to adequately compensate for negative impacts to great crested newts, and in line with section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Circular 06/2005 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2026.

6. No development hereby permitted shall take place except in accordance with Part 1 of the Great Crested Newt Mitigation Principles, as set out in the District Licence (WML-OR177, or a 'Further Licence') and in addition, in compliance with the following:

- Works which will affect likely newt hibernacula may only be undertaken during the active period for amphibians.
- Amphibian fencing and pitfall trapping must be undertaken at suitable habitats and features, prior to commencement of the development.

Reason: In order to adequately compensate for negative impacts to great crested newts, and in line with section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Circular 06/2005 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2026.

7. Prior to any works on the site, a Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy for protected, Priority and threatened species, prepared by a suitably qualified ecologist in line with the recommendations of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PJC, December 2025), shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

The content of the Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy shall include the following.

- o Purpose and conservation objectives for the proposed enhancement measures;
- o detailed designs or product descriptions to achieve stated objectives;
- o locations of proposed enhancement measures by appropriate maps and plans (where relevant);
- o persons responsible for implementing the enhancement measures; and
- o details of initial aftercare and long-term maintenance (where relevant).

The works shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and shall be retained in that manner for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To enhance protected, Priority and threatened species and allow the LPA to discharge its duties under paragraph 187d of NPPF 2024 and s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (as amended).

8. Construction Compliance Conditions

Work to construction the development hereby permitted shall only take place between the following times:

Mon-Fri: 08:00-18:00

Sat: 09:00-13:00

Sun & Bank Holidays: No work permitted.

Deliveries: Same hours as above; none on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

Reason: To protect residential amenity and to accord with policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 - 2031.

9. The development shall only be implemented in accordance with the levels details contained on the Private External Works General Arrangement drawings no's 25-649QED ZZ XX DR C 0600 Rev P02 and 25-649QED ZZ XX DR C 0601 Rev P02 dated 13th April 2026.

Reason: To protect the the character and appearance of the area and to accord with policies DP12 and DP16 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 - 2031.

10. No development, including site clearance, groundworks, construction, storage of materials, erection of fencing or changes to ground levels, shall take place within 15 metres of the boundary of the adjacent area of ancient woodland.
The 15-metre buffer zone shall be retained as a non-developed ecological buffer for the lifetime of the development and shall not be used for access, parking, lighting, drainage, services or as part of the event arena.

Reason: To protect the adjacent ancient woodland and to comply with policy DP38 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 - 2031.

11. All mitigation measures and/or works shall be carried out in accordance with the details contained in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PJC, September 2024) as already submitted with the planning application and agreed in principle with the local planning authority prior to determination.

This may include the appointment of an appropriately competent person e.g. an ecological clerk of works (ECoW) to provide on-site ecological expertise during construction. The appointed person shall undertake all activities, and works shall be carried out, in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To conserve protected and Priority species and allow the LPA to discharge its duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended),

the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (as amended).

12. The scheme hereby permitted shall only be implemented in accordance with the recommendations and remediations set out in the Arboricultural Method Statement undertaken by PJC document ref PJC/6617/25-02 Rev 02 and shall be thereafter maintained for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and the setting of the heritage assets and to accord with Policy DP34 and DP37 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 - 2031 and policy EG1 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan.

13. The visibility splays shown on approved drawing reference PTC/CA/45417/04 Rev 1 shall be kept free of all obstruction above a height of 0.6 metres above carriageway level at all times.

The visibility splays shall be permanently maintained for the lifetime of the development, including the removal or pruning of vegetation, and the removal of any structures, fencing or other features that would obstruct visibility within the splay.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to ensure that adequate visibility is maintained for vehicles entering and leaving the site, in accordance with Policy DP21 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 - 2031 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

14. Prior to first use conditions

Notwithstanding the submitted details a comprehensive landscape proposal should be submitted prior to the commencement of the uses including details of all soft and hard landscape and boundary treatments shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. The soft landscape plan should include a landscape specification and planting schedule, with details of quantity, species, size/type (bare root, container etc). It should also include details of implementation and materials (i.e. soils and mulch) and any protection measures that will be put in place (i.e. rabbit guards). The hard landscape plan should include details of all hard surface materials and boundary treatments to be used within the development with a timetable for implementation, including all means of enclosure and boundary treatments, such as walls and fences.

The proposal hereby permitted shall not be brought into first use until the landscaping scheme has been completed in accordance with the approved details.

Reason In the interests of visual amenity of the National Landscape and the setting of the heritage assets and to accord with Policy DP34 and DP37 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 - 2031 and policy EG1 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan.

15. The development hereby approved shall not be first used until details of the maintenance and management of the sustainable drainage scheme have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The drainage scheme shall be implemented prior to the first use of the development hereby approved and thereafter managed and maintained in accordance with the approved details in perpetuity. The Local Planning Authority shall be granted access to inspect the sustainable drainage scheme for the lifetime of the development. The details of the scheme to be submitted for approval shall include:

I) a timetable for its implementation.

II) details of SuDS feature and connecting drainage structures and maintenance requirement for each aspect including a drawing showing where they are located.

III) a management and maintenance plan for the lifetime of the development which shall include the arrangements for adoption by any public body or statutory undertaker, or any

other arrangements to secure the operation of the sustainable drainage scheme throughout its lifetime. This will include the name and contact details of any appointed management company.

Reason: To ensure that the development achieves a high standard of sustainability and ensure the flood risk is adequately addressed for each new dwelling and not increased in accordance with NPPF and policy DP41 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 - 2031.

16. Upon completion of the surface water drainage system, including any SuDS features, and prior to the first use of the development; a survey and verification report from an independent surveyor shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The survey and report shall demonstrate that the surface water drainage system has been constructed in accordance with the details approved pursuant to condition 3. Where necessary, details of corrective works to be carried out along with a timetable for their completion, shall be included for approval in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Any corrective works required shall be carried out in accordance with the approved timetable and subsequently re-surveyed with the findings submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the flood risk is adequately addressed, not increased and users remain safe for the lifetime of the development in accordance with NPPF and Policies DP41 and DP42 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 - 2031.

17. Operational Compliance Conditions

Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any Order revoking or re-enacting that Order), no development falling within Classes A and B of Part 4 of Schedule 2 shall be carried out without express planning permission.

Reason: To mitigate the impact on the National Landscape, open countryside and adjacent heritage assets and to ensure the development will have no adverse impact on the highway and surrounding network in accordance with policies DP16, DP21 and DP34 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 - 2031 and policies EG1, EG2 and EG4 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan.

18. Notwithstanding the submitted details the use of Hobbs Field shall be limited to the one event per calendar year as detailed in the planning statement produced by DMH Stallard dated April 2026 as the 3-day IAS Anniversary Event held in October in any calendar year. The local planning authority shall be notified in writing 14 days prior to the event being held.

Reason: To minimise the impact on the High Weald National Landscape adjacent heritage assets and to ensure no adverse traffic impacts on the highway network to ensure the development is in accordance with Policies DP16, DP21 and DP34 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 - 2031 and policies EG1 and EG4 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan.

19. The use of the land for the erection and removal of the marquee detailed in drawing ref 1093, 62 Rev F shall be limited to no more than 84 days (12 weeks) in any calendar year. The council shall be notified in writing two weeks in advance of the commencement of these marquee works and notified in writing on the date of the final removal of the marquee.

Reason: To protect and mitigate the impact on the National Landscape and adjacent Heritage Assets in accordance with Policies DP16 and DP34 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 - 2031 and policies EG1 and EG4 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan.

20. The car park hereby permitted and detailed in drawing ref 1093-061 Rev M shall not be used for more than 50 calendar days in any year. For the purposes of this condition, a 'day' is defined as any period of use between 00:00 and 23:59 on the same calendar date.

The use of parking shall be split in terms of location and calendar days in accordance with the plans detailed on page 20 of the approved Design and Access Statement dated 30 March 2026.

A written log of the dates on which the car park is used shall be kept by the site operator and made available to the Local Planning Authority upon request.
Car parks use shall be restricted to 07:00-23:00 daily, except during the annual Saint Hill IAS event.

Reason: To mitigate the impact on the National Landscape and adjacent heritage assets, to protect residential amenity and to ensure the development will have no adverse impact on the highway and surrounding network in accordance with policies DP16, DP21, DP26 and DP34 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 - 2031 and policies Policy EG1, EG2 and EG4 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan.

21. The rating level of the noise emitted from fixed plant and equipment (mechanical and electrical) located at the site shall not exceed 37dB (daytime) and 29dB (night) at any premises used for residential purposes surrounding the site when assessed in accordance with BS 4142:2014+A1(2019).

Reason: To protect adjacent residential amenities from noise pollution and to comply with policy DP29 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 - 2031.

22. No external lighting shall be installed to serve the development hereby permitted without the express consent of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To protect the rural landscape character and protected species and to accord with policies DP12, DP16, DP29 and DP38 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 - 2018.

Human Rights Implications

The planning application has been considered in light of statute and case law and any interference with an individual's human rights is considered to be proportionate to the aims sought to be realised.

Plans Referred to in Consideration of this Application

The following plans and documents were considered when making the above decision:

Plan Type	Reference	Version	Submitted Date
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