

**TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990
(As Amended)**

APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION

BY: THE ALDINGBOURNE TRUST

FOR: CHANGE OF USE FROM ANCILLARY
ACCOMMODATION (SUI GENERIS) TO DAY
NURSERY (CLASS E(f))

AT: THE ALDINGBOURNE COUNTRY CENTRE,
BLACKMILL LANE, NORTON, CHICHESTER, WEST
SUSSEX, PO18 0JP

PLANNING STATEMENT

MAY 2022

Report sign off: [CJ Grant], [May 2022]

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement accompanies the submission of an application on behalf of The Aldingbourne Trust, for the following development:

Change of use from ancillary accommodation associated with the Aldingbourne Centre (Sui Generis) to use as a day nursery (Class E(f)).

- 1.2 At: The Aldingbourne Country Centre, Blackmill Lane, Norton, Chichester, West Sussex, PO18 0JP.

- 1.3 This statement sets out the context for this submission and provides details of the following:

1. A description of the site and surroundings;
2. A description of the proposed development;
3. A summary of current relevant planning policy and guidance;
4. An assessment of the key planning considerations in the context of presiding policy and guidance;
5. Concluding comments.

- 1.4 This statement should be read in conjunction with the submitted drawings and other documentation submitted in support of the application.

2.0 BACKGROUND

Site Context

- 2.1 The Aldingbourne Country Centre lies within a rural area to the north of the A27 and within Arun District. The Centre provides training and education opportunities for young adults with special needs including in horticulture, vegetable production, catering and furniture restoration. The site is also open to the public and includes a small animal farm, children's indoor and outdoor play areas, picnic area, woodland walk, café and shop.
- 2.2 A number of buildings are located on the site, predominantly on the north-east corner, including the most recently constructed visitor centre. This building was completed approximately three years ago and sought to consolidate the services provided by the Trust into new purpose built accommodation, providing a modern and welcoming environment for its clients, staff and visitors.
- 2.3 The building to which this application relates comprises a single storey timber structure of some 61.1sqm, which was previously used as a shop for the Centre (see photographs 1 and 2 below). The shop relocated on the opening of the new visitor centre, and the application building has since become surplus to requirements.
- 2.4 In terms of immediate surroundings, to the north and east are existing glasshouses, whilst to the west is the Centre's main focal area of open space. Further to the south lies the Centre car park with the visitor centre further to the south-west.
- 2.5 The Aldingbourne Country Centre itself lies just to the south of the South Downs National Park. None of the buildings on the site or the surrounding area are statutory listed and none are within a conservation area.



Photo 1 – Existing Building (north elevation)



Photo 2 – Existing Building (south elevation)

Planning History

2.6 The wider site has been subject to a fairly extensive planning history, as follows:

Reference	Description
AL/38/20/PL/	Single storey rear extension including raised terrace and ramp – Approved conditionally 06/07/20
AL/70/17/NMA/	Application for a non-material amendment following a grant of planning permission AL/110/12 relating to removal of one set of rooflights, relocation of photo voltaic, reduced length of canopy & extension to bin store door – Approved 17/07/17
AL/133/16/NMA/	Application for a non-material amendment following a grant of planning permission AL/110/12 relating to removal of secondary exit walkway (east elevation), spiral stair exit moved closer to the building (east elevation), addition of glazed door (east elevation), additional window & rooflight (north elevation), removal of wild flower roof finish to canopy (north elevation), removal of window (north elevation), window added to lower ground floor (north elevation), removal of doors to lower ground floor & replace with window (north elevation), full height windows become half height windows (west elevation), servery hatch now changed to window (west elevation), removal of gabion thermal labyrinth (south elevation), void in building where walkway was has now been filled in, additional window on lower ground floor (south elevation & change from solar thermal panels to photovoltaic panels on roof (position amended & number of panels increased) – Approved 14/12/16
AL/110/12/	New visitor building, extension to the existing client facilities building & reconfiguration of existing animal petting buildings. New landscaping elements including car parking, new planting & improved pathways – Approve conditionally 11/04/12
AL/22/05/	Replacing existing poly tunnel 25m long x 12.8 metres (2 x 6.4m) for horticultural purposes and potting sheds for clients with learning disabilities 0 Approve conditionally 09/06/05
AL/86/02/	Change of use of existing garage to office with replacement of existing doors for a door and window – approve conditionally 25/10/02
AL/29/01	Top building extension and rebuilding in traditional materials to match main buildings (built in two phases) – Approve conditionally 25/05/01
AL/33/99/	Extension of existing centre to provide training workshops for upholstery and French polishing – Approve conditionally 14/07/99
AL/42/97/	Office extension over garage – Approve conditionally 11/07/97
AL/83/93/	Erection of building including dwelling, shop, workshop, dining, kitchen, training rooms and offices for agricultural workers with disabilities. Services, car parking, access and implement shed – Approve conditionally plus S106 09/03/94
AL/76/93/	Erection of greenhouse – Approved conditionally 10/9/93

AL/71/78	Use of land for horticultural purposes, construction of WC/dining block, implements potting sop and car park – Approve conditionally 04/10/78
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2.7 None of the above applications are considered relevant to the current proposals.

3.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 The submitted application seeks planning consent for the following:

Change of use from ancillary accommodation associated with the Aldingbourne Centre (Sui Generis) to use as a day nursery (Class E(f)).

3.2 No external alterations are proposed.

3.3 The change of use will facilitate the expansion of a childcare facility which is currently operated in a domestic setting near Pulborough. The existing home based provision will continue, whilst the nursery at the Aldingbourne Country Centre will be offered as additional provision.

3.4 It is considered that the proposed change of use will result in local benefits, not least that the use of this building by a third party will provide additional funds for the centre to re-invest into its existing facilities and provision for young adults with special needs at the centre. The nursery will also allow for additional pre-school childcare places in an attractive location, where children will be able to make use of the wide range of existing facilities already present on the wider site.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 The objective of this statement is to demonstrate that the proposed development is in accordance with National, Regional and Local planning policies. Compliance with policy is demonstrated within the Section 5.0 of this report.

1) Background

4.2 This section of the Planning Statement outlines the principle national and local development plan policies that are relevant to the determination of this application.

4.3 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In the context of this application, the Development Plan comprises the following:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021);
- National Planning Practice Guidance;
- Arun Local Plan 2011-2031 (2018);
- Aldingbourne Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2034 (with post examination modifications) (2016)
- Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) as appropriate and relevant to the proposals.

4.4 Key policies and extracts are outlined below and in the context of each of the material planning considerations as set out in Section 5.0 of this report.

2) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance

4.5 At the national level planning guidance is contained in the NPPF, updated in July 2021. The NPPF is an important material consideration and seeks to secure positive growth in a way that effectively balances economic, environmental and social progress for this and future generations.

- 4.6 The National Planning Policy Framework continues to support the effective and efficient use of land for sites. It upholds the presumption in favour of sustainable development. It also aims to promote economic growth and deliver accessible services that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being (Paragraph 8)
- 4.7 In respect of the promotion of economic development, Paragraph 81 acknowledges that, '*planning policies and decisions should help create conditions where businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.*' Paragraph 84 seeks to support a prosperous rural economy and where appropriate facilitate growth and diversification of agricultural and other land based rural businesses. In addition, Paragraph 85 acknowledges that Councils should also recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements and in locations that are not well served by public transport.
- 4.8 National Policy seeks to encourage the provision of healthy, inclusive and safe communities. In particular, Paragraph 92(a) states '*promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other...*' Paragraph 93(a) encourages decision makers to '*plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities... and other local services...*' and '*ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services*'.
- 4.9 Paragraph 95 acknowledges that local planning authorities should take a positive and collaborative approach to development that will widen choice in education.
- 4.10 Paragraph 119 acknowledges the importance of promoting and supporting the development of under-used land and buildings. Planning policies and decisions should '*(a)encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land, including through mixed use schemes... (d) promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings...*' (Paragraph 120). The NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities should take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which and should support proposals to '*(b) make more effective use of sites that provide community services... provided this maintains or improves the quality of service provision and access to open space*' (Paragraph 123).

3) Arun Local Plan 2011-2031 (2018)

Vision

- 4.11 The adopted Arun Local plan sets the context against which the proposals have been formulated. The Council's vision for the District is set out at paragraph 4.2 of the Plan and states:
- 'By 2031 Arun will be a safer, more inclusive, vibrant and attractive place to live, work and visit. Arun's residents will be healthier and better educated, with reduced inequalities between the most and least affluent.'*
- 4.12 Paragraphs 4.4-4.6 acknowledge that the Council aims to increase the range and quality of education opportunities and community facilities available in the District.

Sustainable Development

- 4.13 Through the application of Policy SD SP1 (Sustainable Development), the Council seeks to promote a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development. In delivering the Council's strategic objectives, it is recognised that '*new local jobs need to be created to meet the needs of the District's growing population, along with education and health facilities...*' (paragraph 6.2.2). The Council also acknowledges that '*the effective use of previously developed land will be encouraged...*' (paragraph 6.2.5). Policy SD SP1a (Strategic Approach) reinforces this and states at part g. that the Council will '*encourage the effective use of previously development land in accordance with the strategy, provided that it is not of high environmental value*'.

Employment and Economy

- 4.14 In terms of employment, Arun's strategic objective is to:

"Strengthen Arun's economic base and provide local job opportunities by increasing, diversifying and improving the quality of employment within the District through the provision of appropriate employment sites, quality affordable accommodation and the development of business support and partnerships."

- 4.15 The Local Plan aims to facilitate the retention of existing employment, accommodate future business needs and encourage local job growth. Paragraph 8.4.2 of the Plan recognises that this can be achieved by indirect means such as supporting local services in rural areas and supporting the expansion of education and training.
- 4.16 Policy EMP SP1 (Strategic Economic Growth) seeks to promote economic growth and including the provision of appropriately scaled development where such uses compliment, and are compatible with, employment/commercial uses.
- 4.17 Policy EMP DM1 (Employment Land Development Management) in relation to the conversion of rural buildings outside of the built up area for industrial or business use, that, these will be permitted provided that:
1. *'The building is structurally sound, of permanent construction, and capable of conversion without rebuilding or significant alteration or extension;*
 2. *The resultant building use will not have an adverse effect on the rural character of the area in respect of the nature and level of activity likely to be generated, including the resultant traffic level;*
 3. *The resultant building and ancillary areas are sympathetic to its setting in terms of form, bulk and visual design;*
 4. *Where the building is of historic or architectural importance, there is no adverse effect on the character and appearance or features of architectural or historic interest, internally and externally, which the building possesses, or its setting; and*
 5. *The traffic to be generated by the new use can be safely accommodated by the site access and the local road system.'*

Design

- 4.18 In terms of design, the Council's strategic objectives seek to:
- 'To create vibrant, attractive, safe and accessible towns and villages that build upon their unique characters to provide a wide range of uses and which are a focus for quality shopping, entertainment, leisure, tourism and cultural activities.'*
- 4.19 Policies aim to achieve high quality, distinctive, sustainable and functional development, which is a good use of the natural and built environment. Policy D SP1 (Design) states that, *'All development proposals should seek to make efficient use of land but reflect the characteristics of the site and local area in their layout, landscaping, density, mix, scale, massing, character, materials, finish and architectural details.'*
- 4.20 Policy D DM4 (Extensions and alterations to existing buildings) is of some limited relevance in this respect and has been taken into account although no material external alterations are proposed.

Transport

- 4.21 Strategic Policy T SP1 (Transport and Development) aims to ensure that growth in the District strengthens the economic base, reduces congestion, addresses climate change and promotes healthy lifestyles. This should include safe access to the highway network, promoting highway improvements and sustainable transport, the use of low emission fuels, public transport improvements and improvements to the cycle, pedestrian and bridleway network.
- 4.22 Policy T DM1 (Sustainable Travel and Public Rights of Way) seeks to ensure that new development ensures ease of movement and prioritises safe pedestrian and cycle access, as well as access to public and community transport networks.

4) Aldingbourne Neighbourhood Plan (2016)

- 4.23 The Aldingbourne Neighbourhood Plan (ANP) was made in November 2016 and contains policies that bear relevance to the current proposals. The ANP notes at 3.9.1 that the area has nursery provision for 0-4 year olds at Bright Starts Day Nursery at Ormiston Academy and for 2-4 year olds at the Hopscotch Pre-School at the Aldingbourne Community Sports Centre.
- 4.24 The ANP's vision is as follows:
- "In 2034 Aldingbourne Parish will continue to be an attractive place to live, maintaining its intrinsic semi-rural character whilst allowing for sustainable development, improving connectivity and local services."*
- 4.25 In terms of core objectives, the ANP seeks to 'contribute to the provision of local infrastructure and facilities', and 'support local shops and other businesses'.
- 4.26 Policy EE3 (Support for New Commercial Uses) seems to support new commercial uses in the area, subject to compliance with other policies in the Plan, whilst Policy EE7 (Rural Buildings) encourages the re-use, conversion and adaptation of rural buildings for small businesses, recreation, or tourism purposes, where the building is suitable and capable of conversion without substantial reconstruction, the proposed use is appropriate to the location, the conversion works are appropriate to the character of the area, the use will not have any impact upon sensitive features, and the local road system is capable of accommodating traffic generation and adequate parking can be provided within the site.
- 4.27 Policy LC8 (School Facilities) seeks to support development that will lead to the provision of improvements of facilities for children to attend primary school in Aldingbourne.
- 4.28 The above policies have been taken into account in the following assessment of the proposals.

5.0 KEY PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS & ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 This section of the statement assesses the proposed development against relevant national, strategic and local planning policies as summarised in the previous section. The key material considerations for assessment are considered to comprise the following:
- **The Principle of the proposed change of use;**
 - **Employment and Economic Considerations;**
 - **Design Matters;**
 - **Highways and Transportation;**
- 5.2 Each of these matters is addressed in turn, below.
- 1) The Principle of the Proposed Change of Use**
- 5.3 The principle of the proposed development is considered acceptable on the basis that it seeks to contribute towards the economic, social and environmental objectives contained within the NPPF, through the re-use and diversification of an existing and redundant building. Furthermore, the proposed use as a nursery is considered compatible with the existing operation of the site as a mix of training, education, tourism and recreational uses by the Aldingbourne Trust.
- 5.4 The proposals involve the use of previously developed land and will facilitate the provision of new jobs for the District's growing population, as well as providing additional childcare and pre-school education options, and hence meet with the District Council's strategic objectives set out in Policies SD SP1 and SD SP1a of the adopted Local Plan.
- 2) Employment and Economic Considerations**
- 5.5 The proposed nursery is a new facility which will create up to six new full time childcare jobs in the local area when it is operating at full capacity. At present, the owner is providing childcare in a domestic setting in Pulborough and it is intended that this existing operation will continue, with the nursery at the Aldingbourne Centre being operated in addition. As well as providing additional employment

opportunities, the proposed nursery will also assist in providing additional childcare options for those in the local area who require childcare provision to allow them to work – hence the indirect benefits to the local economy are considerable. This approach accords with paragraph 8.4.2 of the Local Plan which acknowledges the considerable potential of indirect support for the economy.

- 5.6 Policy EMP SP1 seeks to promote the co-location of compatible uses. This is very much the case in respect of the current proposals. This location has been chosen for the nursery partly due to the mutually beneficial facilities that can be shared between the two facilities – for example play facilities and outdoor space. Families who use the nursery are also likely to visit the Aldingbourne Centre and make wider use of its facilities and activities, assisting with its ongoing profitability.
- 5.7 The existing building forms part of the wider Aldingbourne Centre which is located outside of the built up area, and outside of the South Downs National Park. Consideration has been given to Policy EMP DM1 and the criteria contained within this policy:
- The existing building is structurally sound and of a permanent construction. The proposals do not include any significant rebuilding, alteration or extension to facilitate the proposed use;
 - The resultant use will not have any adverse impact upon the character of the area, and any traffic generation is likely to be negligible (the Transport Statement provides additional information in this respect);
 - The existing building is not of any particular historic importance or interest;
 - As demonstrated within the Transport Statement, the traffic generated by the proposals can be safely accommodated by the site access and on the local road system and sufficient parking is already provided. A designated area will be marked for nursery drop offs and collections.
- 5.8 The proposals also meet the core objectives of the Aldingbourne Neighbourhood Plan by contributing to the provision of local infrastructure and facilities and supporting local businesses. It meets the objective of policy EE3 which supports new commercial uses, and also Policy EE7 which encourages the economic re-use of rural buildings for small businesses subject to a number of criteria which are broadly as per those of Local Plan Policy EMP DM1. The proposals are therefore considered compliant in this respect.

3) Design Matters

- 5.9 The proposals involve very limited alterations to the existing property, with the majority of works being internal changes to facilitate the proposed use. The existing property will not be extended.
- 5.10 The scheme does however include the upgrading of the external landscaping to the southern side of the building to include the provision of a new boundary fence and gate to match the existing, a new bin store to serve the nursery and the addition of two cycle hoops to provide dedicated space for 4 bicycles. The path between the existing car park and the nursery access will also be resurfaced.
- 5.11 As the proposals are contained within the existing complex of the Aldingbourne Country Centre, the impact upon neighbouring land uses will be negligible.
- 5.12 The proposals seek to make efficient use of land but reflect the characteristics of the site in accordance with Local Plan Policy D SP1 (Design) and are considered to fully accord with the requirements of Policy D DM4 (Extensions and alterations to existing buildings).
- 5.13 On balance the overall design of the proposals is considered to be acceptable.

4) Highways and Transportation

- 5.14 A Transport Statement is being prepared by Motion and provides a full overview of the proposals in transport terms. Their report has not yet been finalised and an addendum will be provided to this Planning Statement when the Transport Statement report is issued.
- 5.15 The proposals include the provision of an area to be reserved for nursery parking and drop off within the existing Centre car park. Four cycle parking spaces dedicated for use by the nursery are to be provided immediately adjacent to the nursery entrance. Servicing requirements are very limited with

this scale of operation and can be undertaken from the existing car park or on foot via alternative pedestrian routes within the wider Centre site to the north.

- 5.16 Further details on highways and transportation will be provided on receipt of the Transport Statement.

6.0 OTHER MATTERS

- 6.1 The proposal does not involve any extensive landscaping or construction works and therefore the environmental impact arising from the proposals is considered minimal. There is no predicted impact upon trees or ecology arising from the proposed change of use.

- 6.2 The site is located in Flood Zone 1 and therefore at low risk of flooding.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The planning statement sets out the full details of the proposed development and has assessed it against adopted and emerging planning policy and guidance.

- 7.2 Based on the above assessment, it is considered that there is a strong justification for the grant of planning consent for the proposed change of use of the application property from ancillary accommodation associated with the Aldingbourne Centre (Sui Generis) to use as a day nursery (Class E(f)).