

PLANNING DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

Replacement relocated visitor facilities including car parking, toilets and café and ancillary development

Land Southeast of St Mary's C of E Primary School Crookthorn Lane Climping BN17 5QU

SEPTEMBER 2025



Planning, Architecture & Land Promotion



RTPI
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Smith Simmons & Partners

PLANNING DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning, Design & Access Statement accompanies a full planning application for the relocation of the car park, toilets and café at Climping Beach (which will soon be inundated by the sea) to a site inland from the coast and outside of the flood zone, but which is within close proximity of the current facility. The site is adjacent to Crookthorn Lane, Climping BN17 5QU.
- 1.2 This statement considers the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area and provides an assessment of the proposal in the context of relevant planning policy. The current proposal has been prepared following a public consultation and is informed by the preapplication response from the Local Planning Authority.
- 1.3 Plans and information submitted in support of the application comprise the following:
- Location Plan no. LP01
 - Proposed Block Plan no. DP101
 - Proposed Site Plan no. DP102
 - Proposed Floor Plans no. DP103
 - Proposed Roof Plan no. DP104
 - Proposed South and East Elevations no. DP105
 - Proposed North and West Elevations no. DP106
 - Details and External Materials Palette no. DP108, DP109 & DP110
 - Planning Design & Access Statement prepared by Smith Simmons & Partners
 - Soil Management Plan prepared by Smith Simmons and Partners
 - Foul and Surface Water Drainage Report by CGS Civils rev P1 April 2025
 - Arboricultural Impact Method Statement by Lizard Rev 00 June 2025
 - Existing Tree Schedule by Lizard Rev01
 - Biodiversity Net Gain Statement by Lizard Rev 00 dated August 2025
 - Landscape Design Strategy by Lizard LLD3515-LAN-REP-001
 - Landscape and Visual Character Appraisal LLD3515-LPL-REP-001 Rev02
 - Heritage Statement by Dr Ian Wightman



2.0 THE SITE & SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The application site lies on the southern side of Crookthorn Lane within a designated countryside location established by Arun Local Plan policy SDSP2 and within a Gap between Settlements defined by Policy SD SP3. The proposal relates to development close to the field boundary and existing hedging on the edge of the agricultural field in arable use. It represents an improved alternative location for the existing diminishing visitor car park and café which is similarly located within the Gap and within a rural area. Figure 1 below shows the relationship between the existing and proposed sites.
- 2.2 The proposed site is a flat, edge of field location extending to 2.25 hectares. The site is close to an existing field access and boundary screened by hedging and is situated opposite (south of) the two-storey, pitched roof, St Mary's C of E Primary School which is separated from the site by the access road. The proposals would be located adjacent to existing development and built structures as indicated at Figure 1.
- 2.3 The character of the wider area is rural with a relatively flat topography. The site is located adjacent to a public footpath and on the bend of Crookthorn Lane, which comprises a narrow road with access to the school, farmyard and a clutter of residential properties. The site lies within Flood Zone 1 and as such is identified at the lowest risk from flooding, on agricultural land. The site is within the vicinity of several Grade II listed buildings. There are no other site-specific constraints.



Figure 1. Site location plan and photos looking east and west (inset)



3.0 PLANNING HISTORY OF THE SITE

- 3.1 A pre-application enquiry was submitted to the Local Planning Authority in November 2024 under LA Ref PAA/99/24/. The pre-application enquiry sought advice regarding the proposal for the construction of a single storey building to serve as replacement visitor facilities and including associated car parking.
- 3.2 In their feedback the LPA indicated that the building was appropriate in terms of its design and scale for its location and use and would comply with relevant policies. It was assessed that the site is not in close proximity to residential properties and the building would not give rise to adverse overbearing, overshadowing or overlooking upon amenity. It was accepted that the proposal was modest in size and with vegetation retained around the boundary it would be unlikely to have an adverse impact upon the setting of nearby heritage assets.
- 3.3 The feedback acknowledged that the building would be a tourism/visitor facility with a large car park and would result in potentially increased traffic movements. However, it recognised that many of these trips would already exist with people using the current facility. It suggested details of potential vehicle movements would assist an application with regards to consideration of the impacts on amenity and highway safety.
- 3.4 The response advised that the loss of agricultural land would result in harm, but policy allows for development that outweighs the need to protect the land. Identifying the discounted alternative sites, which are not feasible, and the need for the development, which is supported by the Neighbourhood Plan, is likely to be sufficient to outweigh the loss of agricultural land.
- 3.5 In terms of flooding It was agreed that due to the location of the building, it would not be at risk of flooding or affected by any current or future flooding from rivers/sea. Arun Mapping indicates that the site has high groundwater, but the Environment Agency mapping suggests the site has low likelihood of flooding occurring.
- 3.6 The feedback concluded that whilst the site is outside the built-up area boundary, the principle of development may be acceptable under C SP1 (f) as it is in accordance with other policies in the plan which refers to a specific type of development in this case, for tourism and visitor facilities under policy TOU DM1. It would still be necessary to demonstrate why the development cannot be sited elsewhere in accordance with the gap policy.
- 3.7 The LPA advised that if approved it would usually be necessary to employ a mechanism to ensure the existing facility would cease to operate once the new site was open. However, given the increasing inundation by the sea this would not be necessary. A site visit to the existing facility will demonstrate that the need for this replacement facility application is urgent as the loss of the current facility to the sea is imminent.



4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

National Planning Policy

4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated in December 2024. It replaces all previous Planning Policy Guidance Notes, Planning Policy Statements and various statements of policy in Letters to Chief Planning Officers. Paragraph 11 confirms that at the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means:

- approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or
- where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application area out-of-date, granting planning permission unless:
 - the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed,
 - or any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

4.2 On design, paragraph 135 of the NPPF requires decisions to ensure that developments:

- will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime; are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- establish a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

4.3 Paragraph 88 states planning policies and decisions should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas; the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses; sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship. Paragraph 89 explains that Planning policies and decisions should 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. In these circumstances it will be



important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport).

- 4.4 Section 8 Promoting healthy and Safe Communities at paragraph 96 (c) states decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling. Paragraph 97 (c) seeks to guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs. Paragraph 102 acknowledges that access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change. Paragraph 104 states 'Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails 029.

Arun Local Plan 2011-2031

- 4.5 Local Plan policy relates to the Arun Local Plan 2011-2031. The Arun Local Plan (ALP) key policies relevant to the application proposal are policies SD SP1 (Sustainable development), SD SP2 (Built-up Area Boundary), C SP1 (Countryside), SD SP3 (Gaps Between Settlements), TOU SP1 (Sustainable tourism and the visitor economy), TOU DM1 (Tourism related development), SO DM1 (Soils), ECC SP1 (Adapting to Climate Change), D SP1 (Design), D DM1 (Aspects of Form and Design Quality), HWB SP1 (Health & Wellbeing), T DM1 (Sustainable Travel and Public Rights of Way), ENV SP1 (Natural Environment), ENV DM5 (Development and biodiversity), W DM1 (Water supply and quality), QE SP1 (Quality of the environment), HER SP1 (The Historic Environment) and HER DM1 (Listed Buildings).
- 4.6 Policy C SP1 states Development will be permitted in the countryside where it is for the operational needs of agriculture, horticulture, forestry, the extraction of minerals or the management of waste, for quiet, informal recreation; or green infrastructure; or for the diversification of the rural economy; or a road and/or cycle schemes; or in accordance with other policies in the Plan which refer to a specific use or type of development.
- 4.7 Policy D DM1 states proposals will be approved providing they have regard to the following criteria: character, appearance, impact on residential amenity, trees and woodland, scale, aspects of form and design quality. Policy HER DM1 requires proposals to protect and enhance the setting of listed buildings. Policies in respect of the countryside and setting within the settlement gap are relevant but the provision of the building and parking in this location is justified on the basis that they cannot be located elsewhere and are sensitively located within the area as a whole. Policy SD SP3 prevents coalescence and seeks to retain the separate identity of settlements.
- 4.8 Policy SO DM1 refers to soils and states *Unless designated by this Plan or a Neighbourhood Development Plan, the use of Grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification for any form of development not associated with agriculture, horticulture or forestry will not be permitted unless need from the development outweighs the need to protect such land in the long term. The requirement to protect the best and most versatile land is outweighed as demonstrated through sustainability and options appraisals.*



- 4.9 Policy HWB SP1 of Arun's Local Plan encourages exercise including recreational facilities and safe walking and cycling routes. Such facilities should be located on public transport corridors and easily accessible to the wider community. The proposal is easily accessible by bicycle being directly accessed from Crookthorn Lane which links to Ferry Road and Littlehampton station beyond.
- 4.10 Policy TOU SP1 encourages sustainable tourism development where it protects as well as promotes the main tourism assets of the coast and policy TOU DM1 supports small scale proposals outside the built-up area boundary which attract visitors.

Supplementary Planning Documents - Arun Design Guide

- 4.11 The Arun Design Guide states that developments should not negatively impact, and instead protect, neighbouring amenity in terms of privacy and overshadowing, considering the positioning of neighbouring buildings, and respond to existing elevations through the size and positioning of doors and windows.
- 4.12 Part Q of the guidance 'Rural Development' is relevant. Development within these areas in particular must be sensitively and appropriately integrated into its landscape setting, which forms the dominant featured through simple, unobtrusive design. Important landscape features such as mature trees and planting should be retained and incorporated into the scheme wherever possible. High quality boundary treatments using trees and vegetation can be used to tie buildings to their landscape setting and soften the impact of development. Traditional rural buildings tend to adopt a consistent and simple form comprising a rectangular floor plan and pitched or half-hipped roof. Façades, elevations and boundaries should be reflective of their rural context. Hard surfacing should be kept to a minimum.

Climping Neighbourhood Plan 2016

- 4.13 The relevant policies in the Neighbourhood Plan are Policy CPN 1 (Protecting Community Facilities), Policy CPN 5 (Support and Promotion of Recreation & Tourism Policy), (CPN6 Retention of Car Parking), CPN 10 (Protection of High Grade Agricultural Land), CPN11 (Quality of Design) which relates to the quality of design of proposals and states that proposals must be of a high quality of design and protect and enhance local character as assessed by the Climping Character Assessment. Policy CPN 14 seeks to enhance pedestrian and cycle networks and prevent adverse impact on the living conditions of local residents. Policy CPN 13 (Retaining Buildings or Structures of Character) requires retention and enhancement of locally listed buildings.
- 4.14 Policy CPN 1 states that in order to promote a thriving village for all ages, there will be a strong presumption against the redevelopment of community facilities for non-community uses. Clymping Beach Car Park & Café is identified as a community asset within the policy. The policy supports alternative facilities of equal or better accessibility, size and suitability. Development proposals to sustain or extend the viable use of existing community facilities and the development of new facilities will normally be supported if they comply with other policies in this Neighbourhood Plan.
- 4.15 Policy CPN 5 states that proposals for small scale recreational and tourism facilities or small-scale improvements to recreational and tourism facilities will be supported provided they comply with certain criteria. Policy CPN 6 states change of use of existing public car parking areas will not be permitted unless equivalent and equally accessible parking can be provided as a replacement. Paragraph 8.9 clarifies that it is the intention to maintain levels of public car parking around the parish and para 8.10 states 'Retention of car parking provides an important amenity for residents and for tourists. In a survey for residents in March



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2014 on the Beach Car Park and Café, 89% supported limited hard standing for the beach car park during the winter months.

- 4.16 Policy CPN 10 states that development will not be permitted on the best and most versatile agricultural land, (land graded 1, 2 and 3A) unless special circumstances can be demonstrated which may include; an overriding need for the development in the proposed location and development on the site is demonstrated as the most sustainable option; and the development conforms to other statutory national and local planning policies.
- 4.17 In terms of policy CPN 13 of the NP the Clymping Character Assessment identifies the Village School - St Mary's Primary School, Brookpit Lane as a Building and Structure of Local Character and Historic Importance.



5.0 CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

- 5.1 Whilst the site is outside the built-up area boundary, the principle of development is accepted under C SP1 (f) as it is in accordance with other policies in the plan which refer to specific types of development in this case, for a tourism and visitor facilities under policy TOU DM1. As set out below the development cannot be sited elsewhere in accordance with the gap policy and the necessary supporting information in respect of agricultural land, biodiversity, landscape and heritage is included in the submission.

Background

- 5.2 The proposal has arisen from the need to replace the existing parking and visitor facilities which are gradually being eroded by the sea and lost. (See Figure 2 below for photos of existing site). Car parking provision at Atherington Beach is constantly reducing in size as inundation from the sea is progressing rapidly.
- 5.3 It is anticipated that by next spring the whole parking area, toilets and refreshment facilities will need replacing. It is expected that the toilets and kiosk will need decommissioning this winter. The continual coastal erosion of the area at the end of Climping Street is resulting from the Environment Agency's long-term plan for Littlehampton Harbour to Poole Place which is to allow the coastline to realign to a more naturally functioning system, whilst continuing to provide flood defence to the large hinterland floodplain.



Figure 2. Photos of toilet block and outside seating area at existing site

- 5.4 The Environment Agency's Arun to Pagham Strategy sets the direction for their activities on the Climping beach frontage and recommends a 'do minimum' approach. This is effectively a reactive patch and repair approach to maintenance of the beach and structures, whilst acknowledging that at some point in the future the costs of maintaining the beach will exceed what can be justified, at which point their maintenance activities will cease. Many timber groynes and structures are now reaching the end of their life and when they no longer function effectively and are assessed to pose a risk to public safety they are removed. This has been ongoing for the last 10 years. As these groynes reach the end of their use as a flood defence structure, it is accepted that the beach will adapt and start to realign. This will mean that the parking area and facilities will be completely inundated by the sea.



Figure 3. Aerial views of existing site indicating position and extent of erosion of car parking facility

- 5.5 The beach has been held in place with hard defences for at least 200 years and is now undergoing a process of 'coastal catch-up' where it realigns to its natural position. The beach will eventually become more stable and find a new alignment. This is evident towards Poole Place where there was rapid erosion initially but there has been little change in recent years. The EA has asked the Baird family to demonstrate responsible custodianship by getting ahead of the game and decommissioning the café and toilets while it is still safe to do so, minimising the environmental impact of their demise. This takes significant foresight and planning. Coastal erosion and recent storms mean the applicants have lost 9 acres of shingle beach to the Crown Estate and over half of the car park (3 acres). The photograph below demonstrates the reduced level of parking last winter and the extent of the current pebble barrier adjacent to the coast.



Figure 4. Photographs illustrating the current condition of car park

- 5.6 The applicant is committed to relocating and retaining a car parking and café facility for visitors to the area. The existing facility has been an important amenity at Climping for many years providing a safe place to park for visitors and residents while they enjoy time on the beach. The existing well established car park facilities are full to capacity at peak times in the summer and assist in reducing the amount of unwelcome and disruptive car parking on Climping Street which can be problematic for residents.
- 5.7 The café and toilets are a well-used addition to the car parking and provide a supplementary addition to the visitor experience. The importance of the existing facility to the local community is acknowledged in the Neighbourhood Plan with its designation as a Community Asset. It is hoped to upgrade and relocate these well used and established facilities to improve the visitor experience and ensure a better understanding and



appreciation of the changing coastal environment whilst respecting and enhancing the semi-rural setting. This would be achieved by adding indoor seating and adding a visitor centre with information boards to the current facilities.

- 5.8 The intention is to provide a larger enhanced community facility with better access and more opportunities for use by residents and visitors to Climping. The proposal would improve the facility by providing indoor seating to allow the café to operate daily, between 7am and 8pm, all year round and provide a meeting room/exhibition where groups could assemble before or after visiting the area. The car park would be open every day. There were no time limit or restrictions on the existing car park use. The applicant imposed their own opening and closing restrictions of 8am to 8pm between 1st April and 30th September, in alignment with seasonal parking restrictions on the highway. The car park is also proposed to be made available to help with school drop offs and collections.

Considerations of Alternative Locations

- 5.9 From the beginning of the process of seeking alternative provision the applicant has demonstrated they are committed to working with the community. The applicant has sought to engage with and consult local residents and the National Trust to establish the optimum location for the facility. The failure to replace the facility would most likely result in visitors parking throughout the village and cause access and congestion problems for local residents. The absence of toilet facilities would be detrimental to the area.
- 5.10 The initial discussions identified five potential sites for relocation of the existing facilities. These were the subject to a public consultation meeting held in May 2023 and the scheme submitted in the earlier pre-application enquiry was the result of this dialogue and identified site-specific constraints. The initial key question as to whether the use should be abandoned, and no action taken to replace the existing facilities was overwhelming rejected. 83% of responses were supportive of making alternative provision. Many were concerned that Climping Street already suffers from congestion and a large volume of traffic to the beach on fine days and an alternative location would be a positive change. The vast majority (92.5%) of respondents supported indoor seating within any replacement facilities. The extracted replacement sites in relation to flood zones and shown in aerial context are included below for information at Figure 5.

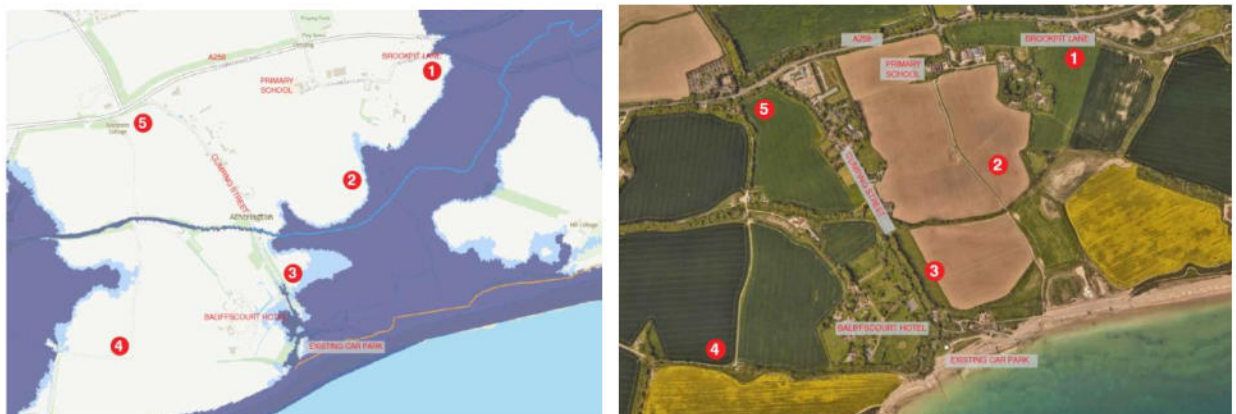


Figure 5. Possible location of sites in relation to risk of flooding and aerial photo of possible locations previously discussed

- 5.11 The alternative sites considered were as follows:



1. Off Ferry Road;
 2. Bread Lane;
 3. Opposite Bailiffscourt Entrance;
 4. West of Bailiffscourt;
 5. Opposite the Oystercatcher.
- 5.12 The support for Option 2 was the highest resulting from the public consultation with 62% of the responses preferring it and consequently this site has been progressed. However, since the public presentation, a gradiometer survey of the land has been undertaken where it had been proposed to site the building in Bread Lane. This identified significant archaeological activity to this area. It is therefore proposed to site the facilities further north which has the added visual benefit of being closer to other buildings.
- 5.13 The site now proposed was the subject of earlier consultation with the National Trust who advised that in principle the relocation of the car park to this position would be acceptable, however there were some suggested design revisions and the addition of a planting scheme and ecology buffer planting, EV charging points and cycle parking. They were broadly happy with the size and location of the building but felt there was scope for it to be softened in its overall appearance to be more sensitive to this location. A half-hipped roof was considered more in keeping with other barnlike structures in the area and would reduce the bulk of the building. Quality flintwork was considered essential. It was suggested the symmetrical design appeared quite austere and breaking this up could help to soften the building and make it sit more naturally with the historic buildings nearby. This would be achieved by splitting the glazing, or by providing fixed louvres or a dovecot. The design submitted in this application has been informed by this advice.

Countryside & Settlement Gap Policy

- 5.14 The village of Climping lies approximately midway between Littlehampton and Middleton-on-Sea and is itself bisected by the A259 Crookthorn Lane. The area to the north of this main road lies outside of the designated settlement gap whereas the area to the south forms part of the coastal plain. Much of the latter is undeveloped, consisting of flat and open arable farmland. Climping Street cuts across this area, linking the A259 to the beach. The street has a scattering of traditional buildings along its length, and its character is more enclosed due to the trees flanking it.
- 5.15 The existing established café and car park provide a much-needed facility for visitors and residents. The parking provides an alternative to illegal parking on Climping Street with its associated adverse impact on residents and provides enhanced facilities for day visitors. The importance of these existing facilities is recognised in policy CPN1 of the Climping Neighbourhood Plan where Clymping Beach Car Park & Café is identified as a community asset. The existing facility is located outside the built-up area boundary and within the Littlehampton and Middleton-on-Sea settlement gap and the facility is proposed to be relocated out of necessity to a position further from the coastline. The expansion of the facility is proposed in combination with the relocation. Policy C SP1(f) Countryside allows for development if it is in accordance with other policies in the Plan. The proposal would accord with the tourism, health and well-being policies and would not therefore conflict with policy C SP1.
- 5.16 Policy SD SP3 of Arun Local Plan sets out the criteria for assessing development within the Gaps and identifies specific criteria where development could be permitted. These include that it would not undermine the



physical and/or visual separation of settlements or compromise the integrity of the gap; it cannot be located elsewhere; and it maintains the character of the undeveloped coast. The application site lies adjacent to Crookthorn Lane to the east of Climping Street, close to Climping school and is easily accessible from the A259. The land is physically contained by a tall hedgerow and mature trees on the northern boundary and mature trees along the eastern boundary with residential properties beyond.

- 5.17 The supporting text at paragraph 7.4.4 explains that Policy SD SP3 is not intended to protect the countryside or landscape but to preserve the distinctive character and settlement structure of the District, as well as the undeveloped coastline. Clear breaks between settlements maintain a sense of place for the communities on either side of the gaps. It states that compliance with gap policy can be assessed using measures such as inter-visibility (the ability to see one edge of the gap from another) and intra-visibility (the ability to see both edges from a single point). The proposal would not appear as an isolated feature in the landscape benefiting from tree screening and a backdrop of built form when viewed from the south. It would not affect visibility across the gap or the ability to view both edges of the gap from a single point.
- 5.18 Arun Local Plan Paragraph 7.4.5 explains that the designation of gaps is not intended to rule out all development but to allow for appropriate, small-scale development which is in keeping with the rural nature of the gaps. The proposal would not go beyond that anticipated by the policy supporting text, and harm to the integrity of the gap would be negligible. The development would relate closely to Climping and would not contribute to settlement coalescence. The proposal is appropriately sited and designed to minimise the impact on the openness of the gap.
- 5.19 The appropriate scale and design of the building would maintain the character of the undeveloped coastline. The proposal would not have a significant impact on the defined landscape character of the area. It is proposed to provide the car park access as flint hoggin and surfacing as grass to minimise the visual impact and improve drainage. The layout and orientation of the parking spaces has been chosen to reduce glare from windscreens on bright sunny days. A storeroom is included within the proposal to provide space for internal storage of parasols, additional seating etc to avoid associated paraphernalia spreading across the site when the facility is not in use.
- 5.20 In terms of location, working on the accepted premise that the facility serves the community and local residents, the site has been chosen after extensive consideration and discussion of alternatives within the Gap, as discussed above. The site has been selected due to being outside of the flood risk area; located close to existing buildings; benefitting from existing boundary screening; is close to existing infrastructure and would not undermine the visual separation of settlements or compromise the integrity of the gap. The proposal cannot easily be sited elsewhere as it replaces existing facilities in the immediate area, close to the beach which are located in the Gap and serve the parish. This site selection also adds the benefit of providing car parking for the local school.
- 5.21 The site has been selected within the search area, located close to the northern boundary of the Gap on the edge of a field and outside of any identified areas of archaeological interest. (A geophysical site survey has been undertaken of the fields to the north of the existing parking area). It is shielded from long distance views across the gap by Hobbs Farm to the west and Kents Farm to the east and would be viewed from the south against the backdrop of the school and other buildings in Crookthorn Lane and is visually well connected to the tree belt to the east. The development would not be an isolated feature in the landscape; rather it would be seen in the context of urban influences and established mature hedging.



- 5.22 The pre-application response suggested that alternative sites should be considered within a wider search area, but as this is a replacement facility for visitors to Climping Beach it cannot be located further inland and needs to be close to the current location within the parish to meet the recognised need generated by local residents and tourists. Visitors using the facility are coming to the coast to spend time at the beach and it would not be feasible to anticipate that day visitors would be prepared to walk greater distances to the beach or to use the toilets. This restricts the distance from the coast that can be considered. The coastal area to the west of the site cannot be accessed easily by public road and Middleton further to the west has its own facilities meeting a different local and visitor need. The same is true of the land further to the east at West Beach which cannot be accessed directly by car as the golf course backs onto the dunes in this location. West Beach car park and café meet a different established need focused on Littlehampton. The alternative facilities close to the pedestrian bridge crossing from Littlehampton to Climping have reduced with the recent closure of both 'The Boathouse' and café in Rope Walk.
- 5.23 The very fact that the current Clymping Beach Car Park & Café is identified as a community asset within the neighbourhood plan means that in order for an equivalent replacement facility to be provided to ensure compliance with Policy CPN 6 of the neighbourhood plan it will need to be located to serve the community of Climping and this cannot be achieved outside of the parish. Many users of the café are local walkers, and they could not access a similar facility provided over a wider search area. The policy states the change of use of existing public car parking areas will not be permitted unless equivalent and equally accessible parking can be provided as a replacement. This policy also effectively restricts any replacement car park to being within Climping parish and easily accessible by road.
- 5.24 The submitted review of potential alternative sites seeks to demonstrate that the appellant has considered all reasonably suitable, available sites within a realistic parish 'catchment' area, south of the A259, so that it could still address the identified need for car parking and associated facilities in the area. This methodology is appropriate and proportionate to the policy requirement.
- 5.25 The proposal is fully compliant with paragraph 88 of the NPPF which supports the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas including sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside and the retention and development of community facilities.
- 5.26 The application is supported by an LDVS which demonstrates the limited impact of the proposal on the wider landscape. The LDVS concludes that the proposed Visitor Centre would associate with the **Traditional Clymping LCA offset** to the north, and result in a sympathetic supporting built form, which would respond to the local vernacular, whilst reinforcing local distinctiveness and a strong sense of place.
- 5.27 The informal field which the site forms the northern part of, has expanded throughout the 20th Century, with smaller field parcels amalgamated, with boundary loss resulting. The deeper boundaries within the landscape associated with the site to the north, west and east would be retained and sympathetically reinforced. The enclosure of the northern part of the field for community use would be sympathetically undertaken to integrate with the surrounding belts of native vegetation to north and east. The natural character would be enhanced, through scrub and tree mosaic boundaries and swathes of wildflower grassland. This would provide a naturalistic extension south of the constrained spaces along Brookpit Lane and Crookthorn Lane. The approach taken would maintain the visual importance and setting of landmark buildings as designated in the Clymping Character Assessment, (2015).

Design & Appearance



- 5.28 The proposed development is designed to respond to the agricultural character of the area and to be landscape led. The building follows the development pattern of other buildings which abut the lane. It is not centrally located within fields. The building is positioned relatively close to the boundary where it will be screened by vegetation and has been orientated east-west along the north boundary with car parking to the south. The proposal has been specifically designed to be respectful of the setting of nearby listed buildings and to be in keeping with the surrounding rural area.
- 5.29 The height of the building has been minimised to ensure it is no higher than the closest properties in Crookthorn Lane and that the field screening which is to be retained would screen most of the elevations and provide a visual connection to the building. The building follows the design guidance in Part Q of Arun Design Guide in that it is sensitively integrated into its landscape setting through use of existing landscape features. The proposal adopts a simple form and elevational design in order to minimise visual impact and reflect traditional vernacular. Bolstering of boundary treatment including planting of trees and vegetation is proposed to soften the impact of development.
- 5.30 Given the rural location of the site a sympathetic design approach has been utilised comprising a barn typology comprising a simple form and soft palette of natural materials (see Figure 6 below). This would include knapped flint to eaves height, with red brick detailing and red-brown clay tile roof. Features include slit windows and horizontal timber weatherboarding. The building would be single storey with the interior opened up into the roof to maintain the barn typology. It was originally intended to provide a thatch roof, but this was discounted early in the design process as the commercial nature of the use combined with the location mean that surveillance of the building is not easy. Slate and tiled roofs exist on other farm buildings and former stables in nearby buildings in Crookthorn Lane and the use of clay is appropriate.
- 5.31 The building would provide the facilities identified as necessary to serve the local community and visitors. It is anticipated that barbeques and parasols would be provided, and these would be carefully chosen to ensure they are appropriate for this setting. Associated seating/parasols/bins would be stored in the internal storage area identified on the floor plan. The large open section of the barn is fully glazed however shutters are integrated to minimise visual impact. Car and cycle parking are provided in front of the building to aid surveillance.



Figure 6. Proposed south elevation

Layout & Scale

- 5.32 The scale of the development has been minimised by careful siting of the development close to established hedging and trees and the school so that it is well screened. The building is located close to other buildings so that it does not appear isolated within the landscape and the proposed car parking area layout and



orientation of the parking spaces has sought to ensure that glare is minimised from windscreens on bright sunny days. The site layout is extracted below at Figure 7.



Figure 7. Proposed site plan and photos of the site looking east and west

- 5.33 The parking areas will be screened by new and existing tree planting and delineated by oak sleepers with the access track provided in flint hogglin. This will ensure the proposal does not adversely affect the rural character of the area or appear too urban in design. This method of marking out parking spaces is often found at outdoor visitor facilities in rural areas.
- 5.34 The layout of the building at Figure 8 shows that sufficient internal storage is included within the building. This would ensure that parasols and other non-permanent paraphernalia can be stored within the building when the facility is closed reducing the visual impact of the development when not in use. It also highlights that bin and ASHP storage will be sensitively screened within a compound to the rear of the building.

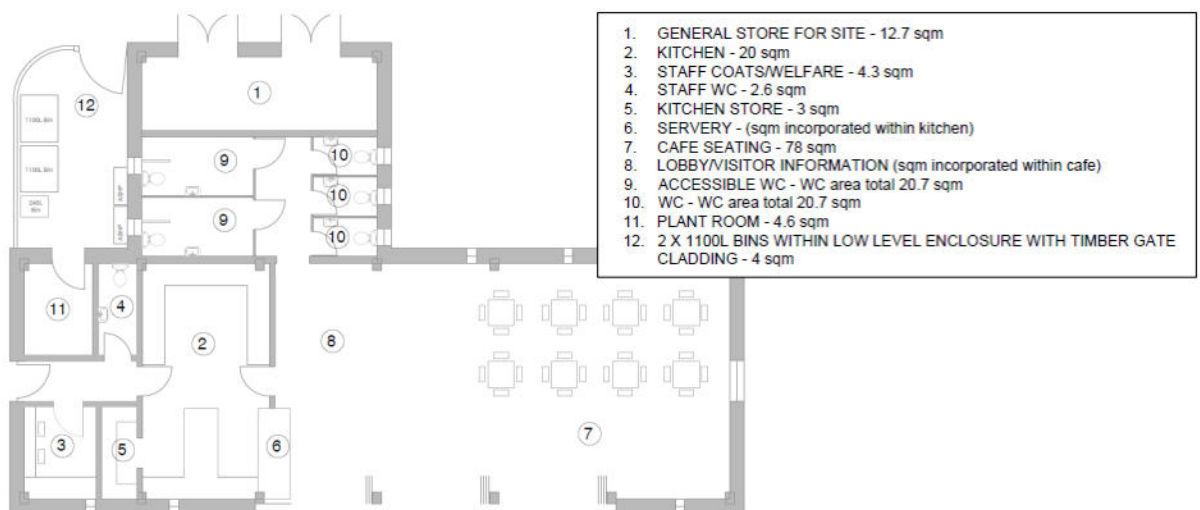


Figure 8. Proposed internal layout and key



- 5.35 As indicated the toilet facilities are only proposed to be accessed internally to ensure that when the café is closed the facilities cannot be used. This will ensure their use is supervised at all times.

Access

- 5.36 The site is located close to the junction of Crookthorn Lane and can be accessed by vehicles from the lane to the north where there is a small rise in ground level. The site is also accessible on foot from a public right of way to the west which runs north-south. The site would reduce traffic on Climping Street which is the main focus area of residential properties south of A259 and provides an opportunity to address the parking issues at St Mary's School.
- 5.37 The site is largely concealed by vegetation on approach from the north and the A259. The proposed car parking expands the existing provision to provide up to 130 spaces, although historically the existing car park accommodated approximately 300 vehicles. The replacement spaces are being provided to ensure there is sufficient capacity and to reduce the parking on Climping Street. The parking area in this position has the added benefit of providing car parking for parents dropping off and collecting children from the neighbouring school which would occur at times when the car park is unlikely to be busy. It is proposed to allow free parking associated with the school and to only charge for visitor parking outside of the winter months.
- 5.38 The site will alter the access from A259 to Crookthorn Lane which can accommodate two-way movements and will be accessed from an improved junction arrangement with the A259 in future. Speed limits on Crookthorn Lane remain at 30mph however as stated in the transport report observed speeds are circa 23/24mph, and at low volumes. The location of the site in relation to the A259 ensures good access to the local settlements. Pedestrian accessibility will be improved with the location of the Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT) immediately to the west of the proposed car park. Cycles can easily travel to the car park via the National Cycle Network Route 2 and for those to the north of the A259, via the new crossing/infrastructure to be implemented as part of the wider roundabout improvement scheme.

Loss of Agricultural Land & Soils

- 5.39 Policy SO DM1 of Arun Local Plan restricts the use of Grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification for any form of development not associated with agriculture, horticulture or forestry unless need for the development outweighs the need to protect the land in the long term. This proposal represents relocation of a well-established local amenity which requires re-siting close to the existing facility. The need for the development exists and is sufficient to outweigh the need for protection. It is facilitating retention of an established community facility identified as such in the Climping Neighbourhood Plan.
- 5.40 The proposal would result in a small reduction in the field area which is a limited proportion of the overall farm. The proposal falls within Grade 2 agricultural land and is therefore considered the best and most versatile agricultural land, but as explained above there are special circumstances which demonstrate there is an overriding need for the development in the proposed location and that the site chosen for relocation is the most sustainable option. The pre-application response from the LPA advised that the loss of agricultural land would result in harm, but policy allows for development that outweighs the need to protect the land. The identified discounted alternative sites and the need for the development which is supported by the Neighbourhood Plan would likely be sufficient to outweigh the loss of agricultural land.
- 5.41 Care will be taken during construction to preserve the soil resource (see the accompanying Soil Management Plan). Areas where soils need to be removed are minimal. Topsoil and subsoil will be stripped only where the building is to be constructed and at the gateway entrance. Subsoils from footings need not be protected and



will be removed from site. Topsoil will be spread thinly over areas of wildflower planting and on the arable field to the south to a depth of 200mm. No soil will be stockpiled. It will be loaded into dumpers and immediately spread or removed. Any soil movement will be dealt with in accordance with Defra guidance Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soils on Construction Sites. This includes soil management during construction which will take place in accordance with the submitted Soil Resource Plan showing the areas and type of topsoil and subsoil to be stripped and spread. This will be undertaken in the driest condition possible and use tracked equipment where possible to reduce compaction. Adherence to the SRP can be conditioned and will ensure that the physical soil properties are maintained throughout construction, such that undisturbed and reinstated soil profiles will be able to support healthy root growth and successful plant establishment.

- 5.42 The Neighbourhood Plan Policy CPN 10 restricts development on the best and most versatile agricultural land, unless special circumstances can be demonstrated. These may include an overriding need for the development in the proposed location and development on the site is demonstrated as the most sustainable option and/or the development conforms to other statutory national and local planning policies. This requirement is addressed since there is an overriding need to relocate the facilities away from the flood risk area and the proposal accords with other policies as set out above.
- 5.43 According to the Agricultural Land Classification map dated August 2010 (extracted below at Figure 10) the site lies within Grade 2 and is of very good soil quality. The land has been farmed with the adjoining land primarily for the growing of arable crops by the applicant and his family for decades, however the loss of such a small area as a natural resource is limited and does not significantly affect the overall viability or productivity of the farm.

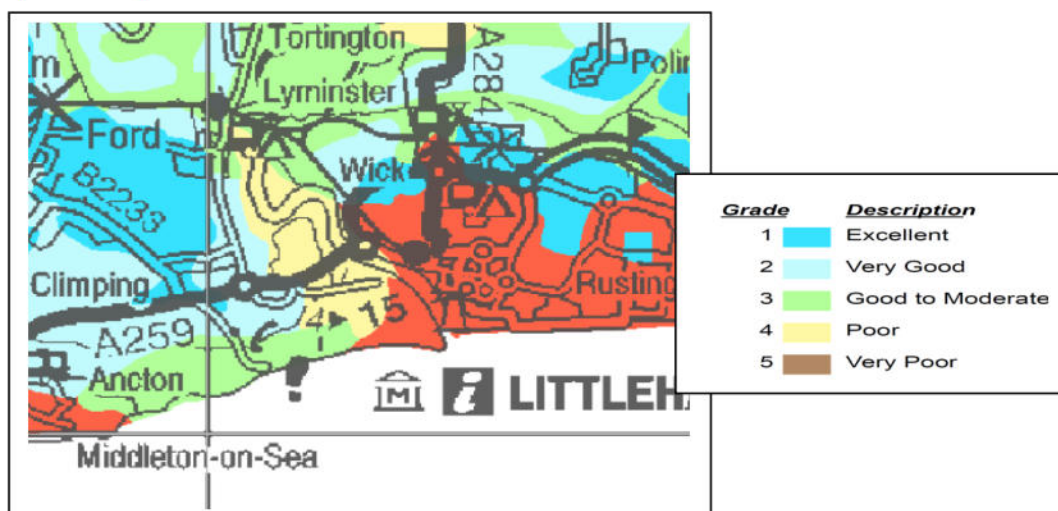


Figure 10. Soil quality

Tourism

- 5.44 Expansion of visitor attractions/tourist facilities is supported by local plan policy TOU DM1 provided that they are in accessible locations; are accompanied by workable and realistic travel plans; address visitor management issues; and achieve good design. Loss of an existing visitor offer is not normally accepted unless it is demonstrated that the use is no longer required, and the site is unlikely to be reused for visitor purposes.



In this case the loss of the existing facility cannot be prevented, and alternative visitor provision is being provided following public consultation and consideration of a range of alternative sites.

- 5.45 The policy expects visitor attractions, facilities or accommodation outside of the Built-Up Area Boundary to be small-scale and relate to quiet, informal recreation and enjoyment of Arun's countryside. This is the case with the facilities proposed. The principle of a car park in this rural location is accepted by the presence of the existing facility and expansion to include a larger visitor facility would be appropriate as it is associated with enhancing visitor use and appreciation of the specific coastal location. The development is required and is compatible with its countryside location and is sensitively designed and located to minimise potential impact on the countryside. By its very nature the use needs to be closely located to the coast. It also helps to address the nuisance caused by visitor car parking on Climping Street by providing alternative safer off-road facilities a short walk from Climping Street.
- 5.46 The improved visitor facilities would attract an additional clientele being readily accessible from the south coast cycle route along Kent Lane and the cycle lane along the A259. It would also appeal to long distance walkers given its easy access from the coastal path and Littlehampton to Climping footbridge.
- 5.47 Policy TOU SP1 states that sustainable tourism development will be encouraged where it protects as well as promotes the main tourism assets of the coast and the complimentary visitor uses of the fertile coastal plain in conjunction with agriculture. The proposal fully accords with these requirements. It is directly related to promotion of a better understanding and appreciation of the coastline habitat and encourages long-term visitor interest and, activity which benefits local people and extends the visitor season whilst protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment of Arun and addressing concerns of residents in Climping Street. The adjacent school has a coastal school curriculum, and it is anticipated that the development would be well aligned with this and could provide additional complementary exhibition artifacts and meeting space.

Natural Environment

- 5.48 Ecology and protected species considerations are integrated into current planning considerations via local plan policy and Section 15 of the 2023 National Planning Policy Framework. The site is located within a rural setting and offers opportunities for the natural environment. The site lies within a Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA) which requires development to retain and sympathetically incorporate locally valued and important habitats and to be designed to minimise disturbance to habitats. As required by policy ENV DM5 of the Local Plan the application is supported by a biodiversity survey and metric. The proposal does not result in any habitat loss as it would take place on land which is currently farmed and mitigation in the form of bat, bird and hedgehog boxes could be utilised and controlled by condition to ensure ecology enhancement within the site. No external lighting is proposed in order to retain the dark skies in this locality.

Heritage Considerations

- 5.49 The proposed building would be located adjacent to the school which is locally listed and would be visible from other listed buildings in Brookpit Lane. The site is close to neighbouring heritage assets, including Kents Dairy Cottages, Kent's Barn, Brookpit Manor and Kent's Farmhouse to the east however, the proposal is modest in size. With existing boundary screening retained it is unlikely to have an adverse impact upon the setting of these nearby heritage assets.
- 5.50 The accompanying Heritage Statement outlines that the design of the Visitor Centre and its location close to the field boundary and lane have sought to mitigate the impact of built form with the use of vernacular and locally distinctive features and materials. This is considered to be successful, especially as a one-off building



and is not in itself considered harmful to the setting of the heritage assets. The corresponding car park will have some impact on the appreciation of the historic farmstead, though this is from distance.

- 5.51 In terms of the NPPF the impact of the proposed development on the setting of the heritage assets would be considered 'less than substantial harm', and within the spectrum of harm, at the lower level.

Landscaping

- 5.52 The application is supported by a Landscape Design Strategy which outlines the proposed sympathetic design of the landscape planting scheme, which has been developed with due regard to the characteristics of the site, and fields in this location which have been large and open since at least the 19th Century, though development has still occurred adjacent to the lanes. Climping is on the 'Chichester to Yapton Coastal Plain' and the associated land management guidelines (2003) point towards the strengthening of field boundaries through hedgerows; the establishment of new vegetation features in the form of hedges and tree clumps in field corners and increasing species-rich grassland areas. Following discussions with the National Trust it is proposed to provide much of the new planting in groups rather than regimented straight lines. The provision of additional trees serves to integrate the building and car parking in the wider landscape.

Health & Wellbeing

- 5.53 Policy HWB SP1 of Arun's Local Plan is relevant as it encourages exercise including recreational facilities, safe walking and cycling routes noting these should be located on public transport corridors and easily accessible to the wider community. The proposal would assist in encouraging and supporting opportunities for exercise. It would be easily accessible from the upgraded cycle route along the A259, and ease of parking would assist in facilitating walking in the area. The car park would have direct access to existing footpaths and Ferry Road and the footbridge beyond into Littlehampton. The existing footpaths are indicated in green on the site location plan at Figure 1 of this statement, showing the direct connectivity of the site to Bread Lane and the wider area and shoreline.

Drainage

- 5.54 The site is not affected by any current or future flooding from rivers or the sea. The submitted Drainage Statement confirms that the surface water will discharge into the ground using the infiltration basin and permeable paving. All infiltration features have been designed to accommodate storm events up to the 1 in 100-year return period, with an additional 45% allowance for climate change and a further 10% allowance for urban creep.
- 5.55 The foul water is to be discharged into the existing foul sewer located in Climping Street. The proposal is compliant with policy W DM3 of Arun Local Plan which seeks to increase the levels of water capture and storage and improve water quality, by incorporating sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS), appropriate to the size of the development by including permeable car park surfacing.



6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The proposals have been fully informed by the development management policies of the Local Plan and National Planning Policy Framework. The site selection has resulted from a desire to be outside the area of archaeological interest and flood risk but to remain close to the sea whilst utilising the proximity to existing buildings and field boundaries to reduce any impact on the wider landscape. The design and materials palette proposed for the building would complement the rural setting, be modest in scale and of traditional appearance which would assist with the visual integration of the development in its setting.
- 6.2 The proposal for the replacement and expansion of the community facilities would be visually respectful of the site and its wider context. The proposal would not result in harm to neighbour amenities or the rural character of the area and would appropriately enhance the visitor/tourist experience whilst extending the capacity of the existing car parking, without compromising the character of the settlement gap or contributing to visual coalescence.
- 6.3 For all the above reasons the application proposal complies with the policies of the Local Plan and the overarching objective of the National Planning Policy Framework to deliver appropriate sustainable development. As such we therefore request that the application is granted planning permission at the earliest opportunity.