

Planning Statement

**Erection of 2 no. new buildings for the storage of caravans/motorhomes
or self-storage in place of existing glasshouse and
buildings approved under application LU/47/16**

Castlevew Nursery

Old Mead Road

Littlehampton

On behalf of Mr M Amirpashaie

May 2018

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared on behalf of my client Mr Amirpashaie to accompany this planning application for the erection of 2 no. new buildings for the storage of caravans/motorhomes or for self-storage. It is intended that the buildings will replace the existing glasshouse on the site and the storage building and propagation unit which were granted planning permission under application LU/47/16 but have yet to be constructed.
- 1.2 The existing glasshouse on the land was part of a much larger building which was granted permission in April 2005 but was only partially completed. It has since been in use for horticultural purposes by the applicant and more recently a tenant who grew a variety of perennial plants. The glasshouse was rented to the tenant for a nominal rent which barely covered the costs. The applicant therefore sought to diversify the business by using the adjoining land for caravan and motorhome storage with planning permission being granted initially for 30 caravans under application LU/105/15. This helped generate additional income which the applicant intended to use to support the horticultural use by the erection of a storage unit and propagation unit. Planning permission was therefore obtained for two new buildings for agricultural storage and propagation in 2016 (LU/47/16).
- 1.3 Unfortunately, before the building could be constructed, the horticultural tenant vacated the premises leaving the glasshouse unoccupied. The applicant has been advertising since May 2017 for a new occupier and the advert included the possibility of having the use of the additional buildings the subject of the planning permission:



The screenshot shows a webpage from Gardenforum, 'The Information Hub for Garden Retail'. The main heading is 'Glasshouse to let (West Sussex)' dated May 8 2017, by Castlevew Nursery. The text describes a 80ft x 100ft glasshouse suitable for small operation growing, with reasonable rent, located between Arundel and Littlehampton. It mentions auxiliary buildings available if needed, connected to mains electricity and water, and ready to start with minimal upfront costs. The contact number is 07557 652605. The ad is sponsored by Woodlodge, a company with 20 years of experience. Social media sharing options for Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Email are provided. The footer of the ad includes the Gardenforum logo and a 'Log in' button.

- 1.4 Despite this advertising, no new tenants have been found. Over this period, the applicant has secured two further planning permissions for caravan/motorhome storage (one of which included 4 no. containers for self-storage and storage of scaffolding equipment) which now allows the storage of up to 91 caravans (LU/141/16 and LU/231/17). The site of the planning permissions for the horticultural buildings was not included in those permissions as it was hoped that the horticultural use would recommence.
- 1.5 Application LU/141/16 also secured planning permission for a site office/security cabin. A subsequent permission LU/427/17 proposed a lodge style building for the office/security facilities and was approved in February this year.

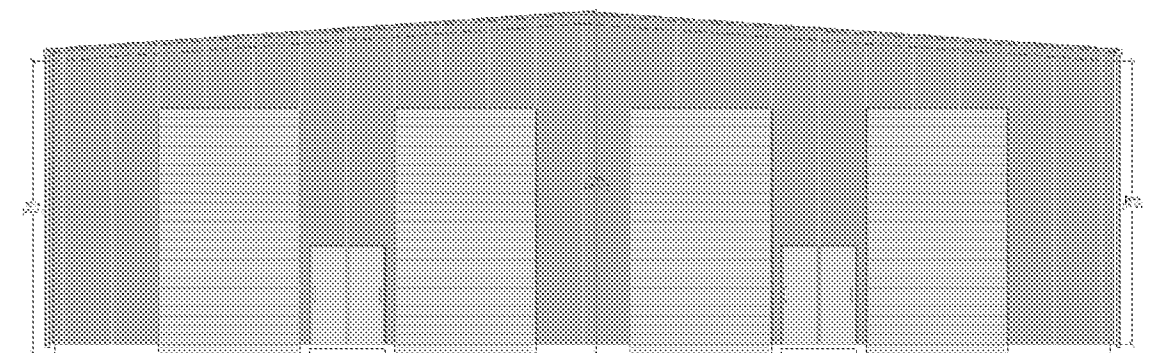
2. The Site and Its Surroundings

- 2.1 The application site is part of Castlevew Nursery which is situated at the western end of Old Mead Road. The land in the applicant's ownership comprises a glasshouse approximately 22.5 metres by 32 metres in extent located close to the eastern boundary with unused land to the north where the two agricultural buildings have planning permission. The caravan/motor home storage for which planning permission has been granted under a series of planning permissions takes place on land along the southern, western and northern boundaries. A small area in use for scaffolding storage is located in the north-west corner of the land and there are a small number of containers within the site used for self-storage.
- 2.2 To the south-west and west of the nursery site is located a solar park and to the east is Glenvilla Nursery separated from the applicant's land by means of a pollarded row of fir trees adjacent to the application site and a trellis style fence beyond. Further to the east is a residential property known as The Bungalow sitting in a large plot on which there is a current planning application for residential development. The boundary of this planning application is contiguous with the northern part of the applicant's land. It is understood that there has been a positive pre-application response to the use of land for residential purposes and, if granted, will result in a more built-up character to the western end of Old Mead Road.
- 2.3 The southern and western boundaries of the applicant's land are defined by wire fencing and a row of Leylandii trees which provide an effective screen. The northern boundary and part of the eastern boundary has been fenced with trellis style fencing and planting has taken place on the outside to form a soft edge to the countryside beyond.

- 2.4 Access to the site is via Old Mead Road, a private lane which serves the existing properties and former horticultural nurseries. The access to the site itself is from the south-east corner of the land.

3. The Application Proposal

- 3.1 The application proposes the erection of 2 no. new buildings to allow for the internal storage of caravans/motorhomes or self-storage.
- 3.2 The first building (building A) will be located in the same position as the existing glasshouse and will be of similar dimensions (22.5m x 32m). The second building (building B) will be to the north, on the land that has not been included in the caravan storage area as it was to accommodate the approved agricultural buildings. The building will measure 20m x 28m. There will be a gap of just over 6m between the buildings to allow access as the doors to each building will open onto this central area.
- 3.3 The buildings will be constructed with a steel frame and clad in metal profile sheeting. The only openings will be onto the central area and will comprise roller shutter vehicle access doors and pedestrian doors. Building A will measure 7.26m to the ridge and Building B will measure 7.17m.

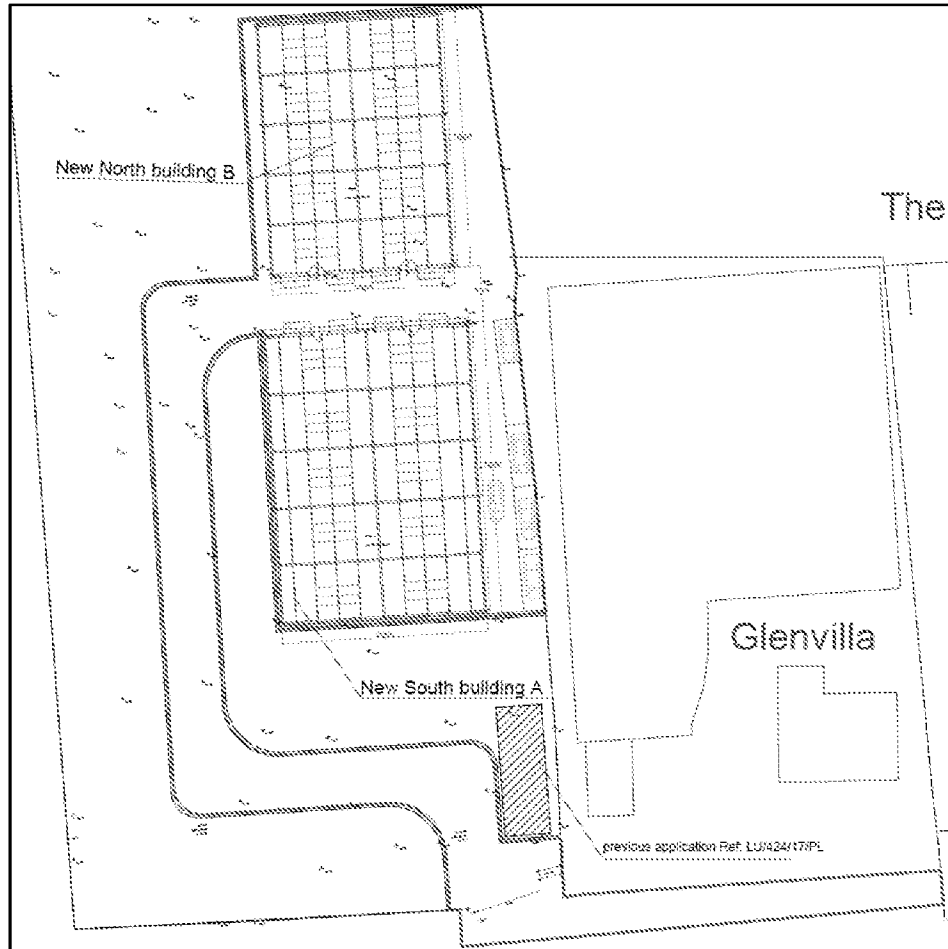


FRONT ELEVATION
North

Building A (in place of existing glasshouse)

- 3.4 Storage will take place in rows behind each of the eight roller shutter doors. It is anticipated that each row will accommodate four caravans/motorhomes or areas for self-storage. Each storage area therefore is roughly equivalent to a parking bay or container elsewhere on the site. The two buildings will in total accommodate approximately 32 storage spaces.
- 3.5 Access to the site will be via the existing gateway and across the vehicle manoeuvring area between the stored caravans. Five parallel car-parking spaces will be provided

adjacent to the eastern boundary next to building A and will only be available as temporary parking for clients that are accessing the storage.



Proposed Site Layout

4. Planning Policy

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It is the Government's intention to achieve sustainable development which includes the three dimensions of economic, social and environmental roles. Paragraph 8 acknowledges that these roles should not be undertaken in isolation because they are mutually dependent. Economic growth can secure higher social and environmental standards. It is submitted that this proposal can be seen as meeting this objective provided there is no harm to the character of the area.
- 4.2 The Government's commitment to building a strong, competitive economy is set out in paragraphs 18 to 22. In paragraph 19 it states that the Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an

impediment to sustainable growth. Therefore significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system.

- 4.3 Paragraph 28 deals specifically with the rural economy and states that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. It states that local and neighbourhood plans should, amongst other matters, support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings.
- 4.4 Local Development Plan policies are contained within the Arun District Local Plan 2003. Saved policy GEN2 deals with built-up area boundaries and states that outside such areas development will not be permitted unless it is consistent with other local plan policies. Policy GEN 3 sets out the criteria against which new development in the countryside will be assessed and confirms that development will not be permitted unless it complies with one of the five criteria specified. Criterion (iii) relates to diversification of the rural economy which confirms that development which supports existing rural businesses can be acceptable in countryside locations. It has been demonstrated that a user cannot be found for the horticultural use of the existing glasshouse and therefore it is reasonable to consider the benefits to the storage business which is now a rural business in the context of its location.
- 4.5 On the proposals map the site is located within Area 3: the Setting of Arundel and Area 10: Strategic Gaps. With regard to the setting of Arundel, policy Area 3 does not permit development which would adversely affect the views of Arundel or its special setting. In particular, development will not be permitted which would adversely affect the long-distance views of Arundel Castle or Arundel cathedral. The site itself is located close to the eastern edge of Area 3 well related to existing development in and around Old Mead Road. Within the site, the proposed development will be located close to the eastern edge and will replace the existing glasshouse and previously approved agricultural buildings. The buildings will be viewed as part of the existing development; the storage of caravans/motorhomes, containers and scaffolding. The existing Leylandii screen and the more recent planting will provide an effective screen separating the site from the low-lying countryside beyond and as such the site does not contribute to the setting of Arundel.
- 4.6 With regard to Strategic Gaps, policy Area 10 seeks to prevent coalescence and retain the separate identity and amenity of settlements. It requires development to be consistent with other policies of the development plan, to maintain the objectives and fundamental integrity of the Strategic Gap and have regard to the long-term enhancement of the landscape, amenity and conservation value within the gap. It is submitted therefore that the gap policy does not preclude development provided it is compliant with other policies and does not undermine the purpose of the gap. It

has been demonstrated that the proposal is compliant with other policies as it supports an existing business in the rural area. Furthermore, there is no conflict with the purpose of the gap as the buildings will be considered part of the existing development on the site and in Old Mead Road and will not have any impact on the function of the gap.

- 4.7 The emerging policies of the Arun District Local Plan 2011-2031 are similar to the current saved policies insofar as they seek to protect the countryside whilst allowing sustainable development where it accords with other policies in the plan. Policy EMP SP1 in particular seeks to promote the sustainable growth of the District's economy by, amongst other matters, supporting sustainable employment opportunities in rural areas. Policy EMP DM1 sets out the development management criteria applicable to new economic development outside the built-up area. This includes that it is an appropriate sized extension of an existing employment site, it would not result in an unacceptable intensification of use of the public access and consideration of landscape context and neighbouring residential properties. In this respect, the site falls within an area designated for the setting of Arundel and the Arundel to Littlehampton Gap (Policy SD SP3) which replaces the Strategic Gap policy and has been commented on above.
- 4.8 The Littlehampton Neighbourhood Plan 2014, in policy 1, sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development and states that development will be approved where the plan is silent unless the policies of the Arun Local Plan indicate otherwise, or the adverse impacts significantly and demonstrably outweigh its benefits when assessed against the NPPF.

5. Planning Considerations

- 5.1 The site the subject of this application is located outside the built-up area where the countryside protection policies of the Local Plan seek to control development to that justified under particular circumstances. This includes proposals which are considered to represent a diversification of the rural economy and new development on employment sites that is appropriate to its context.
- 5.2 In this case, the horticultural use of the glasshouse was not sustainable due to its limited size and resultant poor financial return. Despite obtaining planning permission for buildings that could have supported a horticultural use, no new occupier has been found. It therefore makes sense for the applicant to utilise the land for further storage uses and given that there is an existing building on the site and permission for further built development, new buildings providing space for internal storage would seem appropriate. This would also give the applicant an advantage over other sites by being able to offer internal space for caravans and motorhomes.

Many of these vehicles are highly valuable and being able to offer storage in a weatherproof, secure building will attract business and higher rents.

- 5.3 It is therefore submitted that there is policy support for the erection of new buildings on the site. It is not an expansion of the site into the countryside but the effective use of land within the site which is no longer required for horticultural purposes. It can therefore be considered to be an expansion of an existing business use which is acceptable in principle under emerging policy EMP DM1 (which now carries significant weight).
- 5.4 The key consideration therefore is whether the development is appropriate to its context having regard to the potential traffic movements, neighbour amenity and impact on the character of the area. The matter of impact on the character of the area has been largely dealt with earlier in the report in considering the policy context. Additionally, it is relevant that the site is located in an area of mixed character with large scale horticultural buildings, caravans, solar park and residential properties. In character terms, the site cannot be considered to be 'rural' but now a commercial site.



The Application Site in Context (taken before the additional caravan storage implemented)

- 5.5 The new buildings would not be out of character in this context and the economic benefits weigh significantly in favour. In this respect, the proposal represents sustainable development bringing significant economic benefits to the existing business and staff with the resultant social benefits which arise from that. The business also provides a service that people need providing high quality, secure internal storage for caravans/motorhomes avoiding parking on driveways and highways. The new buildings in place of the existing glasshouse and approved agricultural buildings will not impact significantly on the character of the area and therefore it is concluded that the development overall is sustainable.
- 5.6 The proposed buildings will not be in close proximity to any existing residential properties. Building A will be located adjacent to the glasshouse on the adjoining Glenvilla nursery which will separate it from the dwelling which is located further to the south east. This boundary is also landscaped with Leylandii and fencing/cherry laurel. Building B will be located adjacent to what is currently open undeveloped land. It is submitted therefore that the development will not impact on neighbour amenities.

Access

- 5.7 In terms of traffic movements, the applicant can provide an accurate assessment of the likely movements based on the existing use. He has been able to review the movements from CCTV footage on the site to assess existing movement and use this to predict future movements. It is intended that the space within the new buildings will be rented on an annual contract; this is how the majority of existing contracts operate and eventually all existing contracts will become annual. The applicant's experience, based on the CCTV evidence, is that annual storers access the site once per quarter i.e. two trips per quarter which is 8 per year. Therefore, the existing site with permission for 91 caravans/containers would generate 728 trips per year and the new buildings an additional 256 trips per year. This amounts to 984 trips per year or 2.7 trips per day in total with the new buildings contributing 0.7 trips per day to the existing 2 trips per day. It is submitted that this is unlikely to have a severe impact on the existing highway network

6. Local Validation Requirements

Contamination

- 6.1 The land to the west of the application site was previously a landfill site. It is understood that it did not include the current application site as it is very close to the adjoining residential property to the east. The applicant, in undertaking previous groundworks to a depth of 5m found only soils and no evidence of any landfill. In considering previous applications the Environmental Health Officer suggested an 'unsuspected contamination' condition which would be acceptable to the applicant in this case.

Parking Plan

- 6.2 The site plan submitted with this application indicates parking for approximately five vehicles. These will only be in use for short periods of time whilst customers store items. Given that the anticipated movements are only 2.7 trips per day, it is submitted that this is sufficient to serve the proposed use.

Landscaping Strategy

- 6.3 The existing site is planted to all boundaries by a mixture of established Leylandii and Cherry Laurel more recently planted in association with the previous planning permission for the additional caravan storage. Given the existing landscaping, and the fact that the buildings will be located within the site, it is not anticipated that any additional landscaping will be required.

Flood Risk Assessment

- 6.4 The northern and eastern boundaries of the site lie within flood zone 2/3 with the site for the buildings falling within flood zone 1 where no assessment is required as the site is less than a hectare.

Foul and surface water

- 6.5 There is no requirement for a foul connection in association with this development. The southern building will replace the existing glasshouse which discharges surface water to the watercourse to the north. The surface water from the northern building will be dealt with in a similar way or discharged to a soakaway (given previous comments on lack of contamination in the area).

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 It is submitted that the principle of new buildings on this site can be supported on the basis that soon to be adopted Local Plan policy allows sustainable employment opportunities in the rural areas. Equally, the NPPF encourages LPAs to support economic growth in rural areas by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development which can include new buildings.
- 7.2 It has been demonstrated that the existing horticultural use will not continue and therefore the glasshouse is redundant. Its replacement with a new storage building along with a new building to the north is appropriate in the context of the uses undertaken on the site and the general character of the area. The additional traffic movements will not be significant and there will be no impact on the amenities of adjoining neighbouring properties.
- 7.3 In all respects the proposal represents a sustainable form of development and is development plan compliant.