

Report to	Planning Committee
Date	9 November 2022
By	Director of Planning and Environment
Local Authority	Chichester District Council
Application No	SDNP/21/02183/FUL
Applicant	Jessica Stilwell
Application	Demolition of existing and construction of replacement farm office.
Address	Green Lanes Farm Back Lane Forestside Stoughton PO9 6EB

Recommendation: That the application be Approved for the reasons and subject to the conditions set out in paragraph 10 of this report.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This application is liable for Community Infrastructure Levy.

Executive Summary

Parish Council objection - officer recommends PERMIT

The application site has the benefit of an authorised office/administration element associated with the agricultural activities undertaken on this and surrounding land and so the principle of the replacement office building is compliant with the authorised use and is acceptable. It will be sited directly where the office building is currently and would be read in context with other, existing agricultural buildings on the site. Although the proposed building possesses a larger floorspace than the one it is to replace, it has been designed to have a multi-functional role and incorporates an agricultural aesthetic, reflecting its setting within the wider landscape. Overall, the scale of the proposed building remains modest and, together with the removal of existing structures will not result in proliferation of buildings on the site and will result in a minor visual benefit overall. Therefore, the building and associated use is considered to comply with the objectives of relevant National and Local planning policy set out in this report. Subject to conditions limiting the use of the building to Green Lanes Farm only, provision of ground floor accommodation only and removal of existing office and storage containers from the site, the application is recommended for approval.

1.0 Site Description

- 1.1 Green Lanes Farming occupies a modest holding on the north side of West Marden Hill and east of Back Lane. Several buildings occupy the site, including calf-rearing barns (one subject to SDNP/21/00014/FUL), storage containers and rudimentary timber office/welfare building. The largest building on the site is a general purpose barn erected under Part 6 of the GPDO in 2020 under reference SDNP/20/02455/APNB.
- 1.2 The wider site boundaries to the south and southwest of the holding (with the highways) is effectively screened by tall, mature hedgerows. Similar screening is found along the eastern and northern boundaries.

- 1.3 To the north of the site is open pasture. Between the building group and the highway to the south (West Marden Hill) is an area of pasture. To the east of the site is a group of four dwellings fronting the highway, the nearest being Filkins, which shares a common boundary with Green Lanes Farm. Filkins is approximately 32 metres away from the nearest barn (building to building).
- 1.4 The general character of the landscape is a mixture of both agriculture (arable and grazing) and parcels of woodland, with equestrian use of some fields. Fields are mainly modest and irregular in size, defined by mature boundary hedging.

2.0 Proposal

- 2.1 Planning permission SDNP/18/03033/FUL - allowed the retention of a farm office building, storage barn, cattle pens, and provision of a new private sewage treatment plant. This existing office facility is a modest but rudimentary domestic timber outbuilding adapted for use for the administrative functions undertaken in connection with Green Lanes Farming Ltd. Adjacent to this building is an adapted steel storage container used as additional office accommodation. A further storage container is used for secure storage purposes. The applicant considers that the existing office building has reached the end of its operational life and requires replacement.
- 2.2 The applicant has taken the opportunity to amalgamate the current office floorspace along with staff welfare facilities into one building. The current ad hoc arrangement of the existing timber building and associated storage containers are to be removed from the site.
- 2.3 The replacement office/welfare building is an Oak-framed, single storey building located in approximately the same position as the existing structures. Its elevations are to be clad in timber boarding under a hipped, clay tiled roof. The accommodation comprises farm office, mess room, wc/washroom, boot room and store. There is no first floor accommodation. The floorspace of the replacement building amounts to 90m². The footprint of the building is articulated into a broadly 'L' - shape, with an overall height of 4.5 metres.

3.0 Relevant Planning History

SDNP/18/03033/FUL - Retrospective application for erection of a farm office building, storage barn, cattle pens, and a new private sewage treatment plant. PERMIT 07.09.2018

SDNP/20/02455/APNB - Erection of a new agricultural building for straw storage, including hardstanding. PRIOR APPROVAL NOT REQUIRED 07.07.2020

SDNP/20/04750/FUL - Demolition of existing farm office and construction of replacement farm office with open-fronted parking area. WITHDRAWN 08.02.2021

SDNP/20/05865/FUL - Retrospective permission for installation of 1 no. electric roller blind and proposed installation of 1 no. electric roller blind on an existing agricultural building. PERMIT 04.08.2021

SDNP/21/00014/FUL - Retrospective application for erection of a calf rearing barn and a concrete pad. PENDING CONSIDERATION

4.0 Consultations

Parish Council

The Parish Council is concerned about the proliferation of buildings in this particular part of the farmstead in question, in this rural location. It is not clear why the proposed building needs to be as large as what is proposed; in appearance it resembles a 'chalet bungalow' style dwelling, which is quite inappropriate for this location. In view of these concerns these comments should be taken as an OBJECTION on the part of the Parish Council

Natural England

No comments to make on this application

WSCC - Highways

DATE OF SITE VISIT: N/A

RECOMMENDATION: Advice

S106 CONTRIBUTION TOTAL: N/A

This application has been dealt with in accordance with the Development Control Scheme protocol for small scale proposals which include up to 5 residential units or extensions to single units accessed from roads that do not form part of the Strategic Road Network (SRN). As such the comments provided by Strategic Planning should be considered to be advice only, with respect to this planning application.

This proposal has been considered by means of a desktop study, using the information and plans submitted with this application, in conjunction with other available WSCC map information. A site visit can be arranged on request.

This proposal is for the demolition of an existing farm office and construction of a replacement farm office. The site is located on Back Lane, an unclassified road subject to national speed limit.

WSCC in its role as Local Highway Authority (LHA) previously provided consultation advice for a similar application at this site, SDNP/20/04750/FUL, raising no objections. This application was withdrawn by the applicant.

The applicant proposes no alterations to the existing vehicular access arrangements. The LHA does not anticipate that the proposed development would give rise to a material intensification of movements using this access.

An inspection of collision data provided to WSCC by Sussex Police from a period of the last five years reveals no recorded injury accidents within the vicinity of the site. Therefore, there is no evidence to suggest the existing access is operating unsafely or that the proposed development would exacerbate an existing safety concern.

The Planning Statement states that on-site vehicular parking will be located adjacent to the proposed office building. From inspection of the plans and local mapping, there is adequate space for this to be accommodated, including space for on-site turning.

In conclusion, the LHA does not consider that this proposal would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety or result in 'severe' cumulative impacts on the operation of the highway network, therefore is not contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 109), and that there are no transport grounds to resist the proposal.

HCC - Landscape Team

The proposed replacement office is now smaller than the original application, but it still proposes a one and a half storey building and it is very noticeable that the plans do not show any internal design for the space. Therefore like the earlier building it still appears to be large enough to include accommodation and not just an office.

On landscape grounds there is a holding objection to this scheme, due to the lack of mitigation and improving the overall environment.

The scale of the proposed development lacks detail of the internal use of the building space, it still appears to be large enough to be used as accommodation as well as a farm office.

CDC - Environmental Strategy

Bats:

The Protected Species Walkover Survey (November 2020) concluded a negligible potential to support roosting bats overall and therefore did not recommend any further surveys. However, the lighting scheme for the site will need to take into consideration the presence of bats in the local area. The scheme should minimise potential impacts to any bats using the trees, hedgerows and buildings, especially around the northern boundary of the property, by avoiding unnecessary artificial light spill through the use of directional light sources and shielding.

The hedgerows on site are used by bats for commuting and foraging and will need to be retained and enhanced for bats. This will include having a buffer strip around the hedgerows (5m) and during construction fencing should be used to ensure this area is undisturbed. Any gaps should also be filled in using native hedge species to improve connectivity. Conditions should be used to ensure this.

We require that a bat box is installed on the building on site facing south/south westerly positioned 3-5m above ground.

Nesting Birds:

Any works to the trees or vegetation clearance on the site should only be undertaken outside of the bird breeding season which takes place between 1st March - 1st October. If works are required within this time an ecologist will need to check the site before any works take place (within 24 hours of any work).

We would like a bird box to be installed on the building and/or tree within the garden of the property.

Reptiles:

The site of the proposed replacement building is currently used for storage of materials and holds some potential for use by over wintering amphibians and reptiles under these piles. We are happy that a precautionary approach can be undertaken on the site for reptiles. This involves any removal of scrub, grassland or ruderal vegetation to be done sensitively and done with a two phased cut. Additionally, material piles should be removed carefully by hand under method statement to ensure any animals which may be present are not injured or killed.

Dormice:

The hedgerow along the northern boundary of the site is considered to have suitability to support hazel dormouse as it offers foraging opportunities and is well connected to adjacent suitable habitat. The hedgerow is being retained within this proposal and therefore, no further surveys are needed, just a precautionary approach, including having a buffer strip around the hedgerows (5m) and during construction fencing should be used to ensure this area is undisturbed. Any gaps should also be filled in using native hedge species to improve connectivity. Conditions should be used to ensure this. However, if

works require any destruction or removal of the hedgerow then further surveys for dormice will need to be undertaken

5.0 Representations

3 Third Party objections

Domestic design ('bespoke garage') at odds with proposed function as farm office and design of other farm buildings on the site and its rural setting

Size disproportionate for proposed use - existing office space more than adequate.

Condition of existing building insufficient justification for replacement by larger structure

Overdevelopment

Agricultural justification for replacement of the building inaccurate

Agent's supporting information

Green Lanes Farm is the administrative centre for Green Lanes Farming Ltd, a productive beef cattle enterprise specialising in calf rearing, growing store cattle and finishing cattle. Green Lanes Farm is where calves are reared and weaned before being moved on to grower sites elsewhere in the South Downs and further afield.

The business has outgrown the office and administration facilities presently on the site.

An adjacent storage container is also used as an office and administration storage.

Proposal has been subject to pre-application discussion and reflects that advice

Proposal in line with the objectives of rural and agricultural policies of NPPF and Local Plan

Siting is within existing building group.

Functional design informed and in keeping with rural setting, with minimal impact on the surrounding landscape

No proliferation - existing office building and containers to be removed

6.0 Planning Policy Context

- 6.1 Applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The statutory development plan in this area is the **South Downs Local Plan 2014-2033** and any relevant minerals and waste plans. Other plans considered:

- N/a

The development plan policies and other material considerations considered relevant to this application are set out in section 7, below.

National Park Purposes

The two statutory purposes of the SDNP designation are:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage,
- To promote opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of their areas.

If there is a conflict between these two purposes, conservation takes precedence. There is also a duty to foster the economic and social well-being of the local community in pursuit of these purposes.

7.0 Planning Policy

Relevant Government Planning Policy and Guidance

- 7.1 Government policy relating to National Parks is set out in English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular 2010 and The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), updated July 2021. The Circular and NPPF confirm that National Parks have the highest status of protection, and the NPPF states at paragraph 176 that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in national parks and that the conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations and should be given great weight in National Parks.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 7.2 The following National Planning Policy Framework documents have been considered in the assessment of this application:
- NPPF01 - Introduction
 - NPPF02 - Achieving sustainable development
 - NPPF04 - Decision-making
 - NPPF06 - Building a strong, competitive economy
 - NPPF12 - Achieving well-designed places
 - NPPF15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- 7.3 The development plan policies listed below have been assessed for their compliance with the NPPF and are considered to be compliant with the NPPF.

The following policies of the **South Downs Local Plan** are relevant to this application:

- Core Policy SD1 - Sustainable Development
- Core Policy SD2 - Ecosystems Services
- Strategic Policy SD4 - Landscape Character
- Strategic Policy SD5 - Design
- Strategic Policy SD7 - Relative Tranquillity
- Development Management Policy SD39 - Agriculture and Forestry

Partnership Management Plan

- 7.4 The Environment Act 1995 requires National Parks to produce a Management Plan setting out strategic management objectives to deliver the National Park Purposes and Duty. National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) states that Management Plans "contribute to setting the strategic context for development" and "are material considerations in making decisions on individual planning applications." The South Downs Partnership Management Plan as amended for 2020-2025 on 19 December 2019, sets out a Vision, Outcomes, Policies and a Delivery Framework for the National Park over the next five years. The relevant policies include:

- Partnership Management Plan Policy 1
- Partnership Management Plan Policy 3
- Partnership Management Plan Policy 13
- Partnership Management Plan Policy 50

8.0 Planning Assessment

- 8.1 The main issue with this proposal is considered to be the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
- 8.2 Green Lanes Farm (GLF) is noted to be the administrative centre of the overarching beef cattle enterprise, Green Lanes Farming Ltd. As well as being the administrative centre for the business, other buildings on the site are used for calf-rearing, with up to 200 calves on site at any one time. Planning permission SDNP/18/03033/FUL authorised the use of the site and buildings for the enterprise, as well as the retention of the current office building and the provision of a package treatment plant. Therefore the principle of the site acting as the administrative centre for this enterprise has been acknowledged in planning terms. Subsequently, a general purpose barn has been erected with the benefit of permitted development and there is an as yet undetermined application for the retention of a further open-sided calf barn sited in the northeast corner of the site.
- 8.3 The current office building is sited on the northern edge of the site, adjacent to an established rural hedgerow. The office building is of rudimentary timber construction under a shallow pitched felted roof and has the appearance of a re-purposed domestic summer house/chalet. Adjacent to this building are two steel shipping containers under a shared corrugated sheeting roof, one of which is used as additional office space, the other for storage. An area at the front of the present office building is dedicated to staff parking. The current arrangement and visual appearance of buildings and structures is ad hoc and somewhat rudimentary and whilst public views of this part of the site are relatively well screened, the condition and appearance of the structures do impart a negative impact on landscape character.
- 8.4 The proposed replacement building will provide not only office accommodation for the administrative function of the business as a whole but also secure storage for documents and welfare facilities for staff. The drawings propose that the replacement building will occupy the footprint of the existing timber office, together with a modest area of degraded land immediately to the west. The building will be of traditional timber framed construction under a fully hipped, tiled roof. The building's aesthetic and choice of materials are reflective of those commonly found on rural buildings throughout the National Park and are acceptable in this rural context.

- 8.5 It is acknowledged that the replacement building is larger than the one it is to replace (excluding the floor space of the steel containers) and third parties have made representations on this aspect of the application. The building is multifunctional in that it is to provide not just office space for the administrative function of this rural enterprise but also staff welfare and meeting facilities, secure document storage, some of which is currently accommodated in the two steel containers.
- 8.6 The building will be single storey only and the hipped roof and articulated footprint and roofscape effectively address any massing issues. Whilst the pitch of the roof is necessary to secure a tiled roof, the resultant increase in height is modest and visually well contained in perceptual terms by mature hedging and trees defining the boundaries of the wider holding.
- 8.7 Overall, the proposal would result in a better quality building that is sympathetic to the rural character and appearance of the surrounding landscape. The low overall height of the replacement building, its siting in context with other (more substantial) farm buildings and supplementary planting will ensure that the impact on the visual qualities of the area would be benign. The removal of the existing poor quality building and incongruous shipping containers agreed as part of this proposal would, in itself, result in a visual enhancement of the site and immediate area.

9.0 Conclusion

- 9.1 The application site has the benefit of an authorised office/administration use associated with the agricultural activities undertaken on this and surrounding land. Therefore, the principle of the replacement office building is acceptable. Although the proposed building is larger than the one it is to replace, it has been designed to have a multi-functional role and possesses an agricultural aesthetic, reflecting its setting within the wider landscape. The overall scale of the proposed building remains modest and, together with the removal of existing structures, will result in a visual enhancement. Therefore, on balance the building is considered to comply with the objectives of relevant National and Local planning policy set out in section 2 of this report.

10.0 Reason for Recommendation and Conditions

It is recommended that the application be Approved for the above reasons and subject to the conditions set out below.

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

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

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

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

3. The materials used in the construction of the development hereby approved shall be as detailed within the permitted application particulars and shall be retained permanently as such, unless prior written consent is obtained from the Local Planning Authority to any variation.

Reason: To safeguard the appearance of the building and the character of the area.

4. Notwithstanding condition three above, the development hereby permitted shall not proceed beyond slab level until details of the proposed roof tile has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in full accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To safeguard the appearance of the building and the character of the area.

5. At no time shall any first floor or mezzanine level be inserted within the building unless approved by way of an application to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To accord with the terms of the application and to ensure that the level of office accommodation reflects the scale of the administrative and functional operations undertaken by Green Lanes Farming Ltd and to prevent an over intensive use of the site.

6. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015, the building hereby permitted shall not be used other than as office, administration and welfare purposes solely in connection with agriculture at Green Lanes Farm and Green Lanes Farming Ltd and for no other purpose, including any other purpose within Use Class E of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended).

Reason: To accord with the terms of the application and to ensure that the Local Planning Authority has future control over the building to prevent inappropriate commercial uses in this sensitive countryside location.

7. The building hereby permitted shall not come into use until the existing office building has been demolished and resultant debris removed from the site, together with the complete removal of the two steel containers and associated roof covering located immediately to the north east of the office building.

Reason: In order to prevent the proliferation of buildings on the holding; the proposed building provides sufficient floorspace to negate any justification for the retention of buildings and structures that have a negative impact on the character and appearance of the area.

8. No development shall commence until protective fencing in accordance with BS5837/2012 has been erected along the application side of the boundary hedgerow forming the northwest boundary of the site. The fencing shall remain in situ for the duration of the construction period of the building hereby permitted.

Reason: To ensure the protection of a feature that has important landscape and ecological benefits.

9. No external lighting shall be installed to the building or anywhere within the site unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This exclusion shall not prohibit the installation internal lighting or of sensor-controlled security lighting of 1,000 lumens or less, which shall be designed and shielded to minimise upwards light spillage.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to control the development in the interests of amenity and protect the South Downs International Dark Night Skies Reserve.

11. Crime and Disorder Implications

11.1 It is considered that the proposal does not raise any crime and disorder implications.

12. Human Rights Implications

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

13. Equality Act 2010

13.1 Due regard has been taken of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010.

14. Proactive Working

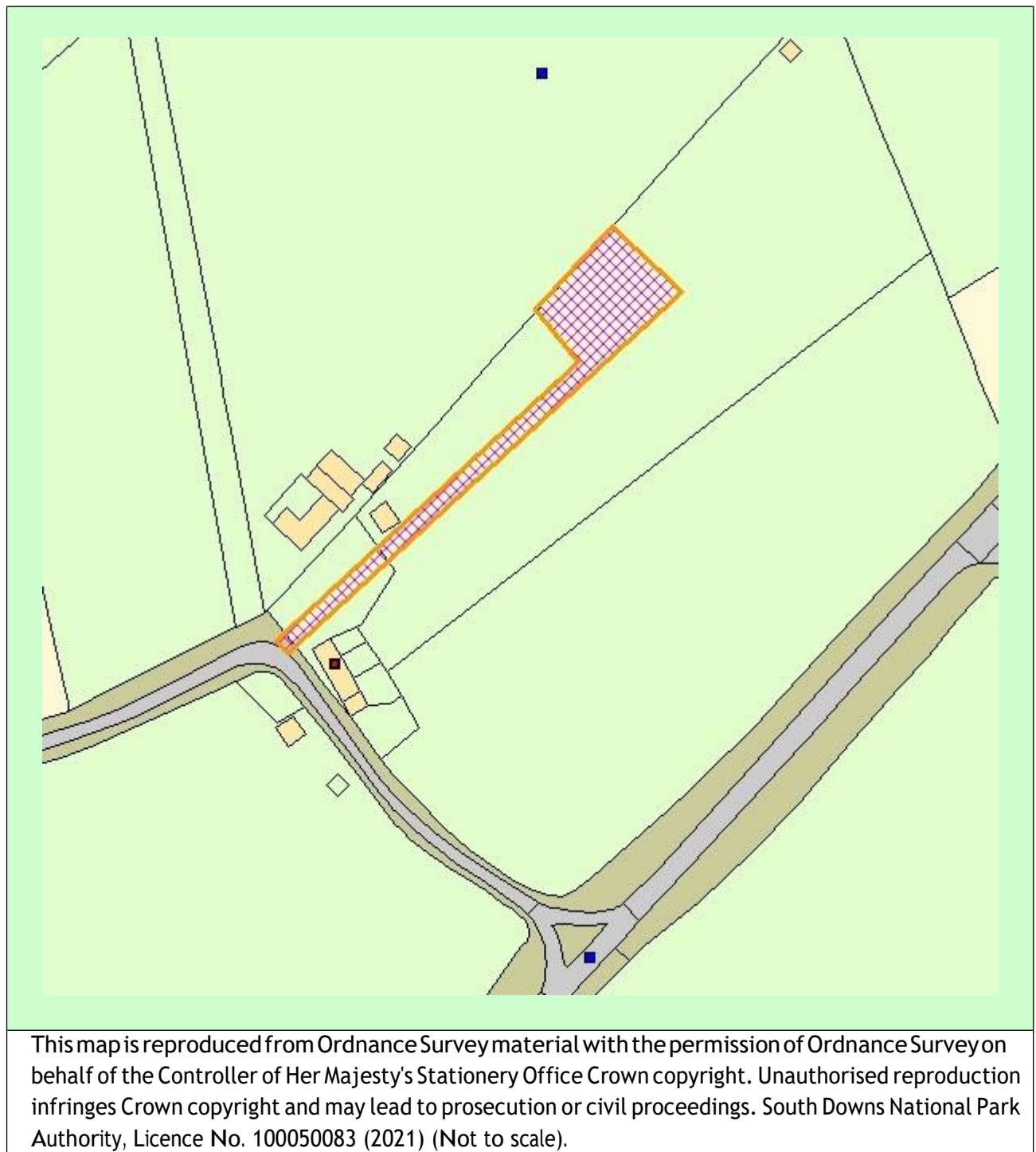
14.1 The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by identifying matters of concern within the application (as originally submitted) and negotiating, with the Applicant, acceptable amendments to the proposal to address those concerns. As a result, the Local Planning Authority has been able to grant planning permission for an acceptable proposal, in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Tim Slaney
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Appendices	Appendix 1 - Site Location Map Appendix 2 – Plans Referred to in Consideration of this Application
SDNPA Consultees	Parish Council, WSCC Highways, HCC Landscape, CDC Ecology
Background Documents	SDNPA Local Plan, SDNPA Management Plan, SDNPA Design Guide, NPPF

Appendix 1

Site Location Map



Appendix 2 – Plans Referred to in Consideration of this Application

The application has been assessed and recommendation is made on the basis of the following plans and documents submitted:

Plan Type	Reference	Version	Date Received	Status
Plans - Site Location Plan (A4)	001		27.04.2021	Approved
Plans - Site Block Plan (A3)	002		27.05.2021	Approved
Plans - Substitute plan: proposed elevations and floor plan	2010948-01	Rev E	03.05.2022	Approved

Reasons: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.