



# Pre-Planning Application Assessment

Malthouse Lane, Hurstpierpoint BN6

The scheme envisages a two-storey modern contemporary building (approx. 1,570 m<sup>2</sup> total floor area) accommodating *warehouse space, research laboratories, and office areas.*

This project got planning approval.  
Mid Sussex District Council DM/21/1118

Draw Plans submitted a further application DM/24/2932 to remove Condition 17 and got 24 hours access for the site.

**Pre Planning Application Research by Draw Plans Architectural Design Studio**  
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## Pre Planning Application Assessment Report

### Introduction and Proposal Overview

This report provides a planning pre-app assessment for a proposed new-build facility on land south of Contego Safety's Wearmaster House, Malthouse Lane, Hurstpierpoint. The scheme envisages a two-storey modern contemporary building (approx. 1,570m<sup>2</sup> total floor area) accommodating *warehouse space, research laboratories, and office areas*. The design is intended to be sleek and modern – featuring a flat roof profile and significant expanses of glass – marking a contrast to traditional rural buildings nearby.

The proposal will be assessed against relevant Mid Sussex District Council planning policies and site constraints, with attention to context, neighbouring land uses, access/transport considerations, and environmental factors. This *pre planning application* review is aimed at identifying key issues and policy considerations before submission of a formal application.

### Planning Policy Context (Mid Sussex and Local Plans)

**Mid Sussex District Plan (2014–2031)** – As the main adopted plan (until its ongoing review to 2039), it sets the framework for development. A core strategy is to encourage sustainable economic growth and re-use of previously developed (“brownfield”) land while protecting the countryside. The site lies outside any defined built-up area, so countryside policies apply. *Policy DP12* (Protection of Countryside) is particularly relevant – it restricts major development in rural areas unless there are overriding benefits, or it involves appropriate reuse of brownfield land or expansion of an existing rural business. Notably, this site has an established planning history as previously developed land: a disused chicken farm building on the plot was granted permission for redevelopment in 2007, and that consent was partially implemented, giving the site an extant commercial use permission.

**Local Plan / Neighbourhood Plan** – The Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Neighbourhood Plan echoes the importance of balancing growth with protecting rural character. One of its strategic objectives is “*promoting economic vitality*” in ways compatible with the village feel and environment. The plan designates a major new business park at Goddards Green (Northern Arc) to accommodate larger commercial growth, highlighting that new large-scale developments in open countryside around Hurstpierpoint should be carefully justified. Development on this Malthouse Lane site

would not fall within a designated employment area in local plans but given the previous approvals (and the site's brownfield status), it can be considered an established opportunity site for employment use. The proposal should therefore be framed as supporting local economic development – e.g. providing high-quality research and office space for a growing company – in line with policy aims to boost rural economy, *provided that* landscape and environmental impacts are acceptably mitigated.

**Design and Character Policies** – Mid Sussex *Policy DP26* (Character and Design) requires new buildings to reflect local character and landscape, especially important here on a rural fringe. While the intended architecture is contemporary (flat roof, extensive glazing), the design will need to be justified in context. A new application with significant glass facades should include a robust design rationale and possibly mitigation (such as non-reflective coatings, subdued colours, or integrating natural materials) to address the “*not in keeping with the area*”. Policies also encourage sustainable design features – the new building should achieve high energy efficiency and could incorporate renewable energy or green roofs/walls to improve its sustainability credentials.

Any new application will thus need to demonstrate compliance with countryside protection policies and that it brings *improvements* or benefits (e.g. better design, landscaping, or traffic mitigation) compared to any previous scheme. Emphasizing that the site is previously-developed and that refusal would leave the 2019/2021 permissions implementable was a key argument before – this context remains relevant in making the planning case.

### **Site Context and Neighbouring Land Uses**

The site is located on Malthouse Lane, a rural lane at the north-west edge of Hurstpierpoint, near the boundary with Burgess Hill. It lies immediately south of Wearmaster House, the premises of Contego Safety Solutions (a PPE and workwear company), and is often described as part of “East Lodge Farm.” The surrounding uses are a mix of rural and semi-industrial. To the north, Contego's existing facility is a low-rise commercial building (formerly *Sussex Safetywear* with associated yards. To the west, a battery energy storage compound has recently been constructed (a utility infrastructure use). These give the immediate vicinity a light-industrial character. However, to the east and south, the land opens out to fields and a few scattered dwellings or farm buildings, forming a transition to open countryside. The nearest residential properties are along Malthouse Lane and College Lane further south-east, as well as some houses or farmsteads to the south – their amenity will need consideration (in terms of noise, lighting, and visual impact). Beyond the site to the east lies Hurstpierpoint College and village lands, while to the north-east is the

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A2300 Jane Murray Way (the Burgess Hill bypass). The site's position is effectively on the fringe of an expanding Burgess Hill urban area, yet it remains under the jurisdiction of Mid Sussex and outside any town boundary.



*Existing Contego Safety Solutions (Wearmaster House) on Malthouse Lane, immediately north of the proposed site. The new building would be constructed on land just beyond this facility, currently open ground with some trees around.*

The land itself (proposed development plot) is currently undeveloped open ground (grass/meadow) with some hedgerow and tree boundaries. Historically it was part of East Lodge Farm – notably used for a poultry shed which has since been removed (hence its classification as previously developed land). There is a gentle slope on the site and mature trees at the periphery (none centrally where building is planned). The site is not within a designated industrial estate, making its context sensitive: any new building will form a prominent structure in a rural landscape setting when viewed from certain angles (especially from the south and from Malthouse Lane approach). Maintaining appropriate landscaping buffers and “green infrastructure” around the facility will be important.

In summary, neighbouring land uses include existing commercial (Contego) and infrastructure (battery storage) components, with otherwise agricultural fields and sporadic residential uses. This mix means the site is partly in a developing commercial enclave, but still largely perceived as countryside by local residents. The

design and operation of the new facility should therefore be mindful of both the adjacent industrial style uses and the wider rural environment.

## Transport and Access Considerations

**Site Access** – The site is accessed via Malthouse Lane, which is a narrow country lane with no formal footways for much of its length. The lane connects south-east into Hurstpierpoint village (becoming College Lane) and northwards it historically continued to Burgess Hill but now terminates at the A273 bypass (Jane Murray Way) with no through-route. Vehicles can join the A273 just 200m north of the site, providing quick access to the A2300 and A23 for regional. The proposed development would likely utilize a junction off Malthouse Lane with appropriate visibility splays. Any new application should ensure the access design meets West Sussex Highways standards for industrial/commercial use, possibly including localised widening, a suitable *bellmouth* entrance, and adequate sightlines. Parking and on-site circulation will need to accommodate staff and delivery vehicles. A parking provision would be expected (possibly justified by any travel plan measures to encourage car-sharing or cycling). Sufficient space for loading bays and service yards for the warehouse function should also be included within the 1,570 m<sup>2</sup> site layout.

**Traffic Impact** – Traffic generation from the proposed 1,570 m<sup>2</sup> of mixed-use floorspace (offices, labs, warehouse) is a key consideration. Local residents previously expressed strong concerns about increased traffic on the lane, calling it “*entirely unsuitable for a project like this*”. Malthouse Lane is described as “*essentially a country lane*” where extra industrial traffic or 80+ employees’ cars could pose hazards to walkers, cyclists and horse-riders who use it. The transport department are likely to impose conditions that include improvements to the site access junction and possibly a limit on HGV movements or hours (to avoid peak school times, etc.). For any application, a Transport Statement should be prepared, updating traffic surveys if needed. It should detail expected vehicle trip generation (perhaps using TRICS data for B1/B8 uses) and distribution via the A273 rather than through the village.

Emphasis can be placed on the proximity to the main road (which limits the length of rural lane used) and any measures to manage traffic (e.g. staggering work hours or providing a shuttle from Burgess Hill station, etc.). If not already existing, passing bays or minor widening on Malthouse Lane could be offered to alleviate two-way traffic issues. The goal will be to demonstrate that safe access can be achieved and that the development will *not* lead to severe traffic impacts – consistent with NPPF

para 111 and local transport policies.



*View of Malthouse Lane near its junction with the A273 bypass (Jane Murray Way). The lane is rural in character with no pavements, prompting concerns about increased traffic and pedestrian safety.*

**Sustainable Transport** – The rural location means car use will be significant, but some sustainable options exist. The site is ~2.5 miles from Burgess Hill rail station and close to a bus route on Jane Murray Way, so a Travel Plan could encourage cycling (the 5 km “cycle-to-work” catchment includes Hurstpierpoint village and possibly shuttle links to the station. The provision of bicycle spaces in any new scheme would be a positive sign; the scheme should enhance facilities for cyclists (secure covered cycle parking, showers for staff). Also, electric vehicle (EV) charging points in the car park would align with sustainable transport objectives and likely be expected under current building standards.

**Public Rights of Way** – Any nearby footpaths should be identified. If there are footpaths exiting onto Malthouse Lane (residents noted there are footpath junctions along it, the application should assess whether increased traffic would impact walkers. Mitigation could include improved signage, crossing points, or even funding for off-road footpath links if needed. It appears footpaths from the countryside do meet Malthouse Lane, so highway safety for those users is a consideration. No direct closure or diversion of any public right of way is anticipated since the development is set back on its parcel.

**Servicing and Hours** – The warehouse and lab uses imply deliveries (possibly by HGVs or vans). The site should be designed for large vehicle turning (a tracking plan

will be needed). For the application, the intended hours of operation should be clarified. If 24/7 use is desired (which may be needed for certain lab operations or flexible warehouse logistics), the impact of nighttime activity must be assessed – especially noise from any night deliveries or on-site processes. It would be prudent to include a Noise Impact Assessment and propose mitigation (e.g. no heavy deliveries at night, use of white noise reversing alarms, and acoustic fencing if needed). However, if the site remains primarily office/R&D in nature, typical office hours (with occasional 24/7 lab environmental monitoring only) might be proposed to assuage concerns. The applicant should be prepared that the Council may still attach conditions on hours of operation or HGV delivery times to protect the tranquillity of the area.

In summary, transport and access are likely to be a sensitive issue. The development will need to show it can provide safe access and that traffic increases are manageable, by referencing the previous no-objection from Highways and any additional improvements in this new proposal.

## Environmental Constraints and Planning Designations

**Landscape and AONB/National Park** – The site is not within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (*High Weald AONB* lies in other parts of Mid Sussex, not here) and it is well outside the South Downs National Park (the Park boundary is a few miles south of Hurstpierpoint village). Nonetheless, the landscape is an attractive rural fringe. The Council will consider visual impact on the countryside. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) may be warranted given the size of the building and the extensive glazing proposed. Mitigation via landscaping is essential and should include a soft landscaping plan” with “*ecological enhancements and green infrastructure*” to improve the natural setting. Similarly, any new design should include native tree and hedgerow planting (especially along south and east boundaries) to screen and soften the building’s appearance from open countryside. Use of earthy, non-reflective materials on at least some facades would help blend the structure – although modern, it can still use *contextual cues* (e.g. wood or brick elements echoing agricultural barns). The flat roof could potentially accommodate a green roof section or solar panels which might reduce visual mass and provide sustainability benefits.

**Heritage** – There are no known heritage designations on the site itself. However, the Council’s planning notices hinted that the previous proposal might affect the setting of a listed building. It’s possible that a listed farmhouse or barn (perhaps *East Lodge Farmhouse* or others) is nearby. A check on heritage assets should be done. If a listed

East Lodge Farmhouse exists adjacent, the design must consider its setting (e.g. maintaining some open buffer and using sympathetic materials). A brief Heritage Statement may be required if any heritage asset is within the vicinity (typically within 100–200m). Additionally, Hurstpierpoint village has a Conservation Area, but that is over 1 km away, so not directly relevant here.

**Flood Risk and Drainage** – The site is in Flood Zone 1 (low risk of river flooding). No major watercourse runs through it. Surface water drainage will, however, need careful design due to the size of the roof and hardstanding's. A Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) strategy should be provided at pre-app or application stage, showing how runoff will be attenuated on-site (e.g. via permeable paving, attenuation tanks or ponds, and controlled discharge). This will ensure no increase in flood risk downstream. The ground might have clay soil, so infiltration may be limited – consultation with West Sussex Lead Local Flood Authority will guide whether a attenuation pond (balancing pond) is needed. There are no indications of significant surface water flood accumulation on site, but the drainage report should confirm this (using Environment Agency maps). It's also prudent to design drainage to a 1-in-100-year storm +40% climate change standard, in line with Policy DP41 (Flood Risk) requirements. Foul drainage would connect to the mains sewer (which may run along Malthouse Lane or require connection into Burgess Hill's network). Early liaison with Southern Water is advisable to confirm capacity for the additional flow.

**Ecology and Biodiversity** – The site is presently rough grassland. However, residents have noted the presence of wildlife in the area, including *great crested newts* (a protected species) and other fauna (bats, owls, hedgehogs, deer) in the surroundings. A new ecology survey should be done to update those findings (especially if some years have passed). If any ponds are within 500m, a newt Habitat assessment may be needed. Even if none are found on the site itself, the development should aim for biodiversity net gain – e.g. incorporating bat boxes, bird nesting provisions, native planting, and perhaps a wildlife pond or meadow area on site margins. During construction, mitigation like sensitive timing (to avoid bird nesting season for vegetation clearance) and protective fencing for any nearby badger setts, etc., should be implemented. Any application should consider including *ecological enhancements* to improve the overall natural setting. Continuing in that vein, the new proposal can strengthen its case by demonstrating it will *enhance* biodiversity compared to the current field (for example, managing part of the site as wildflower meadow or planting an woodland copse).

**Trees** – An Arboricultural Assessment will be needed as trees line parts of the site. According to earlier info, no mature trees sit at the centre of the build zone, so direct loss of trees may be minimal. Nonetheless, root protection zones of boundary trees

must be respected during works. If any hedgerow needs removal for access widening, a hedgerow assessment under the Hedgerow Regulations should be done to see if it's 'important'. Replacement planting should be provided for any loss.

**Noise and Lighting** – The rural context means background noise levels are low at night. The facility's labs and offices are not inherently noisy, but warehouse operations could generate noise (forklifts, loading, reversing beeps). A Noise Impact Assessment, as noted, would help shape mitigation like acoustic fencing on the southern boundary to shield the closest countryside receptors. On lighting, a detailed lighting scheme should be provided at application stage: any external lighting must be downward-facing, minimal intensity, and on timers/motion sensors where possible. This is to preserve the rural dark skies (and also for ecology – bats in the area would benefit from avoiding excessive light spill). The new building's large glass facades could result in nighttime glow if the interior is lit; using blinds or smart glass that tints at night could reduce light pollution. This will address potential complaints about a "beacon" of light in a previously dark area.

**Other Constraints** – The site does not fall in a Green Belt or specific strategic gap, but the *Hurstpierpoint Society* and NP are keen on avoiding coalescence with Burgess Hill. Keeping the development footprint within the already disturbed area and not sprawling further into open land can respect that aim. There are no known contamination issues on a former chicken farm site, but a contamination survey can confirm no residual agro-chemicals in soil. The ground is likely workable for standard foundations; however, any civil works near the A273 embankment (if applicable) might need checking. Finally, the site is not within an Air Quality Management Area – traffic increase is modest, so air quality likely not a significant issue beyond dust during construction (addressable via a Construction Management Plan).

## Conclusions and Recommendations

In principle, developing a new warehouse/lab/office facility on this site appears feasible in planning terms, given the established precedent (extant permissions) and alignment with policies promoting brownfield redevelopment and rural economic growth. The key will be to ensure the new proposal *follows through on improvements and mitigation* to address prior concerns:

- **Accord with Planning Policy:** Emphasize consistency with Mid Sussex District Plan policies by demonstrating the economic benefits (local jobs in a high-tech sector) and that the countryside location is justified by the site's brownfield status and lack of alternative locations. Highlight support from the Parish Council for previous scheme and that refusal would leave a fallback development anyway.

- **Design and Landscaping:** Refine the contemporary design to be high-quality and sensitive – possibly a slightly reduced height or broken-up elevations to reduce mass. Balance the “*significant use of glass*” with natural materials in cladding, to avoid an overly industrial look. Provide visualizations from key viewpoints to show it will “*blend-in*” as much as possible (noting that similar designs successfully got support by using wooden cladding. A robust landscape plan with new planting will be essential.
- **Neighbouring Amenity:** Engage early with any nearby residents (e.g. along Malthouse/College Lane) to understand their concerns. Offer measures such as traffic management, noise control, and maintaining a green buffer to the nearest homes. This can help mitigate “Not In My Back Yard” opposition with tangible accommodations.
- **Transport Mitigations:** Perhaps commit to some minor highway improvements on Malthouse Lane (if within control or via contribution to WSCC) – for example, signage, a pedestrian refuge near footpaths, or a short footway if feasible near the site. A Travel Plan outlining efforts to minimize car trips would also strengthen the application.
- **Environmental Protections:** Include all necessary surveys (ecology, arboriculture, drainage) and incorporate their recommendations (e.g. creating new habitats for any great crested newts if found, and ensuring no net biodiversity loss). Show that surface water will be managed sustainably so the development is resilient and doesn’t worsen any flooding elsewhere.

By addressing these points, the proposal can be presented as a well-planned, policy-compliant development that brings investment and jobs locally while respecting its rural surroundings. The previous application’s approval indicates the Council’s willingness to support this project type here, so long as it meets conditions on access, design, and environment. Early pre-application dialogue with the District Council is advisable to confirm the scope of studies needed and to refine the design approach. Overall, with careful planning and community consultation, the project can successfully navigate the planning process from *pre-planning application* stage to a positive determination.

This project got planning approval. Mid Sussex District Council DM/21/1118

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