

From: Emily Wade <Emily.Wade@midsussex.gov.uk>
Sent: 09 March 2026 11:32:50 UTC+00:00
To: "Susan Dubberley" <Susan.Dubberley@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: Castle Inn DM/26/0200

Hi Sue

Comments on the above application.

Castle Inn is a Grade II listed building located in a semi-rural context at Hickstead village. Planning permission and listed building consent were recently granted for various works to the building and within the grounds, including construction of a new single storey outbuilding to the west of the Inn.

The current proposal relates to this new outbuilding and is for the introduction of solar PV panels to both east and west facing roof slopes.

The new outbuilding as approved is broadly traditional in its form, materials and detailing, reflecting the adjacent existing historic stables building. The solar PV array is extensive and will cover the majority of both roof slopes to the building. This will inevitably have some adverse impact on its appearance and its contribution to the setting of the Inn, resulting in a degree of less than substantial harm, through impact on setting, to the special interest of the building. I would place this harm at the lower end of the less than substantial spectrum.

In terms of the NPPF, this harm would stand to be weighed against the public benefits, if any, of the proposal. In carrying out this balancing exercise, the Council must also be aware of the requirement of the Framework that great weight must be given to the conservation of heritage assets (paragraph 212), and that any harm to the significance of a heritage asset must require a clear and convincing justification (paragraph 213). This stands to be considered against the requirement of paragraph 167 that significant weight should be given to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings.

In the context of the existing application, I would therefore note the following:

- The application does not appear to be accompanied by a justification for the works beyond a comment from the agent that the existing power supply to the building is insufficient for the needs of the Inn. Further detail of this should in my opinion be provided as at present I do not think we have before us the clear and convincing justification of the harm to the asset required by the NPPF, nor indeed any statement relating to improved energy efficiency or low carbon measures which might stand to be weighed against this harm- it seems rather that the development has generated an increased need for power, which needs to be met, rather than that any improvement in energy use from standard sources/reduction in carbon emissions would be achieved?

- Paragraph 208 of the NPPF require that harm to heritage assets should be avoided or minimised. If the principle of the PV installation can be established on the basis of the above further information, I would suggest that the applicant should:
 - a. provide evidence to suggest that the full extent of the arrays now shown is required, or alternatively reduce the scale of the installation; and
 - b. consider the use of colour-matched rather than standard black PV panels. The black panels will appear particularly prominent in the context of the clay tiled roof of the building.

In summary, the proposal is considered to result in degree of less than substantial harm, through impact on setting, to the special interest of Castle Inn. This requires further justification and potentially amendment of the scale and nature of the array to ensure that the harm is outweighed by public benefits (through increased energy efficiency) and that the harm arising is avoided or minimised.

Thanks

Emily

Please note that this advice is given at Officer level only and is without prejudice to the formal decision of the District Council.

Submit your planning application online.
<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk>

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