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Sent: 20 March 2026 15:04:39 UTC+00:00
To: "Stuart Malcolm" <Stuart.Malcolm@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: DM/26/0238 LVS Hassocks

Hi Stuart

Comments on the above planning application.

The proposed development site is located to the western side of London Road, to the north of Sayers Common. It consists of the LVS school campus, which is set back from the road behind a long entrance driveway, and surrounding fields. The school includes a variety of buildings of different dates and styles, the oldest of which date apparently from the mid-late 19th century and consist of a substantial house (formerly known as Kingsland) and what appears to be one surviving outbuilding to the north of this. A second outbuilding appears to have been demolished and replaced with planning permission in 2014. Although the house is quite an impressive building, it has been altered, and is of a fairly common type. I would consider it to be of some interest in terms of the development of Sayers Common, but probably not sufficient to be regarded as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA). The surviving outbuilding is also of some interest in terms of the narrative of the Kingsland estate, but again probably not enough to be NDHA material.

A further building associated with the Kingsland estate survives adjacent to London Road- Kingsland Lodge/The Chaplains House is a small brick-built cottage which appears to date from the early 20th century, replacing an earlier building which was set further to the east, when the line of London Road was altered. Given the relatively late date of this building, and its lack of architectural interest, I would not regard it as being of sufficient special interest in the local context to be regarded as an NDHA, although it does make a small contribution to the narrative of the development of Kingsland, partly because it illustrates the original position of the entrance from London Road. There is however some attractive stone walling to this part of the road frontage which should be retained as part of any detailed proposal, particularly as this can be done without any compromise to the proposed internal arrangement of the site.

The Heritage Statement submitted with the current application also identifies several features of the 19th century designed landscape around Kingsland house which are surviving, including the circular pond to its immediate northwest.

In architectural and historical terms, the more interesting part of the development of Kingsland came during the late 20th century, when the house and estate were purchased for development by the Priory of Our Lady of Good Counsel, formerly based in Haywards Heath, and noted local architect Michael Blee was commissioned to provide a design for a new priory with facilities for conferences, seminars and retreats.

Blee's design, constructed between 1976 and 1980, retained the 19th century house, and added a complex arranged around the previously existing circular pond to the west of this, including a conical chapel and monastic arc, with a powerfully expressed timber frame.

Historic England have recently considered the buildings of the former priory for listing, but decided against adding them to the Statutory List. In the designation report, it is the chapel which is considered the most striking element of the complex, although not possessing sufficient architectural interest to be comparable to similar buildings of the period which are listed. The monastic arc is also considered to be of some architectural value, but to be less successful in architectural terms, and to have been harmed by later alterations. In historical terms, the importance of the site as a relatively rare example of a late 20th century religious house, and an important work by Michael Blee, is noted, but is considered insufficient to outweigh the relatively limited architectural interest identified.

Guided by these findings, and by the further information in the Heritage Statement now before us, it is my opinion that the complex (excluding the house) should be regarded as a non-designated heritage asset of architectural and historical interest within the local context. Although not of sufficient value within the national setting for statutory listing, the chapel and monastic arc are clearly of a degree of architectural interest - most notably the chapel, which is a more successful design and less altered. In historical terms, the rarity of an institution of this type in Mid Sussex, and its associations with the Priory of Our Lady of Good Counsel which was formerly based in Haywards Heath at The Priory, Syresham Gardens (a still extant, Grade II listed building) and with noted local architect Michael Blee, are sufficient to consider the complex of historical interest within Mid Sussex context. I would place the overall interest of the NDHA as being of a mid-high level with respect to the chapel, and of a mid-level with respect to the monastic arc.

In terms of the contribution made by setting to the significance of the NDHA, the relatively tranquil, rural context of the site will have been contributory factors both in the original establishment of Kingsland as a country house and estate, and its later adaptation and development as convent with a focus on study and retreat. As such, the surviving verdant, rural character of the setting of the NDHA will be considered to contribute positively to its significance, notwithstanding that that setting has experienced change over time.

Also within the vicinity of the site is a Grade II listed house, Kingscot, which is a 17th century building located to the south adjacent to London Road. Although the modern expansion of Sayers Common now surrounds the house to the west and south, historical map regression shows that until the latter half of the 20th century the building sat in relative rural isolation.

This building is considered to possess architectural interest based on its construction and craftsmanship, historical illustrative value as a good example of a rural Sussex house of its period, and aesthetic value based in part on the use of vernacular materials drawn from the local landscape. As such, the surviving rural characteristics of the setting of the listed building (which consist primarily of the open and verdant nature of the site to the north and northwest) will be considered to contribute positively to the special interest of the listed building and how this is appreciated, in particular those parts of that interest which are drawn from historical illustrative and aesthetic values. The site is particularly important in terms of the context in which the house is appreciated in views from London Road, including the character of the approach to it from the north.

The current proposal, which follows on from pre-application advice, is a hybrid application for redevelopment of the site, comprising the demolition of the existing school buildings with the exception of the chapel, which is retained but with a change of use to community use, a full application for a new SEN school with associated access, parking and landscaping etc. to the north of the site, and an outline application for construction of up to 210 dwellings on the remainder of the site, with associated access, landscaping etc.

In comparison to the pre-application submission the submitted Heritage Statement contains useful further information relating to the history of the site, including the first development of the 19th century estate, the introduction of the monastic buildings during the 20th century, and later alterations. However, I disagree with some of the conclusions drawn in terms of the level of interest of the buildings, in particular the chapel and monastic arc, and in relation to the contribution made by setting to that interest.

With respect to the direct impact on the existing buildings on the site, the proposal is for the demolition of all of the existing structures with the exception of the chapel. The loss of the monastic arc is regrettable and represents a total loss of significance to an asset of a mid-level of interest within the local context. The preservation of the chapel is welcomed, subject to detail of any proposed alterations, however the loss of the associated monastic building detracts from its significance, and the imposition of extensive development within its setting, with the loss of the existing rural character of that setting, will result in further harm. The retention of the circular pond which has sat at the centre of the development at Kingsland since the 19th century and which is the focal point of the monastic arc is noted, as is the curved form of the proposed new development to its eastern and northern sides, which is an intended reference to the form of the monastic arc. Notwithstanding these positive aspects of the scheme due to the demolition of part of the NDHA and the scale and proximity of the new development, I would place the harm arising as being at the mid-level to an NDHA of a mid-high level of interest within the local context. As is required by paragraph 216 of the NPPF, this harm must be part of the balancing exercise which should be undertaken in considering the merits of the proposed application.

I also note and would agree with the Council's landscape consultant's response at part 4.3 of their comments in relation to the SEN School development@

'4.3. Demonstration of views towards the retained chapel should be integrated into the demonstration of the design development, as this is a key feature which contributes towards the wayfinding of the development and acts as a local landmark which can be seen beyond the site boundaries. Further details of this should be integrated into the Design and Access Statement.'

This will be important in mitigating the harm identified above.

The submitted Heritage Statement also in my opinion undervalues the contribution made by the site to the setting of Kingscot. I have read and considered the points made in this document about the nature of the site and the lack of intervisibility between the site and the listed building. However, I remain of the opinion that given the nature of the asset, the open and verdant character of the site, and the proximity of the two, the site does contribute positively to the historical illustrative and aesthetic values of the listed building, particularly as noted above in terms of the approach to it along London Road from the north. Any further development of the scheme should be mindful of this contribution and should seek to mitigate the harm arising from the loss of the site's current rural character.

In terms of the outline application before us, the proposed residential development is set relatively close to the north and northwest of the listed building, albeit that screening by trees means that intervisibility between Kingscot and the new housing to the northwest will be limited. A pair of new buildings shown to the north of the site access replace The Bungalow and Kingsland Lodge/Chaplains House, but are set further back from the road. However, works to upgrade the access into the site and the likely visibility of the residential development to the west from London Road will result in a degree of harm to the character of the setting of the listed building, including the approach to it from the north. This harm will be cumulative with the existing modern development to the south and west, in particular in the manner which the development will remove the last surviving element of the historically rural setting of the house. For these reasons, although without a fully detailed scheme it is difficult to be precise, I would identify a low-mid level of harm to the listed building, which under paragraph 215 of the NPPF would stand to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

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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