

**From:** Emily Wade <Emily.Wade@midsussex.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 17 September 2025 09:20:26 UTC+01:00  
**To:** "Rachel Richardson" <Rachel.Richardson@midsussex.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** DM/25/1467 Land at Old Vicarage Field etc., Turners Hill

Hi Rachel

Comments on the above pre-application scheme.

The proposed development site is a meadow located to the west of the village centre of Turners Hill, in the angle behind the existing development fronting the junction between Church Road and Lion Lane/North Street. The site includes The Old Vicarage, and 120 and 121 School View, existing houses fronting onto Church Road. Access to the site would be provided via the gardens of The Old Vicarage. The current proposal, which follows on from pre-application advice, is for 40 new dwellings with associated access, parking, drainage, landscaping and other associated works as well as the creation of a new community car park and replacement parking for Lion Lane residents.

The proposed development site is partly within the Turners Hill Conservation Area and partly within its immediate setting. The boundary of the Area includes the above-mentioned properties fronting onto Church Road and turns north behind the fire station to include the yard to the rear of this and the field beyond (also part of the proposed development), before returning to follow the line of the rear gardens to properties running north along Lion Lane.

There are also a number of listed buildings within the immediate vicinity of the site, including:

- The Old School House (31 Church Road), a Grade II listed former schoolhouse dating from 1828 and located to the southern side of Church Road diagonally opposite The Old Vicarage and the proposed new site access.
- Old Forge Cottage, a Grade II listed building dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century and located at the junction of Church Road and North Street.\*
- Forge House, a Grade II listed 18<sup>th</sup> century building just to the north-east of Old Forge Cottage.\*
- 117 and 118 The Bank, an 18<sup>th</sup> century Grade II listed building on North Street, overlooking the village green.\*
- 115 and 116 The Bank, a Grade II listed 18<sup>th</sup> century building also overlooking the green.\*
- The Red Lion, Grade II listed and located on Lion Lane just to the north-east of the site.

\*These buildings back directly onto the site.

There are also a number of non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs) the settings of which would be affected by the proposal. Turners Hill C of E Primary School, The Old Vicarage, and the Fire Station were identified at pre-application stage; the submitted Heritage Statement also suggests that 120 & 121 School View, Church Road and Providence Terrace should be considered as NDHAs.

A public right of way (PROW) runs west from Lion Lane towards the north-east corner of the site, before turning to run north, and then west again, at a distance of one field from the site's north-western boundary. There is also a second well used, but possibly unclassified, path running directly across the north-western boundary of the site from the point at which the PROW turns northwards.

### Turners Hill Conservation Area

The Council does not currently have a detailed adopted appraisal of the Turners Hill Conservation Area, however the Council's document '*Conservation Areas in Mid Sussex*' provides a brief, high level assessment of each of its Conservation Areas. For Turners Hill, this document notes that the Area retains the character of the historic heart of the village, and that there are excellent views across the surrounding countryside. In my opinion the Area's special significance lies in its nature as the historic heart of a rural Sussex village, which has grown up over many centuries in close connection with the surrounding countryside. The economy of the village is likely for much of its existence to have been based largely on agriculture and rural industries, and many of the buildings employ vernacular materials which have been drawn from the surrounding landscape. For these reasons I would consider that the surviving rural setting of the village, including views from public and private spaces across the surrounding fields and woodlands, makes a strong positive contribution to the significance of the Area and how this is appreciated. The character of the approaches to the Conservation Area along PROWs and other paths running into the village centre from the surrounding countryside also contributes to the context within which it is appreciated.

The proposed development site includes buildings and spaces falling within Area itself as well as a field within its setting. The Old Vicarage is a substantial and attractive building with many features typical of its period of construction which (as noted above) would be regarded as an NDHA, and makes strong positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The cottages at School View also date from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and would also be considered to contribute positively to the character and appearance of the Area. The submitted Heritage Statement also identifies this building as an NDHA.

These buildings are proposed to be retained as part of the current development proposal but there would be a marked impact on the nature of their settings, including their immediate garden settings and the access to them. The proposal includes creation of the access road to the site through the current gardens to The Old Vicarage, as well as a block of flats and a detached dwelling largely within the northern and north-western part of its gardens. This will be detrimental to the currently spacious and verdant setting of this building, and will intensify development within this part of the Conservation Area, contrary to the established character of this part of School Lane, which is of large houses in extensive gardens, providing a transitional space between the village centre and the open countryside beyond.

The development will also have an adverse impact on the character of the frontage onto Church Road, which is currently verdant, with the existing houses set well back behind mature hedging and trees. The creation of a the new access breaking through the hedge line, with the associated removal of the existing trees and hedgerow to the site frontage, and regrading of the affected area with terraced banks and retaining walls flanking the access road, will have a fundamental impact on the character of this part of Church Road, which as above is currently verdant, transitional and 'edge of village', especially as the suburban development within the site would consequently be open to view. This will be significantly detrimental to the positive contribution which the Old Vicarage and the School View cottages, their gardens and frontages, currently make to the character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area, as well as to the character of the key approach into the centre of the village from the west along Church Road.

There are a number of ancillary agricultural buildings to the rear of the Fire Station which it is proposed to demolish as part of the current proposal. These appear to be largely of 20<sup>th</sup> century construction, and are not (according to the Heritage Statement) in a good state of repair. They are however sympathetic to the vernacular in their style and materials, and would be considered to make a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The site also includes a small field or orchard to the north of the Fire Station yard, which although apparently used in small part for informal car parking retains largely a verdant and open character. This field is partly within the Conservation Area and partly within its setting. It provides a transitional space between the historical hard edge of the development along Lion Lane to the east and the open countryside beyond, and would be considered to make a strong positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area directly or through its setting.

The principal part of the application site, as mentioned above, is an undeveloped meadow of grassland with surrounding trees and hedges. This part of the site is within the setting of the Conservation Area being adjacent on two sides to its boundary. It has a marked impact on the character of views from the rear of a number of properties fronting onto Lion Lane and Church Road, and is also visible between buildings on Lion Lane from the green at the heart of the village. It also has a significant impact on the character of the approaches to the village centre/Conservation Area along the unclassified (?) path and the PROW running west from Lion Lane.

At present, the open and verdant nature of the larger part of the site makes a strong positive contribution to the rural character of the setting of the heart of the Conservation Area, and represents a direct connection between the village development and the surrounding countryside. Development of 40 dwellings on this site will have a fundamental impact on its nature, as it will become a suburban enclave. This will reverse the positive contribution it currently makes directly and through setting to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

For the above reasons I would consider that the proposal will directly and indirectly (through impact on setting) harm the character and appearance of the Turners Hill Conservation Area, contrary to the requirements of District Plan Policy DP35 (Conservation Areas). In terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) because of the scale of the site and its proximity to the heart of the village I would consider it likely that the level of harm caused would be regarded as less than substantial, but at the higher end of that scale.

#### Listed buildings

I have noted above a number of listed buildings within the immediate vicinity of the site, the settings of which would be impacted by the proposed development. On the basis of the information that is available each of these buildings will be considered to possess architectural and historical illustrative values as good examples of buildings of their type and period, as well as aesthetic value which will be based in some cases partly on the use of vernacular materials drawn from the surrounding landscape. Some of the buildings, notably the Old School House, former forge buildings, and the Red Lion public house will also be regarded as having communal value based on their current and/or former roles in village life. In all cases, in my opinion, as the buildings represent a variety of building types typical of a Sussex village, that village location will be an important contributor to their special interests, and the surrounding rural landscape will be significant in reinforcing this, particularly those parts of their special interests which are drawn from illustrative or aesthetic values. I would therefore consider that the

surviving rural setting of the buildings will make an important contribution to the special interests of the listed buildings and the manner in which these are appreciated.

- In the case of The Old School House the proposed development will, for the reasons set out above when considering the impact on the Conservation Area, have a marked effect on the currently verdant, transitional nature of this part of Church Road. The proposal would therefore detract from the semi-rural character of the setting of this listed building and in particular views from it across Church Road, and the context in which it is appreciated in views looking along the road in either direction. This will detract from the manner in which its special interest (historical illustrative and communal values) as a former village school will be appreciated, as well as its aesthetic value. The impact of the development on this listed building will be exacerbated by the placement of the access to the site diagonally opposite. In terms of the NPPF I would place the harm caused through impact on setting to the special interest of the Old School House and how this is appreciated as less than substantial, at the mid-range of that scale.
- In the case of the former forge buildings (Old Forge Cottage and Forge House) I would consider that the proximity of the site to the rear of these buildings will have a suburbanising impact on their settings and the context within which they are viewed, as well as on the outlook from the buildings themselves, which will be affected by both new dwellings and a fairly extensive area of car parking which is proposed to the south east corner of the site. Again, as rural village buildings, illustrative of a former rural light industry, this suburbanising impact will have a detrimental impact on the manner in which their special interests are appreciated, and in particular their historical illustrative, aesthetic and communal values. I would place this harm as less than substantial, at the mid-range of that scale.
- In the case of the buildings fronting onto the Green (115-116 and 117-118 The Bank), these houses overlook the site directly to the rear, and are also seen against the backdrop of the site in views from The Green and North Street. Again, as rural Sussex village houses the suburbanisation of their settings and the severing of the currently close relationship between the buildings and the surrounding countryside will be detrimental to their special interests and the manner in which these are appreciated, in particular their historical illustrative and aesthetic values. I would place the harm caused as less than substantial, at around the mid-range of that scale.
- The Red Lion is located just to the north-east of the site. There may be some visibility of the proposed development from the building and from its immediate garden setting, as well as impact on the rural character of the backdrop against which it is appreciated from Lion Lane. There will also be an adverse effect on the currently rural character of the approach to the public house along the adjacent PROW. In my opinion this will be detrimental to its special interest, in particular its historical illustrative, aesthetic and communal values, resulting in less than substantial harm, at around the mid-range of that scale.

In all cases the impact of the proposed development on the settings and special interests of these buildings will be contrary to the requirements of District Plan Policy DP34 (Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets).

#### NDHAs

I have commented above on the detrimental impact on the Old Vicarage and the School View Cottages (120-121 Church Road). In terms of the NPPF, I would place the level of harm caused as mid-high, to assets of a mid-level of interest (the Old Vicarage) and low-level of interest (School View Cottages) respectively within the local context.

The Old Fire Station is identified in the submitted Heritage Statement as being mid 20<sup>th</sup> century in date, and although apparently originally constructed as a wheel-wrights workshop it appears to have quickly been converted for use as a fire station. It remains in use as a fire station today, and is the smallest such building in Sussex. As such, it has both historical and communal value in the local context. As with the impact on the neighbouring buildings at The Old Forge and Forge House, the proximity of the site to the rear, and the suburbanising impact of the development will in my opinion detract from the rural village setting of this NDHA and the contribution this makes to its significance. I would place the level of the harm caused as mid-high, to an asset of a mid-high level of interest within the local context.

Turners Hill Church of England Primary School was constructed in 1887 and despite substantial later extensions retains its period character. It remains a functioning school, and has architectural, historical and communal value within the local context. The impact on this asset will be similar to that described above in respect of the Old School House- the site is to the opposite side of Church Road, but the semi-rural, village setting of the NDHA will be adversely impacted by the creation of the new access through the road frontage which would be directly opposite the school. This will result in a mid-level of harm to an asset of a mid-high level of interest within the local context.

Providence Terrace was constructed in 1901 as a pair of townhouses, with the ground floors later converted for commercial use and shop frontages introduced. The buildings retain a number of period features including an unusual metal parapet detail, and timber sash and casement windows. The shop frontages, although apparently not original, are also attractive, and the pair contribute positively to the street scene of Lion Lane and vitality of the village core. As with the listed buildings at The Bank, which are just to the south of the Terrace, the proposed development site abuts the rear boundary of these properties and would have a marked impact on their rear outlook, as well as potentially the backdrop against which they are appreciated in views from The Green. This would in my opinion result in a mid-level of harm to an NDHA of a low-mid level of interest within the local context.

In summary, a large number of designated and non-designated heritage assets at the heart of Turners Hill village and on its semi-rural western edge would be adversely affected by the current proposal, either directly, or indirectly through impact on setting. I have set out above the levels of harm arising, and although in all cases these are placed at less than substantial for the designated assets, the cumulative impact on the historic character of the village will be in my opinion significantly detrimental. In carrying out the balancing exercise set out in paragraph 215 of the NPPF, we must also be mindful of the requirements of paragraph 213 that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification, and of paragraph 212 that great weight should be given to an asset's conservation. Paragraph 216 sets out the exercise with respect to NDHAs, and states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

I have not commented here in any detail on specifics of the site layout or the design quality of the proposed buildings within it as I understand that the Council's Urban Design Officer will be doing so, however I do have concerns that these aspects of the proposal do not in every way comprise the high

level of contextual design that we would expect in such a sensitive location, and that this compounds the harms identified above to the adjacent heritage assets.

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.

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