

From: Emily Wade <Emily.Wade@midsussex.gov.uk>
Sent: 09 May 2025 15:27:14 UTC+01:00
To: "Steven King" <Steven.King@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: DM/25/0827 Land East of Lunces Hill

Hi Steve

Comments on the above planning application.

The proposed development site is a parcel of fields to the east of Fox Hill and Lunce's Hill, south of Haywards Heath.

The site contains one heritage asset, the barn to the Cleavewater historic farmstead, which would be regarded as curtilage listed. The former farmhouse of this farmstead is located directly to the north, and is Grade II listed. There are other surviving former farm buildings to the east of the house, which are outside the site.

There is a further listed building at some distance to the north at Southdowns Park, which is the former County Asylum. Although this is at some distance from the site, the scale of the former hospital building is such that it forms a landmark skyline feature in the approach to Haywards Heath from the south along Lunce's Hill. The proposed development site forms part of the rural foreground in these views.

There also listed buildings to the south west at The Old Cottage and Roger's Farmhouse, but as these fall within Lewes District I will not comment here on any impact on their settings or special interests.

The current outline proposal follows on from pre-application advice, although it is disappointing to note that the points made in this advice have not been acted on in order to reduce the level of harm caused to the affected heritage assets. I have read and considered the submitted Heritage Statement, but do not agree in some cases as to the level of contribution made by the site to the settings and special interests of the affected assets. I also disagree as to the level of harm caused to these assets by the proposed development.

To consider the various assets within MSDC in turn:

Cleavewater Farmhouse and Barn:

Cleavewater Farmhouse is, from the list description, a 16th century or earlier Wealden hall house, refronted during the 19th century with local sandstone. Based on the limited information in front of us, it is likely that the former farmhouse will be considered to possess architectural value based on its design, construction and craftsmanship, historical illustrative value as a good example of a former Sussex farmhouse of its period, altered in response to changing socio-economic circumstances and the needs and aspirations of successive owners, and aesthetic value based in part on the use of vernacular materials viewed against the backdrop of the rural landscape from which they were drawn. It also has group value with the barn and the other surviving historic farm buildings to the east.

Cleavewater Barn is a substantial timber framed building with timber cladding and a hipped tiled roof, located just to the south of the farmhouse. The building, which is suggested to date from

the 19th century, has barn doors to the long west facing elevation. The northern end appears to have been altered, and is of brickwork with a further set of cart doors. To the eastern side there is an outshot under a catslide roof. Based on the very limited information in front of us, the barn is likely to be considered to possess architectural value based on its construction and craftsmanship, historical illustrative value as a good example of a Sussex barn of its period, and aesthetic value based in part on the use of vernacular materials. As above, it also has group value with the other buildings within the historic farmstead.

The frontage to both house and barn onto Fox Hill is demarcated by a long brick wall, which may be regarded as curtilage listed depending on its age. In any case, it should be noted that planning permission would be needed for any alteration to the wall, as it is within the curtilage of the listed building. This wall marks the western edge of the farmstead, which historic map regression shows during the 19th century to have been of an evolving multiyard plan, with linked farmyards to the rear (east) and south of the house, and around the eastern and southern sides of the barn. The boundary wall to the south of the barn marks the extent of the yard in this position; various outbuildings appear to have been positioned along this side of the yard during the 19th and 20th centuries. The land to the north of the house appears to have been laid to orchards, with the fields of the farmstead presumably extending to the east, and likely including the application site.

The surviving rural setting of the house and barn will be considered to make a strong positive contribution to their special interests and the manner in which these are appreciated, including in particular those parts of those interests which are drawn from historical illustrative and aesthetic values. The application site forms a very significant part of that setting, including the backdrop against which the former farmstead is appreciated in views from the adjacent road. The likely historical association between the farmstead and its former farmlands, if confirmed, will strengthen this contribution.

Southdowns Park, Haywards Heath

Southdowns Park is a substantial mid 19th century former hospital building in a Lombardo-Venetian style, located in a prominent, elevated position at the southern edge of Haywards Heath. The building, which was originally a mental hospital before conversion to residential use, consists of two long wings to either side of a central section, each element of the building being punctuated by towers. The building is arranged along the ridge of a hill so that the long elevation faces southwards over the countryside beyond the town, with distant views of the Downs. The hospital campus originally included Hurst Farmhouse, located at the base of the hill to the south east, which was then known as the Asylum Farm, although the farmstead in fact significantly predates the hospital building.

Southdowns Park is likely to be considered to possess architectural interest based on its design, construction and craftsmanship, historical illustrative value as a good example of a substantial mid-Victorian asylum complex, aesthetic value, including as a landmark building in views of Haywards Heath from the countryside to the south, and communal value as a long standing centre of health care provision within the district. It also has group value with the former hospital farm.

The immediate setting around the hospital building including its retained landscaped gardens along the southern elevation in particular, and surviving ancillary buildings, makes a strong positive contribution to the significance of the listed building. The wider rural landscape to the south of the former hospital also contributes in this respect, both in terms of the designed views

from the hospital's southern elevation and landscaped gardens over the countryside to the south of the hospital, which it seems reasonable to assume would have been considered to have a therapeutic affect on patients, and in terms of reciprocal views across the surviving undeveloped land to this side of the town towards the hospital. As noted above, the building is a landmark in these views, marking the historic edge of the town during a key period of its development.

The proposed development site forms one part of this wider rural setting- it is likely to be visible from the hospital building and/or its grounds, forming part of the rural vista to the south. It also forms part of the foreground in views towards the hospital from Lunce's Hill. In these respects it will make a small positive contribution to the building's special interest.

Southdowns Park and the impact on it are not considered in the submitted Heritage Statement- this should be addressed.

Non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs)

The submitted heritage statement mentions NDHAs within the vicinity of the site at the Fox and Hounds Public House on Fox Hill, and Hurstwood House and Hurstwood Place, Hurstwood Lane. Although we now have this statement before us (it was not provided at pre-application stage) unfortunately the level of information within it regarding these possible NDHAs and their historic and visual relationship with the site is low, and we continue to have little information to go on to determine the nature or level of significance of the buildings within the local context, or to assess the impact, if any, of the proposed development on these significances. I would recommend that this aspect of the statement is revised and expanded accordingly.

Impact of the current proposal:

The current proposal is an outline application for a residential development of 130 houses with associated access from Lunce's Hill, internal access roads, parking, hard and soft landscaping and associated works. The proposal includes the retention of Cleavewater Barn and its conversion for a commercial or community use, such as a community or farm shop, with an associated parking area created directly to the east of the building.

To consider the impact of this proposal on the identified heritage assets in turn:

Cleavewater Farmhouse and Barn

The proposed development will have a fundamental effect on the existing rural, agricultural character of the site, which will become suburbanised. This will remove and reverse the currently positive impact that the site has, through setting, on the significance of these heritage assets and of the historic farmstead of which they are part- a contribution which will be enhanced if it is confirmed that the site constitutes the historic farmlands of the farmstead. The harm caused will be in terms not only of the effect on currently rural views from the listed buildings and their immediate settings, but also of the context within which the farmstead is appreciated from the adjacent road, including the character of the approaches to it along Lunce's Hill/Fox Hill. The impact will be not only visual, but also in respect of an increase in noise, activity and light pollution within the setting of the listed buildings. It will be exacerbated by the proximity of the site access to Cleavewater Barn, and by the associated loss of at least part of the existing boundary wall in this position, which marks the historic extent of the farmstead. The impact will be cumulative with the existing development to the opposite side of the road.

The proposal includes conversion of Cleavewater Barn to a commercial or local community use, possibly a community or farm shop. However, we have no detailed information before us which would allow us to comment in a meaningful manner on this aspect of the proposal -see below in terms of the principle and justification for the works. A historic building survey should also be commissioned from an appropriately qualified and experienced historic building archaeologist prior to any further development of the scheme. A structural survey and report will be necessary to demonstrate that the building is capable of conversion- this should be carried out by a surveyor with experience of historic timber framed structures. All of this information, alongside detailed plans, were requested at pre-application stage, but have not been provided. As previously noted, it will not be possible to consider this aspect in outline only, and listed building consent will be required for the works.

The proposal to create a car parking area for the proposed commercial or community use directly to the rear of the Barn is in my opinion contentious- such a feature in close proximity to the curtilage listed barn and listed farmhouse will detract from their settings and from the surviving rural, agricultural character of the farmstead.

As noted above it would also appear from the submitted masterplan that the proposed site access would involve removal of at least part if not all of the boundary wall along Fox Hill to the south of the barn. This in itself will require planning permission and possibly listed building consent. As this wall marks the historic western boundary of the southern yard to the farmstead, its partial removal would affect the legibility of the farmstead and the settings of the listed and curtilage listed buildings, and is in my opinion contentious.

Although we have not received any detail of the architectural treatment of the proposed new dwellings, and this would in any case be in most respects the remit of the Council's Urban Design Officer, I do note that the Design and Access Statement makes reference to the special treatment of the westernmost plot, where the proposal is for a *'low-density, farmstead arrangement where dwellings are clustered around a carefully landscaped courtyard, with a character that respects the local vernacular.'* This will not in my opinion mitigate the harm caused by the loss of the rural setting of the farmstead, and may be harmful in itself if it confuses the current appreciation of the form and narrative of the historic farmstead, by introducing a further 'faux' farmstead adjacent to it. This was again a concern raised in our pre-application advice, which has not been addressed.

For these reasons, in my opinion the proposal will result in less than substantial harm, through impact on setting, to the listed and curtilage listed buildings at Cleavewater Farm. In the absence of a fully detailed scheme it is not possible to be precise about the level of that harm, but I would consider it likely to fall within the mid-high range of that scale. In respect of Cleavewater Barn, there will also be a direct impact on the building through the proposed conversion works. At present, we do not have enough information to be able to comment on this aspect of the proposal.

The submitted heritage statement concludes that less than substantial harm will be caused to Cleavewater Farm at the lowest end of the scale. For the reasons set out above, I strongly disagree with this conclusion.

- The Statement concludes that modern residential development in the surrounding landscape has limited the importance of setting in relation to its contribution to the significance of Cleavewater. This is not in my opinion correct. Although the modern residential development opposite the former farmstead has had an adverse impact on the context within which it is appreciated, this means that the surviving rural setting to

the north, east and south is of more, not less, importance to a continuing appreciation of its historical illustrative and aesthetic values. The proposed development site forms the most significant part of that setting, including in terms of the backdrop against which the farmstead is appreciated in views from Fox Hill. Development on the site will have a cumulative adverse impact with the existing development to the west of the road.

- The inclusion of a landscape buffer between Cleavewater and the proposed new housing is suggested to *'ensure the legibility of the significance of the listed house within its more immediate surroundings'*. Whilst I am not entirely sure what is meant by this, the proposed 'landscape buffer' which consists of a small amount of retained open space and some boundary planting is unlikely to be successful in preventing intervisibility between development on the site and the farmhouse- to the extent which the screening is effective in isolating the farmhouse within its immediate garden setting, in divorcing the farmhouse from its former farmlands and from the wider rural landscape the screening in itself would be regarded as harmful. The proposed landscape buffer will also not be effective in mitigating the impact of the proposed residential development on the character of the wider context within which the farmstead is appreciated in views from Fox Hill.
- It is suggested that the proposed development will bring less than substantial harm to the significance of Cleavewater, and the considered design of the proposed development will ensure that this less than substantial harm is confined to the lowest levels possible. Again, I disagree. The loss of this most significant part of the surviving rural setting of the farmstead, including what are assumed to be its historic farmlands, to residential development will result in a much higher level of less than substantial harm than is identified, and the design of the development as shown, which as noted above has not moved on since the pre-application stage, will do little to mitigate this.
- In relation to Cleavewater Barn, the statement suggests that *'the proposals directly preserve the historic fabric of the curtilage of Cleavewater, thereby preserving its significance.'* As the barn is regarded as curtilage listed, listed building consent would be required for its removal. This is unlikely to be granted except in very exceptional circumstances. As such, the simple fact that the barn is retained as part of the scheme cannot be regarded as a benefit of the scheme. In respect of the conversion works, as we continue to have no detail of the barn's current condition, or of the works envisaged as part of the conversion, it is impossible to comment on whether a new use for the building is desirable, or if it is as to whether the historic fabric will in fact be adequately preserved by the current proposal. This was raised at pre-application stage, and has not been addressed. Further, we have no evidence before us that a conversion of the type proposed constitutes the optimum viable long term beneficial use of this building, nor that associated residential development of the scale envisaged would be necessary to secure this use. In addition, the extent to which the barn would remain appreciable as part of the farmhouse's curtilage- or of the historic farmstead- will be harmed by the proposed planted screening which is shown along the northern side of the barn, separating the barn from the house and the remaining former farm buildings. Again, this issue was raised at pre-application and has not been addressed. In summary little or no weight can be given to this argument in the context of the current proposal.

Southdowns Park:

The proposed development may have some adverse impact on the currently rural character of designed views looking southwards from the former hospital building and its immediate landscaped setting. It may also adversely impact, or partially block, views towards the hospital as a landmark building on the approach to Haywards Heath from Lunce's Hill and/or Fox Hill. More information, including appropriate verified views from agreed viewpoints, will be

necessary to determine this- these were requested at pre-application stage but as far as I am aware have not been provided? If a level of harm to the special interest of the building is caused, I would expect this to be less than substantial, and towards the lower end of that scale.

Possible NDHAs:

As above, more information is required to comment on the status of these buildings and any potential impact upon them.

Summary:

In summary, the proposal as shown would result in less than substantial harm through impact on setting to Cleavewater Farmhouse and to Cleavewater Barn. It is not possible to assign a precise level of harm in the absence of a more developed scheme, however I would expect that harm to be at within the mid-high range of that scale. In respect of the Barn, there will also be a direct impact through the conversion works- as we have no detail of these it is not possible to comment here on the impact these will have on its special interest as a curtilage listed building. Further, there will be a direct impact on the potentially curtilage listed wall to the south of the Barn, which marks the historic extent of the farmstead. The at least partial loss of this wall to create the access to the site will adversely impact the surviving legibility of the farmstead.

There may also be impact on the setting of the listed former hospital at Southdowns Park, but this is difficult to assess in the absence of a full proposal including appropriate verified views.

Any impact on the possible NDHAs mentioned above will require assessment based on more information regarding these buildings, as well as the scheme itself.

In summary, the proposal is considered harmful, through impact on setting, to the special interests of Cleavewater and of the associated curtilage listed barn. This will be contrary to the requirements of District Plan Policy DP34. In terms of the NPPF, I would place the level of harm through impact on setting at the mid-high range of the less than substantial scale in both cases, such that the balancing exercise set out in paragraph 215 will apply.

In relation to the Barn, there will also be a direct physical impact through the proposed conversion works, however in the absence of any detail this impact is impossible to assess, as is the suitability in principle of the building for conversion. As noted above, this work will require an application for listed building consent, which cannot be in outline. Listed building consent may also be needed for the partial removal of the boundary wall- this will certainly require planning permission.

With respect to Southdowns Park, and subject to the further information set out above, I would consider that a low level of less than substantial harm may result, through impact on the wider setting of the building.

Further information is required to consider the potential impact on the NDHAs identified by the applicant.

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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