

From: Emily Wade <Emily.Wade@midsussex.gov.uk>
Sent: 30 September 2026 11:02:01 UTC+01:00
To: "Rachel Richardson" <Rachel.Richardson@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: DM/26/2138 Old Beech Farm, Staplefield Rd, Cuckfield

Hi Rachel

Comments on the above planning application.

The proposed development site, Old Beech Farm, is a Grade II listed former farmhouse, part of a historic farmstead, located in a rural position outside Cuckfield. The farmstead also includes a Grade II listed barn as well as a number of other ancillary buildings. The farmstead originated as a dispersed drift way form and later evolved into dispersed multi yard arrangement, although the earlier form remains discernible. A farmstead with a surviving farmhouse and a barn both predating 1700 is very rare within the High Weald Character Area, and therefore an important survival.

The principal phases of development of the house itself can be briefly summarised as:

- Late 16th/early 17th century east range built originally as a wing to another structure which was situated to the western side, which has since been removed.
- The replacement of this structure to the west with a lower service range, at which point the former service wing became the 'house' proper. It is speculated that this may be the point at which the building took on its current lobby entry appearance to the principle (southeast) elevation.
- During the 18th century the east range of the building was largely underbuilt in brick.
- By 1843 an extension was added to the northeast of the building
- During the 20th century the 19th century addition was replaced and further extension added beyond it. Alterations were also made to the east range including further underbuilding and the introduction of a number of French windows. A boot room and porch were added, the latter in two phases.

Planning permission was recently granted for the demolition of the 20th century wing to the northern side of the house and construction of a replacement single storey extension, alongside other more minor alterations. This work has now been completed.

Based on the information in front of us, the former farmhouse would be considered to possess architectural value based on its construction and craftsmanship, including its relatively complex history sequential rebuild and extension, historical illustrative value as a good example of a 16th century Sussex farmhouse, altered and extended 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 within the landscape from which they were drawn.

The barn is described in the list description as dating from the 17th century. It is likely to possess architectural value based on its construction and craftsmanship, historical illustrative value as a good example of a timber framed Sussex barn of its type and period, and aesthetic value based in part on the use of vernacular materials.

The buildings also have group value with each other and with other surviving buildings within the historic farmstead, some of which may be regarded as curtilage listed or as non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs).

As such, the surviving rural/agricultural 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, in particular those parts of those interests which are drawn from historical illustrative and aesthetic values. The buildings are currently set in extensive gardens with lawns and the original farmstead pond, with fields beyond.

The current proposal, which follows on from a pre-application enquiry, relates to the part of the gardens to the immediate northeast of the house and is for the construction of a swimming pool and pool house. The area is currently largely occupied by a stone patio area, outdoor kitchen and summer house/ pergola. Adjacent to this but unaffected by the proposed works is a hard surfaced tennis court.

In many circumstances, the introduction of domesticating features such as swimming pools within the immediate setting of a historic farmstead may be considered to detract from the surviving agricultural/rural character of that setting and the contribution which this makes to the special interest of the buildings within the farmstead.

However, in this particular case the area in question is already largely occupied by hard surfacing and includes the built form of the outdoor kitchen and summer house. None of these features are particularly sympathetic to the wider rural context of the farmhouse and barn and would tend to detract from their settings. The character of the site is also influenced by the adjacent tennis court, which has a further domesticating impact. In this instance, the principle of the replacement of the patio, kitchen area and summer house with a pool, pool surround and pool house of more sympathetic design and materials is considered acceptable in principle and may have in fact the potential to enhance the setting of the farmstead.

With respect to the pool and pool surround, these largely occupy the area of the existing patio and outdoor kitchen. The pool surround is proposed to be of brick paviours to match existing paving near the house, with a limestone drainage slot, and brick retaining wall around the area. Subject to detail which could be reserved by condition, this is considered uncontentious. The pool lining is however shown as an azure blue glazed tile- whilst I would not dispute the quality of this material, it is a bright and artificial colour. This aspect of the proposal would therefore benefit from further consideration and revision to prevent the work having an inappropriately suburban character – this was an issue noted at pre-application stage.

The proposed pool house is a relatively modest building located to the northern end of the swimming pool. The building is also partly set into the existing bank in this location, which further reduces its apparent bulk and visual prominence. The proposed elevations show a vernacular style building which relates well to the agricultural context, and to the existing recent extension to the house. Subject to detail which could be reserved by condition, this aspect of the proposal is not considered contentious.

A hard and soft landscaping scheme is shown which includes new planting around the pool area and pool house, which will soften and screen the new built form and aid its integration into the existing farmhouse gardens and wider rural landscape. Subject to detail, this aspect of the proposal is considered welcome. New external lighting is indicated in the DAS, but not shown on the landscaping plan – this should be addressed so that the extent of new lighting proposed is clear. I would recommend that this should be kept to a minimum.

In summary, although the principle of the proposal is not considered contentious, there are a couple of areas requiring amendment or further information to ensure that the proposal fully preserves the setting of the historic farmstead.

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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<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk>

Emily Wade Ma MSc
Conservation Officer
Planning Services
Tel: +44 (0)1444 477385
emily.wade@midsussex.gov.uk <http://www.midsussex.gov.uk>



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