

Steve Ashdown

From: Rainier, Peter <Peter.Rainier@dmhstallard.com>
Sent: 07 June 2026 20:48
To: Gary Marsh (Cllr); John Hitchcock (Cllr); Abdul Bashar (Cllr); Graham Casella (Cllr); Janice Henwood (Cllr); John Dabell (Cllr); Chris Cherry (Cllr); Tofojjul Hussain (Cllr); Mike Kennedy (Cllr); Cavan Wood (Cllr); Dick Sweatman (Cllr); Paul Kenny (Cllr)
Cc: Eric Owens; Steve Ashdown; Susan Dubberley
Subject: Response to Planning Committee Report DM/25/3132 [DMHS-DMS.FID8001034]

Dear Members and Officers,

As you will be aware the above application is due to be considered at the Planning Committee on Thursday evening.

I set out below comments on behalf of the applicant and would ask that you give them due consideration at the meeting before concluding your deliberations and voting on the application. Officers may of course, wish to clarify their thoughts in respect of the first three points in the presentation to Committee. Please ensure that this correspondence is placed on the planning portal.

1) Historic England Advice

1. Historic England's (HE) report of the 2nd February is considerably out of date, many of the points they have raised have been addressed and either answered factually or proved incorrect. HE's conclusion is based on outdated information and does not reflect the totality of the scheme as amended. We submitted additional information in March covering all amendments and there is no HE response covering the latest submissions. It is noteworthy that the south-east bedroom vaulted ceiling has consent for a vaulted ceiling - approved in the 2023. The current report indicates that this element of the scheme is deemed acceptable at 12.6. Consequently, the HE report should only be afforded limited weight as it does not take into account all of the available evidence or expertise in line with NPPF para 208.
2. HE state the first floor enclosure has been omitted. There is submitted photographic evidence there never was one.
3. HE state that the sub-division of the northern bedroom is unacceptable as it does not replicate the original floor plan. As clearly illustrated on drawing LF/083/96 there was a sub division so their statement is incorrect.

2) Precedent

As we are all aware, planning decisions are based on the individual circumstances of the specific application and the site to which they refer.

We made reference to the case of Humphrey's Bakery as a similar example quoting (just 100m away on Lindfield High Street and a grade 2* Listed Building) however this was dismissed as not a comparable development.

Within the Committee Report (12.23 - 12.30) officers refer at length to a scheme in Hassocks (which although not mentioned by officers, the Inspector concluded was unacceptable 'on balance') and seeks to draw similarities.

There needs to be a level playing field within the report and in reality, neither scheme creates a precedent and this application should be considered on its own merits and weight should not be given to other decisions.

3) Inferring potential criminal proceedings

The application should be assessed on its intrinsic merits without reference to other potential proceedings.

4) Detailed points of rebuttal to officer report

2.6 The staircase has been proposed to be reinstated with additional benefits of hatches at first floor and attic. The lower staircase is being replaced in seasoned oak that was originally modern timber. The basement entrance door is now solid oak and not plywood. This is the best that can be achieved and it is entirely reasonable and appropriate of the Council to address it within this application. An enforcement notice will need to reference the details now being proposed. The inclusion of the staircase removal within the reason for refusal (alongside the Bakehouse) just reinforces the punitive approach taken by officers and which fails to address the reality of the situation. The staircase has been removed and part of the bakehouse (2 walls) fell down.

The draft reason for refusal states – *“The recreation of at 17th century staircase and stair enclosure, which previously connected the ground, first and attic floors of the historic house, as reconstructed would provide merely a superficial replica of the building’s historic form, the loss of historic fabric which has occurred is considerable, and the harm arising from this initial and irrevocable loss will not be mitigated by the current proposal;”* As noted the staircase previously connected the ground, first and attic floors, but this was not the case when it was removed, albeit without the benefit of LBC. The reinstated staircase would restore this vertical circulation AND replace softwood with seasoned oak. The approach taken by officers is, in our view, neither proportionate nor rational.

The bakehouse collapsed as proven by structural engineers. The only fabric that was lost is 7.5 m2 of bricks. The North and part of the west wall still are present. The building has been rebuilt like for like. The chimney had to be increased in height to comply with Building regulations.

The inference of a large amount of Historic fabric being lost is misleading. Para 12.16 also indicates the re-use of the bricks for the chimney breast to the main part of the house ‘could be acceptable’.

2.7 Not just cleaning and exposing parts of the timber frame. In fact, over 60% of the frame is now visible. A significant benefit. Removal of plasterboard, artex, breeze blocks and cementitious finishes throughout the house. Complete restoration of the front elevation, lime plaster throughout the building. All of these are significant benefits and not minor.

2.8 To state these are only minor benefits is, in our opinion, entirely incorrect and contradicted in the 12.16 listing of 18 points that could be accepted. We consider that the public/heritage benefits are considerable and are not being afforded the correct weight that is due them.

5.0 Historic England’s response is based on their 2nd February report, four months ago. Many of their points raised have since been addressed. Some examples, the subdivision of the en-suite bathroom to the north of the bedroom. This is now factually proved incorrect by drawing LF/083/96. The vaulted ceiling has as confirmed on numerous occasions have planning approval. This is now indicated as ‘could be accepted’ (para 12.16). HE’s letter does not reflect the updated submission and latest discussions with officers so can only be given limited weight.

10.2 This statement completely contradicts the officer conclusions relating to the extension approved in 2023... ‘it is recognised that the existing ad hoc development has resulted in a

collection of unsympathetic alteration to the detriment of the listed building and the proposals would remove these and replace them with a two storey extension that does provide a more cohesive appearance to the rear of the building. It is considered that this will result in an improvement to the character and appearance of the listed building'. The previous extensions cumulatively were considerably larger than what exists now. They presented a confused medley of gables and hipped roofs which completely hid the original 15th century hall house. Although the new extension envelops the 1830s outtrigger, it reveals more of the original house with the roof now liberated of skylights.

10.4 The reinstatement work is considerable, as this should include all lime-based construction, re-pointing, rendering, in-fill panels, plaster finishes, roof coverings, staircase (including access).

10.10 It is not an original window that is being replaced. The description is incorrect. There is no gothic arch, the gothic detailing belongs to the mid C20 casement window and is of poor quality. The window is to be replaced with a traditional Georgian glazing bar vertical sliding sash which is a benefit.

12.13 While the proposed benefits, 'could also have sat alongside the approved scheme, or have been undertaken separately from any other works' the fact is they did not. However, they DO form part of this scheme now before the council. They are also works of alteration which require listed building consent so must be weighed into the overall balance. It is illegitimate to suggest that a benefit needs to be directly related to an aspect of a scheme which is otherwise harmful in order to be weighed favourably. Harm must be accompanied by clear and convincing justification (para 213), but there is no requirement for a corresponding heritage benefit that relates directly to a harmful change (would that were possible) to be offered up. The proposed benefits of the scheme ought to be considered holistically, looking at the heritage asset as a whole.

Furthermore, the large number of heritage benefits secured by this proposal cumulatively amount to much more than a 'relatively minor benefit'. Taken as a whole, the benefits are substantive and the harm is no more than at a low to moderate level, even accepting some permanent erosion of significance due to the removal of the staircase.

12.14 Historic England's report out of date and now inaccurate as noted above

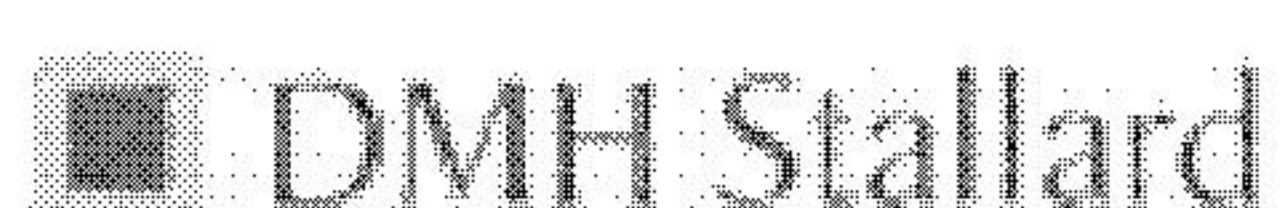
12.21 We accept that the removal of the staircase was done in error and resulted in harm, however, the previous approval does not include a significant proportion of the beneficial changes now proposed as part of this application. It is not the role of Planning Committee to consider alternative schemes, but rather to assess the scheme before them in a holistic fashion against the baseline position of the building prior to any of the recent works being undertaken.

13.8 We strongly disagree - the property was uninhabitable it was rat infested and riddled with damp, with no central heating.

Kind regards,

Peter

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