



6B. Heritage Statement

Project: Four staff houses at Hurstpierpoint College (Ruckford House site, BN6 9JS)

Applicant: Hurstpierpoint College Limited

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Date: 09 October 2025

Scope and method. This statement follows Historic England Guidance Note 3 on the setting of heritage assets. It identifies the heritage assets and their significance, reviews how their settings contribute to that significance, evaluates the likely effects of the proposal, and explains how the design has been refined to avoid, minimise and mitigate any harm, before setting out the overall balance in line with National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 208.

Heritage assets and significance. The principal designated assets in the vicinity are the Grade II listed buildings at Ruckford Mill, including Ruckford Mill Farmhouse, Ruckford Mill Farmhouse Cottage and Ruckford Mill. Within the wider campus, the Grade II listed main quadrangle and Star House are also of relevance. The mill group is significant for its architectural interest, historic illustrative value as a nineteenth century water powered corn mill with associated dwellings and outbuildings, and for communal value as a former local focus of rural activity. The college buildings have architectural and aesthetic value as a coherent ensemble of purpose built educational buildings within a planned landscape. Both groups draw part of their significance from a verdant, rural character and a degree of separation from surrounding settlements.

Contribution of setting and key views. The setting of the mill group includes the mill stream, boundary vegetation and the wider rural landscape to the north and east, and it extends south across the open playing fields towards the college. The open, green character of these fields and the presence of trees and hedgerows reflect the agricultural origins of the mill and contribute positively to how the assets are experienced. The site is viewed obliquely and intermittently from Malthouse Lane and from the public right of way identified as 56_2Hu that runs to the north of the playing fields. Glimpsed views are filtered by vegetation and the existing college buildings to the east and south already provide a developed backdrop in some viewpoints. The setting of the main college buildings is characterised by their architectural grouping within a mature, landscaped campus that includes open sports pitches and tree belts.

Assessment of effects. The proposal introduces four dwellings on a managed parcel of land that is currently vegetated and sits within the established campus envelope. The change involves a localised loss of greenery and the introduction of domestic built form and associated hardstanding. Without mitigation this could erode a modest part of the verdant character that contributes to the appreciation of the listed buildings. The effect is limited by the small scale and height of the development, by its position within the campus, and by the screening and separation that already exist. On this basis, the degree of harm to the settings of the nearby listed buildings is assessed as less than substantial at the lower end of the spectrum.

Design response and mitigation. The design has been refined to respond to the rural context and to reduce visual impact. Elevations adopt a restrained vernacular with red and buff brickwork, clay plain tiles and a traditional vertical emphasis to openings. There will be no uPVC fenestration; windows and doors are aluminium clad timber with concealed ventilation to avoid visible trickle vents. Hardstanding has been reduced and visually broken up with permeable surfacing and planting pockets. Frontage trees are retained where feasible, native hedgerows and trees are reinforced along Malthouse Lane and to the north, and screening towards the public right of way is strengthened. External lighting will be carefully designed to avoid spill into the wider landscape and to protect foraging and commuting routes for bats. These measures ensure the development reads as a modest, recessive addition within the established campus pattern rather than as encroachment into the wider countryside.

Heritage balance and conclusion. Any identified less than substantial harm at the lower end is outweighed by public benefits that include the provision of staff housing that supports the continued operation of an established educational institution and reduces commuting, improvements to on site safety and movement, surface water betterment through Sustainable Drainage Systems, and measurable biodiversity enhancements secured through planting and habitat creation. The proposal therefore accords with policy DP34 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, with policy DP26 on character and design, with neighbourhood plan policy HurstC5, and with the National Planning Policy Framework, when read as a whole.