

From: Emily Wade <Emily.Wade@midsussex.gov.uk>
Sent: 07 May 2025 12:34:42 UTC+01:00
To: "Susan Dubberley" <Susan.Dubberley@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: DM/25/0735 Castle Inn

Hi Sue

Comments on the above planning application.

The application site, the Castle Inn, is a Grade II listed building, dating originally from the 18th century, with attached early 19th century parallel ranges, and later additions. The 18th century core of the building faces onto Hickstead Lane, whereas the larger 19th century ranges are set perpendicular to this fronting onto London Road. To the rear is an attached (18th century?) outbuilding which appears to be part of an originally significantly larger range of attached and unattached buildings which formed a courtyard to the rear of the building. Historical map regression suggests that this group of buildings was during the 19th century the farmstead of Hickstead Farm, and only became a hotel during the late 19th or early 20th century. It was renamed the Castle Hotel, taking the name from the previously existing Castle Inn, which was located just to the south of the adjacent road junction (now known as The Old Post Office).

Based on the information in front of us I would consider that the listed building possesses architectural value based on its design, construction and craftsmanship, historical illustrative value particularly relating to the evolution of its use over time from farm to hotel and public house, and aesthetic value, based in part on the use of vernacular materials within the older parts of the building. As a c.1900 public house it will also have some communal value as a longstanding focus of the local community.

The building has a strong relationship with the adjacent road junction, and it appears clear that the later 19th century additions were designed to deliberately reorientate the building to face onto London Road, possibly to provide a higher status façade for the earlier farmhouse reflecting the aspirations of its owners at that time. When it came into use as a hotel, the 19th century range will have provided the main public face of the building, attracting passing custom from this busy highway. As such, the immediate setting of the road junction, and visual relationship between the building and this, will make an important contribution to the special interest of the building and how this is appreciated, in particular its historical illustrative value. The wider rural setting of the building, in particular that to the north and west, will also contribute positively to an appreciation of its earlier role as a farmstead, as well as to its aesthetic value.

The current proposal is for the creation of a new vehicle access from Hickstead Lane, and erection of a new 1.1m brick boundary wall, and set behind this a new 2.4m acoustic fence, along the eastern boundary facing onto London Road. A new pedestrian entrance is also shown to the southern boundary adjacent to the road junction.

In heritage terms, the new access from Hickstead Lane raises some concerns regarding loss of green space within the setting of the building. Although the area to the south has now been, somewhat regrettably, completely cleared, recent aerial imagery shows that this previously provided a garden setting to this side of the Inn, which complemented the wider rural setting,

which, as set out above, contributes positively to the special interest of the listed building. This does appear to reflect the historical nature of this part of the site, and it would be preferable for soft landscaping to be reinstated rather than the space being partly given over to a new hard surfaced access. Subject to the comments of our Tree Officer, there is also the potential concern of impact on the surviving trees along the southern boundary.

Furthermore, although subject to detail there would be unlikely to be an objection to a new c. 1m high brick boundary wall along the eastern edge of the site, the proposed 2.4m high acoustic fence would be an unattractive and visually intrusive introduction which would detract from the visual relationship between the listed building and the old London Road, including views of the building looking from the south east from that road, and the reciprocal outlook from the building and its immediate setting. This would be notwithstanding the slight set back of the fence and the proposed intervening planting to its eastern side. As the relevant Historic England guidance GPA Note 3 '*The Setting of Heritage Assets*' points out, screening cannot be considered as an alternative to appropriately designed development, and can prove ephemeral. Certainly in this instance the Council would have no longer term control over the retention of screening planting.

For these reasons in my opinion the proposal will be harmful, through impact on setting, to the special interest of the Castle Inn and how this is appreciated. This will be contrary to the requirements of District Plan Policy DP34. In terms of the NPPF I would place the harm as less than substantial, at the low-mid range of that scale, such that the balancing exercise set out in paragraph 215 will apply.

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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