

From: Emily Wade <Emily.Wade@midsussex.gov.uk>
Sent: 22 August 2024 09:08:28 UTC+01:00
To: "Hamish Evans" <Hamish.Evans@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: DM/24/1560 Land adj. to Yew Tree Cottage

Hi Hamish

Comments on the above planning application.

Yew Tree Cottage is a Grade II listed 17th century cottage located to the south side of Haywards Heath Road towards the eastern edge of Balcombe village, within the Conservation Area. There are a number of other listed buildings in the vicinity, including Little Bowders, a short distance to the south on the opposite side of Haywards Heath Road, which dates from the 17th century, and Troytown, a 16th century building a short distance to the north. Both are Grade II listed.

Yew Tree Cottage appears on maps from the mid 19th century as one of a group of buildings set within gardens and orchards around the junction of Haywards Heath Road and Mill Lane, which formed a distinct nucleus of settlement, separated from the centre of Balcombe village by fields and the extensive grounds of the Rectory. These buildings also included Bowders and Troytown. Based on the limited information in front of us it is likely that all three buildings would be considered to possess architectural value based on their construction and craftsmanship, historical illustrative value as good examples of Sussex village buildings of their type and period, and aesthetic value based in part on the use of vernacular materials.

As such, the surviving rural or semi-rural elements of the settings of the listed buildings 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 drawn from historical illustrative and aesthetic values. In this context, the verdant, semi-rural character of this part of Haywards Heath Road will be of significance – this derives from the presence of hedges, trees, and grass verges.

The application site is a grass verge bisected by a tarmacked footpath located just to the south east of Yew Tree Cottage. Although adjacent to the garden to the Cottage, it forms part of the frontage to Combers, a mid 20th century residential development to the west of Haywards Heath Road. The site is not within the Conservation Area, the boundary of which does however include Yew Tree Cottage and the houses to the opposite side of the road.

Although there is not an adopted character appraisal for the Balcombe Conservation Area, its significance in my opinion derives primarily from its nature as the core of a historic Sussex village which has developed over many centuries in close connection with the surrounding countryside. As such, the surviving semi-rural character of the village and the broader rural setting make a strong positive contribution to this character and appearance and how this is appreciated.

The current proposal is for the introduction of an off street car parking space into this area, surfaced with grass grid mat. The footpath would be diverted around the space.

In my opinion, the introduction of off street parking in this position is contentious in principle, in terms of the adverse impact on the semi-rural character of this part of Haywards Heath Road, and the positive contribution this makes to the settings of and approaches to the above mentioned listed buildings, and of the Balcombe Conservation Area. This is notwithstanding the use of grass grid mat, which although it might be softer in appearance than hard standing is unlikely with regular use to retain significant grass coverage, and of course would not disguise a parked car in this position.

This will be contrary to the requirements of District Plan Policies DP34 and DP35. In terms of the NPPF, the proposal will result in less than substantial harm to each of the affected assets, at around the low-mid point of that scale, such that paragraph 208 will apply.

The proposal is also arguably damaging to the street scene in more general terms, in that the grass verges flanking the entrance to Combers appear to be a designed part of this planned development, framing the entrance to the road. The partial loss of one of these verges will be damaging in this respect. This will be contrary to DP26 of the District Plan.

Whilst I would be happy to engage with the applicants at pre-application stage to discuss potential alternatives in terms of off street parking provision for the Cottage, it would appear that opportunities for this within the site itself may unfortunately be limited or nil, due to the site layout and proximity of neighbouring buildings.

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.
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