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Sent: 07 February 2025 14:45:00 UTC+00:00
To: "Katherine Williams" <Katherine.Williams@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: DM/24/2865 and 2866 Dumbrells, Church Platt, Cuckfield

Hi Katherine

Comments on the above planning and listed building consent applications.

The application site, Dumbrells, is attached to the rear of a pair of listed buildings, Somners and the Friary, which front onto South Street within the Cuckfield Conservation Area. The site is also within the setting of several other adjacent listed buildings, including Grade I listed Holy Trinity Church which is a short distance to the rear across Church Platt, The Grade II listed Old School, just to the north of the Church, and The White Harte Inn adjacent to the south on South Street, which is also Grade II listed.

The significance of the site, in respect of Dumbrells and its gardens, has been considered in the context of other proposals, and can be summarised as follows:

- The presence within the retained north wing at Dumbrells of historic fabric which was formerly part of a rear wing to Somners which as well as being of some age and interest in its own right also contributes positively to the understanding of the sequential development of Somners and its narrative. More detail on this can be found in the Heritage Statement submitted with the current application.
- The positive contribution which the open and verdant gardens to Dumbrells make to the settings of Somners and the Friary, and to the character and appearance of the Cuckfield Conservation Area, including views from the east from the direction of the Old School (Grade II listed) and Holy Trinity Church (Grade I listed) and its churchyard, which also contains a number of listed lychgates and monuments.

The site has a complex recent planning history including permission granted for alteration and extension of the existing house, with replacement of existing outbuildings with a detached garage and alterations to the access (DM/18/3863, modified by DM/21/3938), and withdrawal of an application for demolition of the existing dwelling and outbuildings and construction of a replacement detached 3 bedroom house, following adverse Officer comments including in respect of the scale and design of the detached house, and its impact on the settings of adjacent listed buildings and the Conservation Area (DM/21/3940). Pre-application advice has also been sought. Work has been commenced in respect of the approved scheme, and part of the previous building at Dumbrells has been removed, although the north wing (containing the historic timber framing) has been retained.

The current proposal is for alterations to the rear extension of the Friary previously abutting the former Dumbrells, incorporation of the remaining structure of the former Dumbrells into Somners, with new internal doorways for access, and a proposed replacement single storey dwelling within the former rear garden to Dumbrells, with associated hard and soft landscaping works, including vehicle access and parking.

The principle of development of this type was considered under a recent pre-application enquiry (DM/22/2672) and was considered acceptable, although concerns were raised at that time regarding the scale and design of the replacement dwelling within the rear garden area, which

did not outweigh the heritage benefits of 'reuniting' the historic fabric isolated within the retained north wing of Dumbrells with the contiguous fabric within Somners. The current application attempts to address these concerns. To consider the key elements of the proposals in turn:

Work to Somners, The Friary, and the retained portion of Dumbrells:

A key element of the current proposal is the incorporation of the retained north wing of Dumbrells as a rear 'extension' to Somners, with the creation of new doorways at ground and first floor. This will result in the loss of some historic masonry due to the creation of the doorways. However on balance the benefits of reuniting the surviving exposed historic framing to the northern elevation of the rear wing with the contiguous fabric within Somners, so that the entirety of the surviving framing can be appreciated within the one property, is considered to outweigh this minor harm.

Adjacent to the south elevation of the rear wing of Somners, it is proposed to remove a catslide roof above a rear extension to The Friary which has been installed above an earlier pitched and flat roof combination, exposing this earlier roof structure and also more of the original elevation of the building at first floor. This 'layering' of roof structures was observed during a previous site visit. As this removes later fabric in favour of an earlier arrangement, and also exposes more of the original elevation of the listed buildings at first floor, this aspect of the proposal is not considered contentious.

The removal of a more modern WC extension is likewise not considered contentious.

The proposed south elevation also shows a new window to the side of the rear wing to the rear of Somners. This may be acceptable subject to further information on the impact on the historic fabric of the building, both the timber frame and infill. Likewise the new rooflights proposed to either side of the retained north wing to Dumbrells may be acceptable subject to confirmation that there is no adverse impact on any historic fabric which may survive within the roof structure.

The proposal also includes alterations to the elevations of the north wing, including changes to the fenestration. These are considered generally acceptable in the context, although I have some concerns regarding the scale of the windows proposed at ground and first floor to the east elevation facing over The Platt. In my opinion, these may appear overly prominent in the context of the existing more modestly scaled fenestration to the adjacent listed buildings. I would recommend this aspect is reconsidered.

Proposed new dwelling within the rear garden:

The proposal includes a one bedroom dwelling within the rear garden which is intended as a replacement for Dumbrells. As noted above, the principle of development of this nature was considered at pre-application stage and found to be acceptable, on balance, in heritage terms given the beneficial impact of the scheme in respect of the significance of Somners. The footprint, form and design of the dwelling have been amended following negative Officer comments on the previous scheme; the revised design is considered much more sympathetic to the context, although further details will be required of some aspects including the proposed materials, which include solar PV slates to elevations facing over the Platt. We would need to be reassured that the use of these slates on more visually prominent roofslopes is appropriate. This information could be secured by condition.

Hard and soft landscaping scheme:

As noted above, a key aspect of the significance of the site at Dumbrells is the relatively open and verdant character of the rear garden. Whilst as above the built form of the proposed new dwelling is balanced to an extent by the removal of existing outbuildings and the partial demolition of Dumbrells itself, the extent of development within the rear garden remains of concern, and the extent of any associated hardsurfacing should be kept to an absolute minimum. I would recommend that this aspect of the proposal is revisited and that wherever possible hard surfacing is replaced by soft landscaping, or as a second choice, Grasscrete or similar.

On balance, therefore, the proposal is considered acceptable in principle in heritage terms. The proposed works to the retained portion of Dumbrells with Somners will be beneficial to the significance of the latter listed building. This benefit stands to be weighed against the potential harm caused by the new dwelling within the rear garden, which must also be considered in the context of the removal of part of the built form of Dumbrells and of existing outbuildings within the gardens, as well as the existing permission to extend to the rear of Dumbrells.

Revisions are however required to some aspects of the scheme, as set out above, and various details will be required by condition should permission in due course be granted.

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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