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Sent: 05 June 2026 11:39:19 UTC+01:00
To: "Joanne Fisher" <Joanne.Fisher@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: Chownesmead DM/26/0833 and 0834

Hi Jo

Comments on the above planning and listed building consent applications. My apologies for the delay in getting these to you which has been caused by pressure of other work.

Chownesmead is a Grade II listed former country house dating from the 1920s in the neo-Elizabethan style. The former coach house and garden structures such as the terrace, retaining walls, garden walls and gate piers are included in the listing. The house is set in extensive gardens originally designed by Gertrude Jekyll, and is located in a semi-rural position on the outskirts of Haywards Heath.

Planning permission was granted in 2015 for a pool house building enclosing an existing swimming pool to the southeast of the house (14/04433/HOUS). Subsequent to this, planning permission and listed building consent were granted for the change of use of the building from a residential dwelling to a hotel, including installation of a lift shaft and minor internal alterations to the Listed Building. The approval included conversion of the garage building with ancillary residential accommodation at first floor level to create a yoga studio at ground floor level and additional hotel room at first floor level, as well as an extension to the pool enclosure building previously permitted. (DM/18/2193 and 2201). In 2023, pre-application advice was sought regarding further works including amendments to the approved scheme with respect to the internal and external works to the house, to now include an extension, and further enlargement of the proposed pool house to include an additional storey and replacement of the adjacent barn as a linked building, creating a substantial spa building (DM/23/1480).

External works to the house:

A single storey extension is proposed to the northeastern corner of the house, adjacent to the rear service wing and within the service yard. At pre-application stage a similar proposal was considered and found to be contentious. This area is flanked to south and east by what appears to be the original service area/wing of the house, which while not as architecturally grand or imposing as the main part of the building containing the family rooms, is nonetheless of character and interest retaining original features such as leaded windows and doors onto the courtyard. The yard itself, with its herringbone brick pavers, is also an attractive feature of the setting of the house. Although towards the rear of the building, the yard area is visible in closer views from the main entrance drive to the house, and forms part of the context within which the main entrance façade is appreciated as one approaches the house along this drive.

I note that the scale of the proposed addition has been reduced since pre-application. I have also read and considered the arguments put forward in the submitted heritage statement in favour of the proposal, however I remain of the opinion that this is not an appropriate position for an extension, which causes harm to the special interest of the listed building due to the adverse impact on the original rear service wing, including by loss of historic fabric, the service yard and the context of the approach to the house along the main entrance drive. This aspect of the proposal therefore requires reconsideration.

Internal works to the house:

- At ground floor in comparison to the approved scheme further amendments to the plan form are proposed in particular within the northeastern service wing, which is also the location of the proposed extension discussed above. These result in a greater loss of historic plan form and fabric, which is considered contentious – little of the existing layout of the service wing would remain. This aspect of the proposal requires reconsideration alongside the extension.
- At first floor, although I note that the amendments made are an attempt to address concerns raised in connection with the preapplication proposal, the introduction of a partition within the dressing room to the master bedroom has an adverse effect on the historic plan form. In addition, the creation of an ensuite within existing bedroom 3 results in further harm to the historic plan- although not shown on the proposed drawings it is assumed that this would in practice include a door for privacy, which would run up to the adjacent window, in an awkward juxtaposition. These aspects of the proposal require reconsideration. Please also see below with respect to the submitted Heritage Statement.
- At second floor there is greater intervention to the historic plan form than formed part of the approved scheme, including loss of fabric and additional partitioning for ensuites. We have also been provided with some further detail with respect to the works required to create bedroom 13 and its ensuite in comparison to the pre-application proposal. This work will involve an alteration to the overlying roof form to create a small dormer extension. This will result in the loss of historic fabric from the roof, but over a relatively small area. The extension itself will have a minimal impact on the appearance of the building, given its position between twin gables and its set back.
- At pre-application stage further information was suggested with respect to the joinery within the proposed bedroom 13 which would be removed to create the link between this and the ensuite. However, the submitted heritage statement only briefly considers the works at both first and second floor, and it would be preferable if this were revised and expanded to address these works in more detail, to include consideration of loss of fabric such as this joinery as well as impact on plan form. Further comments on the works at first and second floor can be provided once this further information is received.

Proposed pool and spa building:

The proposed two storey pool and treatment room building is a more substantial structure than the approved pool house. However, the building is set further away from

the listed house, creating greater separation between the two, and the additional storey is set below the terrace, taking advantage of the drop in the levels of the gardens to the southwest of the house.

At pre-application stage this approach was considered to be potentially acceptable in principle, but it was noted that the building and surrounding landscaping would require very careful planning and detailing, including the choice of materials, to minimise the bulk and visual prominence of the development in the context of the house, and ensure that it complements rather than detracts from the house and its setting, and to preserve the character of the Jekyll designed gardens, including the existing listed terrace walls.

It was also noted that although the existing barn to the south east of the house is not of any special interest, and its replacement would not be considered contentious in principle, there were some concerns regarding the scale and visual prominence of the proposed replacement 2 storey building; and it was advised that care should be taken to minimise its scale (footprint and height) and its impact on views of the house and the character of the garden setting. As with the pool house, it was further noted that the detailing of the development and the surrounding landscaping will be key, including the maintenance or implementation of appropriate planted screening.

As submitted, I note that the proposed spa building is reduced in scale in comparison with the scheme seen at pre-application stage. However, I continue to have serious concerns regarding the footprint and scale of the proposed building, notwithstanding the set down of the lower floor, the existing pool house permission and the removal of the existing barn. As shown, the building will in my opinion be unduly prominent in views of the house from the gardens to the south, to the extent that it will draw attention from the house as the principle focal point of the site, with the gardens (including the listed structures within them) designed to frame and complement the dwelling.

Alongside the overall footprint, scale and bulk of the new building the following specific aspects of the proposal require reconsideration:

- The position, scale and form of the link between the two elements of the proposal should be reconsidered, with the revised structure set back between the buildings rather than projecting southwards of the upper floor of the pool building.
- The visual prominence of the lower storey of the pool building should be reduced- for example, the fenestration should be reduced in scale and confined to the area below the upper storey rather than 'bleeding' into the retaining wall between this and the house. The windows to this storey should be recessed into, rather than projecting from, the plane of the wall.
- The height of the two storey element replacing the barn should be reduced to sit no higher than the existing.
- The currently proposed form/roof form is in my opinion overly complex and could benefit from being simplified.

Other works within the setting of the house:

The submitted landscaping statement is helpful in explaining the rationale between the general approach to the hard and soft landscaping around the site, and it does indicate that consideration has been given to respecting the surviving elements of the Jekyll scheme within the modern context.

However, it also makes clear that the intention is not for a recreation of this scheme, or for extensive restoration of features or plantings, with the exception of the reintroduction of the pond to the area to the southwest of the house. It is perhaps regrettable, given the fairly extensive evidence of the original garden design which appears to be available, that it is not proposed to do more to reinstate the original character of the gardens, subject to issues of changing climate etc. On balance I would regard the reintroduction of the pond as a heritage benefit of modest weight, with the remainder of the landscaping scheme, with the exception of the parking and lighting (see below) being acceptable subject to detail.

Notwithstanding the above, I have significant concerns regarding the extent of the new, or newly formalised, car parking areas which are now proposed to both the northwest and southeast of the house. In my opinion, the principle of such extensive new areas of hard standing within the garden setting of the building is likely to prove contentious, notwithstanding the presence of an existing informal parking adjacent to the main driveway, and the tennis court to the southwest of the house. This aspect of the proposal, which I assume is closely linked to aspirations relating to the intensity of use of the site and the scale of the spa operation, requires reconsideration.

I also have concerns regarding the extent of the proposed lighting within the grounds, which appears excessive for this semi-rural context. As shown, it will detract from the character of the setting of the house and the Jekyll-designed gardens. This aspect of the proposal requires reconsideration, with the amount of lighting substantially reduced.

Other issues:

The submitted heritage statement notes the possibility of repair works to the house, but no detail is provided. Although I appreciate that the full magnitude of necessary work may not become apparent until the development is on site, a more detailed schedule of the repairs which it is considered are likely to be required, as well as methods and materials for the works, should be provided at this stage, so that we have some indication of their anticipated nature and extent.

A more detailed method statement for works associated with any new or altered services including wiring, pipe runs and any new ventilation required in relation to new or altered bathrooms and ensembles should also be provided.

In summary, in my opinion the proposal raises concerns both in terms of the direct impact on the listed house through both the proposed new extension and aspects of the internal works, and of the indirect impact through works within its setting. The principal element of concern within the setting of the building is the new pool and spa, the footprint, scale and form of which in my opinion do not relate appropriately to the

context, resulting in a substantial and visually discordant development which would detract from the setting and special interest of Chownesmead. However, other aspects including the extent of the proposed new car parking areas, and the extent of lighting, are also considered detrimental.

Further information is required in respect of some aspects of the internal works, as set out above.

For the reasons set out above, the proposal is considered to detract from the special interest of Chownesmead, contrary to the requirements of District Plan Policy DP34. In terms of the NPPF, the proposal will result in less than substantial harm, possibly at around the mid-high point of that scale (although this may be adjusted subject to the above mentioned further information on aspects of the internal alterations), such that the balancing exercise set out in paragraph 215 will apply. In carrying out that balancing exercise, the Council must be mindful of the requirements of paragraph 212 that great weight must be given to the conservation of heritage assets, and of paragraph 213 that any harm should require clear and convincing justification.

It is interesting to note that the submitted heritage statement identifies less than substantial harm as arising from the proposal. The statement suggests that this harm should be offset against the heritage benefits of the refurbishment of the house and putting into it an ongoing beneficial use. However, no evidence is provided regarding the existing condition of the house which suggests that extensive refurbishment is required which could not otherwise be funded, nor, although there is an existing permission for the change of use, is it demonstrated that this is the only option for the ongoing beneficial use of the house, or that it is necessary to fund any repairs which are required. For these reasons I consider that little weight can be given to the argument of heritage benefit which would counterbalance the harm arising.

I would as noted above identify a modest heritage benefit arising from one specific aspect of the landscaping scheme associated with the development, which is the reinstatement of the pond. However, I would not consider that this is sufficient to outweigh the harms arising from other aspects of the proposal.

Whilst we were on site for the current application, we noticed the presence of unauthorised structures on the terrace of the house including a timber built shed and pergola. These should be removed, as I believe is the intention as part of the current scheme. The issue has been reported to our Planning Investigations Team so that they are aware and can monitor the situation should planning permission not be granted, or works not commenced in a timely manner.

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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