

From: Emily Wade <Emily.Wade@midsussex.gov.uk>
Sent: 09 June 2025 13:53:01 UTC+01:00
To: "Hamish Evans" <Hamish.Evans@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: Firs Farm, Copthorne Common, Copthorne DM/25/0708

Hi Hamish

Further comments on the above planning application, following the receipt of a Heritage Statement.

The application site, Firs Farm, is an unlisted mid 20th century farmstead, including a dwelling (The Hut) and a collection of former stable and barn buildings, now in a variety of commercial and industrial uses. Adjacent to the site to the north east is The Firs, a Grade II listed mid 19th century house set in extensive gardens.

Although we have now received a Heritage Statement in respect of the current application, which is for the demolition of the existing buildings on the site (with the exception of The Hut) and the construction of 5 detached houses, with associated access, parking and hard and soft landscaping, this Statement is unfortunately not particularly detailed and does not, in my opinion, fully address either the nature of the significance of The Firs, or the contribution of setting to this.

In my opinion, the house, which is in the classical style typical of its period, possesses architectural interest based on its design, construction and craftsmanship, historical illustrative value as a good example of a moderately sized mid 19th century country villa, reflecting the evolving socio-economic context and the needs and aspirations of successive owners, and aesthetic value. When constructed, the house stood in a predominantly rural context, but in relatively close proximity to the railway station at Crawley Down, which opened in 1860. The house therefore offered stylish, comfortable living in a bucolic context, but with easy access to town for the commuter.

I would therefore consider that the surviving rural setting of The Firs, including in particular to the west and south west, makes a positive contribution to the special interest of the listed building and how this is appreciated, in particular those parts of that interest which are drawn from historical illustrative and aesthetic values. Whilst I note the point made in the Heritage Statement regarding the relatively enclosed nature of the house and its gardens, due to surrounding vegetation, I would also note that this vegetation is potentially ephemeral, and will be subject to seasonal variation. The site is directly adjacent to The Firs to the south west, and whilst partly occupied by built form, the buildings are agricultural in nature, and the site also includes a significant amount of green space. As such, I would consider that although intervisibility between the two may be limited, particularly in summer, the site makes a modest positive contribution to the special interest of the house and how this is appreciated.

The current proposal, which is for residential development of the site, will inevitably have a fundamental impact on its character, which will become suburbanised. It will also have the effect of severing the listed building from the wider rural landscape to the south west. This diminution of the rural character of its setting will, in my opinion, adversely affect the special

interest of The Firs and how this is appreciated, resulting, in terms of the NPPF, in a low level of less than substantial harm, such that paragraph 215 will apply.

If, on balance, you are minded to approve the application I would suggest conditions relating to roofing and facing materials, and to a detailed hard and soft landscaping scheme.

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>

Emily Wade Ma MSc
Conservation Officer
Planning Services
Tel: +44 (0)1444 477385
emily.wade@midsussex.gov.uk <http://www.midsussex.gov.uk>

