

From: Emily Wade <Emily.Wade@midsussex.gov.uk>
Sent: 17 June 2026 15:11:05 UTC+01:00
To: "Caroline Grist" <Caroline.Grist@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: DM/26/0560 Land West Of Gatesmead, Wickham Way HH

Hi Caroline

Comments on the above planning application.

The proposed development site is a parcel of agricultural land located opposite the northern end of Wickham Way, on the northern edge of Haywards Heath. It is bounded to the north by open countryside, and to west by the railway line. To the northeast corner of the site is the modern cul-de-sac development of Gatesmead, to the east is a further open field, and to the southeast is Sunte House and its ground and outbuildings. Sunte House is a II* listed building, and there are within its gardens a grade II listed gardener's cottage, and grade II listed garden wall. A former dairy building and toolshed set just to the north of the house would be regarded as curtilage listed, as would a range of historic former farm buildings, including a workers' cottage, set around a yard to the northeast. To the south of the site, on the opposite side of Old Wickham Lane, is Wickham Farm, a former farmstead which includes a II* listed farmhouse. The extensive gardens around the farmhouse include a number of outbuildings, possibly former farm buildings, some of which from historic map regression would appear potentially to be old enough to be regarded as curtilage listed.

Public rights of way run north-south along the eastern boundary of the site, and east-west along its southern side. The latter path runs on to the east past the southern side of Sunte House gardens.

Sunte House dates (according to the list description) to c.1700, with an 18th century service wing and further 19th century wing to the north. Based on the limited information in front of us, Sunte House would be considered to possess architectural value based on its design, construction and craftsmanship, historical illustrative value as a very good example of a country house of some pretension of its period, altered and extended in response to changing socio-economic circumstances and the needs and aspirations of successive owners, and aesthetic value. The house also has group value with the other listed and curtilage listed buildings within its grounds.

The Grade II listed gardener's cottage and wall both date from the 18th century and will be considered to possess architectural value based on their construction and craftsmanship, historical illustrative value as good examples of garden structures of their period, which may be based in part on the manner in which they reflect the design, layout and function of the house and gardens at this time, and aesthetic value. They also have group value with each other and with the house.

The curtilage listed outbuildings to the house will possess architectural value based on their construction and craftsmanship, historic illustrative value as good examples of buildings of their type and period, aesthetic value and group value with the house.

The curtilage listed former farm buildings, which include a substantial timber framed and weatherboarded barn, will possess architectural value based on their construction and craftsmanship, historical illustrative value as examples of Sussex farm buildings of their type and period, and aesthetic value based in part on the use of vernacular materials. They also have group value with the house.

The house, its outbuildings, and listed garden structures are set in extensive gardens which form their immediate setting and contribute positively to their special interests, in informing an understanding of their nature as constituent parts of a country house estate. However, the surviving rural setting of the buildings, which includes the proposed development site, also makes a strong positive contribution in this respect. Although direct intervisibility between the site and listed buildings may be limited, it makes a positive contribution to the wider context within which they are appreciated, and in particular to the approach to the Sunte House frontage along the adjacent PROWs. The footpath running across the southern side of the Sunte gardens is a continuation of those running adjacent to the site, and is the clearest public view of the house.

The curtilage listed farm buildings have a clear historical relationship of function with the surrounding rural landscape, and the continuing presence of agricultural fields in close proximity to the former farmstead makes a positive contribution to the manner in which the former use of the buildings, and their narrative, are understood. Although intervisibility between the site and the farmstead may be limited, there may be glimpsed views looking across the field to the northwest of the curtilage listed buildings, in which the new housing would be visible.

Wickham Farmhouse is a II* listed building dating from the list description from the late 16th century, with a 17th century timber framed parlour wing. The building is considered to possess architectural value based on its construction and craftsmanship, historical illustrative value as a very good example of a Sussex farmhouse of its type and period, and aesthetic value based in part on the use of vernacular materials viewed within the context of the landscape from which they were drawn. It will also have group value with any surviving former farm or outbuildings such as those which would appear to be identified by the historical map regression exercise discussed above- the submitted heritage statement is not consistent on this point, in that it mentions modern ancillary buildings, but elsewhere admits the presence of at least one 19th century building which has been subject to residential conversion. Wickham Farm is recorded in the West Sussex Historic Farmstead and Landscape Character Assessment as a historic farmstead dating from the Medieval period.

Wickham Farmhouse and the associated possible former farm buildings are set in extensive gardens which will form their immediate setting. There is relatively dense

screening to the boundaries of the gardens by fencing and planting. There are however views towards the former farmhouse looking south through the access from Old Wickham Lane, which are probably the clearest public views of the asset- this access sits opposite the southern end of the open fields of the site. Viewpoints on Old Wickham Lane and the PROW which runs along it therefore allow for an appreciation of the former farmstead in the context of a surviving agricultural setting.

The fields to the north Wickham Farmhouse which comprise the proposed development site constitute the most significant part of the surviving closer rural setting of the farmstead, which has otherwise been encroached upon by the urban sprawl of Haywards Heath. They make a strong positive contribution to the special interest of the former farmhouse and the significance of the historic farmstead, and the manner in which these are appreciated, in particular their historical illustrative and aesthetic values. This contribution is enhanced by the historical relationship of function between the site and the farmstead, which is confirmed by the submitted Heritage Statement which states that the proposed development site was formerly part of the Wickham farmlands. The site also provides an important visual link between the farmstead and the wider rural landscape to the north, which prevents the farmstead being entirely surrounded by suburban development.

The planning application, which follows on from pre-application advice, is for the construction of 49 houses on the site, including vehicular access from Gatesmead to the northeast of the site, associated infrastructure and landscaping.

Although the number of new houses envisaged has been reduced since pre-application, the footprint of the development is similar. It will have a fundamental impact on the character of the site, which will become a suburban enclave. Notwithstanding the retention of a narrow buffer strip of open land to the southern end of the site, the existing rural character of the site will be lost, and the current positive contribution to the settings and special interests of the adjacent heritage assets will be in my opinion removed and reversed. The impact will not be limited to a visual one, but will also include an increase in light levels, noise and activity, all of which will further detract from the settings of the assets.

I would not comment in any detail on layout or design considerations which will be the remit of the Council's Urban Design Officer, however I would note that, as was the case with the pre-application scheme, the proposed masterplan does not respect the existing, historic field pattern, which as existing remains legible through the position of field boundaries and tree and hedge planting. This exacerbates the negative impact on the historic rural character of the site.

The impact of the proposal will also be considered to be cumulative to other residential development to the north and south of Sunte House which has been allowed on appeal.

For these reasons I would consider that the proposal will be harmful, through impact on setting, to the special interests of the listed and curtilage listed buildings noted above. I would place this harm within the less than substantial spectrum, at the midpoint for Wickham, and at the low-mid point for Sunte House, such that the balancing exercise set out in paragraph 215 of the NPPF will apply. In carrying out this exercise, we must be mindful of the II* listing of both listed buildings, and the enhanced level of great weight which must be given to the assets' conservation under the requirements of paragraph 212.

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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