

From: Emily Wade <Emily.Wade@midsussex.gov.uk>
Sent: 16 January 2025 15:45:29 UTC+00:00
To: "Rachel Richardson" <Rachel.Richardson@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: Stumble Ridge, Oldlands Avenue, Balcombe DM/24/2770

Hi Rachel

Comments on the above planning application.

Stumble Ridge is an unlisted modern (c.2012) detached house, replacing a previously existing smaller 20th century dwelling, which is located to the southern side of Oldlands Avenue within the Balcombe Conservation Area, although the southern end of the extensive rear gardens are outside the Area but within its setting. There is not an adopted character appraisal for the Balcombe Conservation Area, but I would consider its significance to lie in its nature as the heart of a rural Sussex village which has developed over many centuries in close contact with the surrounding countryside. The Council's document 'Conservation Areas in Mid Sussex' contains a brief high level analysis of the key features of the Area, which include

- ‘ the large detached houses, set predominantly in spacious gardens, and the extensive grass verges bordering wide roads which contribute to the overall open character of the residential area of Stockcroft Road, Deanland Road and Oldlands Avenue;... and*
- the attractive views of rolling countryside.’*

The surviving rural setting of the Conservation Area, which directly abuts the Area to parts of its northern, eastern and southern boundaries, therefore makes a strong positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Area. The development to the south of Oldlands Avenue within the Conservation Area backs directly onto open countryside, including the application site.

Planning permission was granted in 2020 for the conversion of an existing outbuilding within the rear garden of Stumble Ridge (and the Conservation Area) to use as a holiday let. The current proposal is for the demolition of the existing holiday let building and its replacement with a new detached dwelling. Access would be via an existing trackway to the west of Stumble Ridge, with a new opening formed in the adjacent hedgerow to access the rear gardens. The proposal also includes associated re-grading of the land, and hard and soft landscaping.

The existing holiday let building is not of any particular architectural merit and makes at best a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Its demolition is therefore not considered contentious in principle.

The principle of a new dwelling within the rear gardens to Stumble Ridge is however in my opinion contentious. Notwithstanding Stumblemead, which is a cul-de-sac development immediately to the east of the application site (and outside the Conservation Area), the well-established pattern of development along this southern side of Oldlands, within the Conservation Area, is of a single depth of houses, with no precedent for backland development of the type now proposed. The majority of development to the east, within the setting of the Area, is also of this nature. The proposal is therefore contrary to the established grain of development within this part of the Conservation Area and its setting.

Furthermore, the scale of the proposed dwelling is such that it will detract from the currently largely open and verdant character of this part of the rear garden to Stumble Ridge. This southern part of the garden to the property seems to have been annexed from the field to this

side of Oldlands Avenue relatively recently, and retains a semi-rural character which contributes positively to the Conservation Area and its setting. This again will detract from the significance of the Conservation Area. The associated hardstanding area, notwithstanding that it is shown as grass grid system, will exacerbate the impact on the character of the Area, as will any work to upgrade the access track from Oldlands Avenue.

I note the point made in the submitted Heritage Statement regarding the discrete and relatively well screened nature of the site, however there are views obtainable from adjoining properties and from the allotments to the rear (south) of Stumblemead. Private, and semi-public views will also be considered to contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

For these reasons in my opinion the proposal will detract from the character and appearance of the Balcombe Conservation Area. This will be contrary to the requirements of District Plan Policy DP35. In terms of the NPPF, the proposal will result in less than substantial harm to the Conservation Area, at the lower end of that scale, such that the balancing exercise set out in paragraph 215 will apply.

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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