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REPORT

Planning & Heritage Statement

Removal of existing garage and erection of self-build detached house

The Croft
Fairlight Farm
Holtye Road
East Grinstead
RH19 3QF

Site Location & Description

The application site currently comprises a detached garage building and garden land serving an existing detached house (The Croft). The site is located approximately 500 south of Holtye Road, and accessed via a south bound access track that serves a relatively tight-knit group of houses, and agricultural buildings.

There is a footpath from the southern end of the lane, providing pedestrian access to East Grinstead at a distance of approximately 400m.

This physical context can be seen in the following aerial image:



The house at the southern end of the lane (Fairlight Farmhouse) is a Grade II Listed Building. The full listing description is included as follows:

Details

1. 1068 HOLTYE ROAD

Fairlight Farmhouse TQ 43 NW 4/3 28.1.48.

II

2. L-shaped, substantial farm-house, partly half-timbered, partly tile-hung. Of varying dates from late C16 onwards. Nearly all windows modern.

Listing NGR: TQ4103238818

The application site falls beyond any defined settlement boundary and is therefore within the countryside for the purposes of planning policy. It is also within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Description of Proposal

The application proposes the removal of the detached garage that exists on site, and replacement with a new build detached house. The new house would be sited alongside The Croft, broadly following the established building lines to front and rear.

The new house adopts a contemporary design approach, but with distinct influences from the traditional agricultural vernacular. The dwelling is formed of two main 'blocks', each with a steeply pitched roof, and a central valley in between. The rear elevation would be predominantly glazed and possess an eaves overhang with exposed rafters. Otherwise, the house would be faced in a grey brick with a slate roof.

The proposed house is a self-build project, and will become the applicant's home.

Planning Policy Context

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 dictates that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the policies of the relevant development plan documents, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The development plan for the area currently comprises the Mid Sussex Local Plan, which was adopted in March 2018. Another important material consideration is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the latest iteration of which was published in December 2023. It is important to note that the NPPF post-dates the Local Plan by some 5 years.

A key measure in this respect will be the character of the site and, importantly, the surrounding context. To this end, it is clear that the character of the immediate vicinity is predominantly defined by large, detached housing.

The National Planning Policy Framework advises, at Paragraph 63, that:

'Within this context of establishing need, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies. These groups should include (but are not limited to) those who require affordable housing; families with children; older people (including those who require retirement housing, housing-with-care and care homes); students; people with disabilities; service families; travellers; people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes.'

Footnote 29 advises that:

'Under section 1 of the Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015, local authorities are required to keep a register of those seeking to acquire serviced plots in the area for their own self-build and custom house building. They are also subject to duties under sections 2 and 2A of the Act to have regard to this and to give enough suitable development permissions to meet the identified demand'.

Paragraph 70 states that:

Small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, and are often built-out relatively quickly.

As already indicated, this is a self-build project. The latest Government guidance on the matter is set out in the National Planning Practice Guidance. This requires that all councils maintain a register of people interested in self-build in their area; and that they have to grant planning permission for sufficient self-build plots to meet that demand. The most relevant sections of the Planning Practice Guidance are set out below:

'Relevant authorities must count entries on the register towards the number of suitable serviced plots that they must grant development permission for.'

'Relevant authorities must give suitable development permission to enough suitable serviced plots of land to meet the demand for self-build and custom housebuilding in their area. The level of demand is established by reference to the number of entries added to an authority's register during a base period.'

'Can authorities become exempt from the 'duty as regards registers'?

No. Authorities must have regard to their register when carrying out their planning, housing, land disposal and regeneration functions. There is no exemption from this duty.'

As it stands, there are 28 individuals on the Mid Sussex Self-Build Register. This includes the applicant in this case. The relevant summary from the self-build register is included as follows:

Analysis of MSDC's Self & Custom Build Register of Interest as at 30th October 2023			
No. and type of applicants		Totals for each part of the register	
Individuals	28	Part 1 (evidenced local connection)	24
Association of individuals	0	Part 2	4
Total:	28	Total:	28

According to the self-build register there currently exists planning permission for 3 self-build dwellings across the entirety of the District. The relevant summary from the self-build register is included as follows:

Description	Site	Planning reference
3 x serviced plots for custom/self build (on a development site with outline consent for 43 residential dwellings)	Land to the East of High Beech Lane / Land North of Barrington Close, Lindfield	DM/17/2271 

The self-build component of housing need must be addressed, having regard to Government guidance on the issue.

In terms of heritage assets (in this case the nearby Listed Building), Paragraph 200 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that:

In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

Paragraph 208 of the National Planning Policy Framework further advises that:

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

At a more local level, Policies DP12 and DP15 of the Mid Sussex Local Plan 2018 are relevant.

Policy DP12 states that the countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty. Development will be permitted in the countryside provided that it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District, and:

1. It is necessary for the purposes of agriculture; or
2. It is supported by a specific policy reference either elsewhere in the Plan, a Development Plan Document or relevant Neighbourhood Plan.

Policy DP15 advises that new homes in the countryside will be permitted where special justification exists.

Supporting information

As outlined in the policy appraisal included above, it is a requirement that councils facilitate the delivery of self-build housing. The requirement to permit self-build housing is not stated to be limited to sites within settlement boundaries (i.e. the policy is supportive of self-build housing, whether urban or rural).

The need for, and lack of supply of self-build housing is a 'special justification' for new homes in the countryside, as required by Policy DP15.

In this respect, the proposal must be judged against the three pillars of sustainability, as set out in the NPPF, and summarised below:

1. Economic Objective – The development of a self-build dwelling will provide employment opportunities during the construction phase. Moreover, post completion, and once occupied, the dwelling will add to the vitality and viability of the immediate area, by providing trade for local businesses.
2. Social Objective – The provision of a self-build dwelling will make a modest (but valuable) contribution towards addressing local housing needs (particularly for self-build), increasing the range of options available to those in search of dwelling stock in the area.
3. Environmental Objective – The application site is comprised of engineered, made ground, and a detached garage building, within the curtilage of an existing dwelling. It possesses very few genuine environmental qualities. Conversely, sustainability will be one of the design drivers for this scheme. As part of this proposal, the development will deliver a highly insulated modern building providing a comfortable environment to enjoy all year round, without the need for excessive heating or

cooling. Additionally, it will incorporate a range of sustainable technologies to reduce carbon footprint.

In terms of locational sustainability, there are facilities and public transport links within easy walking distance of the site, which ensure that the occupants of the new dwelling would not be overly reliant on the use of private motor vehicles.

Moreover, in terms of principle (and as indicated above) the Planning Practice Guidance states that:

'Relevant authorities must give suitable development permission to enough suitable serviced plots of land to meet the demand for self-build and custom housebuilding in their area. The level of demand is established by reference to the number of entries added to an authority's register during a base period.'

As it stands, there are 28 individuals on the Mid Sussex Self-Build Register. This includes the applicant in this case. The self-build component of housing need must be addressed, having regard to Government guidance on the issue.

In terms of principle, the proposal represents sustainable development, and delivers a form of housing that the Council are required to facilitate the delivery of (but where there currently remains a significant shortfall).

In light of the foregoing, it is respectfully suggested that consideration of this application should focus upon matters of detail. In particular, the following matters are key:

1. Design, form and visual impact;
2. Heritage;
3. Highway safety and convenience; and
4. Residential amenity.

These matters shall be addressed in turn as follows:

Design – The proposal represents a genuine opportunity for meaningful betterment in terms of design and visual impact. In short, the house now proposed represents a significant improvement in design terms over the existing garage building on site. It is of a very high architectural standard, reflecting the best of rural design and form, and it will be a considerable improvement in these terms on the status quo.

Heritage - In terms of the heritage asset, a proposal to replace an existing outbuilding, with a new building of more appropriate design and form, does nothing to impact upon the architectural and historic importance outlined in the full listing description included above.

In fact, the opportunity to remove the existing garage, and to replace it with a new house of greater quality, architectural form, and detail, would enhance the setting of the Listed Building.

The proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, through removal of a less appropriate structure and replacement with new built form more befitting the setting of the Listed Building. The public benefits of the proposal are those same material improvements to the setting of the Listed Building, together with the provision of a self-build dwelling for there is an identified need, but shortfall in the provision of.

Highways – There is an existing garage on the application site and the lane providing access already serves as access for a number of other dwellings. The provision of one additional dwelling in this context will not generate a material increase in vehicular movements. The proposal will have no impact in terms of highways safety and convenience.

Residential Amenity – There are agricultural buildings to the immediate north of the application site. The property to the west is separated from the application site by the lane along the frontage. There are no properties to the east. Immediately to the south of the application site is the detached house called The Croft. The proposed house is single storey in height at the point where it addresses the common boundary with The Croft. This ensures that there will be no material loss of light. The only windows above ground floor level in the southern elevation are rooflights in a vaulted ceiling over the ground floor kitchen area. There will, in consequence, be no loss of privacy. The proposal will not have a material impact upon residential amenity.

For the reasons explored above, it is clear that the proposal is compliant with planning policy, and that it is acceptable in all other respects. As such, it is hoped that a grant of planning permission will be forthcoming in due course.