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Sent: 04 September 2026 16:28:43 UTC+01:00
To: "Katherine Williams" <Katherine.Williams@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: DM/26/0802 Havelock Farm

Hi Katherine

Please find below comments on the above planning application. My apologies for the delay in getting these to you, which has been caused by pressure of other work.

Havelock Farm is located in a rural position to the north of Ardingly. It is the historic farmstead previously associated with the adjacent Wakehurst Farmhouse (now in different ownership)- together these formed the estate farm to Wakehurst Place, a Grade I listed mansion located a short distance to the south east. The buildings are not listed, but are regarded as non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs). The mansion together with its 18th century former stable block, which is Grade II* listed, are set within the extensive Wakehurst Place registered park and garden (RPG), which is now managed by Royal Botanic Gardens Kew. The farmstead is not within the RPG, but is within its immediate setting.

Planning permission was recently granted for the demolition and redevelopment of the more modern former farm buildings to the west side of the historic farmstead to provide a new conservation and research nursery for the gardens, with associated hard and soft landscaping (DM/22/1774); this permission was amended in its detail by subsequent applications. This new development will wrap around the retained historic farm buildings to their west and north.

The current proposal, which follows on from pre-application advice, relates to the proposed refurbishment and conversion of part of the retained historic farm buildings, for use as ancillary office space. The buildings, which are set around a courtyard, a range of stables to the south, a two storey east range, and the bothy which is attached to the northern end of the east range. The proposed external and internal works associated with the conversion include:

External works:

- Stripping and recovering of the roofs to the buildings in question, re-using the existing tiles to the bothy/east range, and using new tiles to the south range;
- Adjustments to the rooflines to the buildings to account for the addition of insulation and battens above the rafters;
- Installation of new rainwater goods throughout;
- Installation of new photovoltaic panels to the south facing roof;
- Installation of new double-glazed windows and doors throughout with the exception of the existing Bothy timber windows and the south facing windows of the south range, which are to be retrofitted with double glazing.
- Raised external doorheads and thresholds.

- Existing bricked up openings reopened.
- Existing openings bricked up in southern range to the northern elevation and western gable end.
- New raised timber decks and steps to access internal floor levels.
- Raised entrance level and eaves to the lobby to the eastern side of the bothy; and
- A new external plant area.

Internal works:

- New openings through dividing walls.
- Removal of agricultural features.
- New insulated plaster to walls and insulated concrete slab to floors.
- New steel beams and façade posts; and
- Repairs to timber trusses where possible.

To consider these works in turn:

External works:

- The recovering of the roofs to the buildings is not considered contentious in principle, subject to detail of the new tile.
- The slight amendment to the rooflines of the buildings is not considered contentious subject to detail of any necessary alterations to the eaves, and of the detail of the relationship of the insulation to the structure of the roof, where this is currently exposed internally. The placement of insulation externally to the frame of the roof is welcomed in principle, as this should in theory allow the frame to remain visible internally. Ideally, where the framing to the roof is currently visible internally and is of character, insulation would be set between and/or above the rafters, rather than covering them, to allow the framing to remain visible. However where the underside of the roof was previously boarded, as appears to have been the case for example within the southern stable range, insulation could be installed above reinstated timber boarding. This information could be reserved by condition.
- **The proposed new rainwater goods do not appear to be specified on the submitted elevations. We would expect painted metal- this could be required by condition.**
- The proposed new PV panels to the south facing roof of the south range are shown as an extensive installation covering the great majority of this roofslope. Although no detail of the panels themselves is given, the impact of this work on the character of the farmstead in views from the RPG is likely to be quite marked, as the traditional roof covering will be largely obscured by the panels. In my opinion, this will have an adverse impact on both the significance of the NDHA and, through impact on setting, on the special interest of the RPG. Given the extent of the Havelock Farm buildings and the surrounding development by the applicant, an alternative, less visually prominent location for these panels should be sought.
- Whilst the retention of the existing timber windows to the bothy and to the south elevation of the south range, with double glazing fitted, is welcomed, subject to

detail, the design of the proposed replacement and new windows and doors shown elsewhere to both buildings is considered unacceptable. These buildings, despite some later unsympathetic alterations including the introduction of some unsympathetic windows and doors, retain for the most part a traditional, agricultural character- the northern part of the bothy had historically a dual, partly residential use, which is also reflected in its appearance. It is in this character that the significance of the historic farmstead as an NDHA lies. The proposed introduction throughout of windows and doors of an overtly contemporary, domestic style and appearance detracts from this character, and requires reconsideration to preserve or ideally enhance the significance of the NDHA. I would refer the applicant to the relevant Historic England guidance on adaptive re-use of traditional agricultural buildings, links below, which has useful examples of best practice in this respect. The importance of a sympathetic approach to this aspect of the scheme was highlighted in the Council's pre-application advice.

- The proposal to raise a number of external doorheads and thresholds is somewhat unfortunate, as it would be best practice to work within the existing openings. However, the alterations proposed in this respect are relatively minor and on balance are not considered contentious subject to detail.
- The re-opening of previously present openings is not considered contentious in principle, subject to detail.
- With respect to the bricking up of openings, I would suggest that where these are original, or reflect the former agricultural use of the stables building (e.g. the wide doorway to the gable end) these would be better retained, and glazed, or doors fitted, in an appropriate style. This may be linked to a more sympathetic, contextual approach to the new fenestration and doors throughout the development- rather than using an off-the-shelf aluminium door and adjusting the opening to fit, it will be more appropriate to source or have made a door which reflects the scale of the opening and the character of the building.
- The new raised timber decks and steps are not considered contentious, subject to detail which could be reserved by condition. These works will be easily reversible, and an obviously modern intervention to the courtyard area which (subject to detail of the design) should sit relatively comfortably alongside the existing buildings.
- The works to the bothy lobby affect what appears to be a modern porch addition to the original building. They will have a relatively minor impact on the appearance of the building and are not considered contentious subject to detail.
- The new external plant area is shown to the western end of the southern stable range. The height of the enclosure is shown as sitting below the boundary wall between the farmstead and the RPG, and as such the installation should not have a material impact on the setting of this asset. No detail appears to have been provided of the appearance of the enclosure- this would be required by condition to ensure that appropriate materials are used and the impact on the character of the farmstead is also acceptable. It will be helpful if it can be confirmed that the existing cobbled surface to this area can be retained.

Internal works:

- With respect to the proposed new openings through dividing walls, and removal of '*redundant agricultural elements*', it was noted at pre-application stage that the wholesale removal of plan form and features which speak of the past agricultural use of the buildings, such as stall dividers and feeding troughs, would be extremely regrettable and should be avoided. This is of particular relevance within the southern stable range, where more of the historic plan form and features survive, and where the arrangement of loose boxes and part height stall partitions still clearly reflects the intended purpose of the building. Unfortunately, the current proposal appears to do very little to attempt to work within the existing plan form, instead suggesting the almost complete removal of the partitioning to the loose boxes, and the total loss of the part height stall partitions. In addition, only one of the surviving feeding troughs is retained. This would result in an almost total loss of character to the interior of the building, and would have a significantly adverse impact on the manner in which the narrative of the NDHA remains appreciable.

This is particularly regrettable as there seems to be no good reason why more could not be done to retain plan form and features. For example, to the eastern end of the building, where loose boxes are present, rather than almost entirely removing the partitions between them, flat arched openings could be created within the retained partitions, creating connectivity and an 'open plan' feeling to the space, but providing a much clearer indication of the characteristically cellular plan form of the original layout. The surviving feeding troughs could be retained and accommodated in the scheme without any significant loss of floor space.

Within the western part of the stables, where part height partitions are present, there appears to be no sound reason why these could not be retained in their entirety and the office layout adapted to sit between or around them- an essentially open plan layout is already present in this space, and would be retained by such an arrangement, which would also retain its historic character and narrative. The need for a plant room to the western end of the building, in addition to the external plant area, is not clear.

It also appears from the submitted structural report (4.3) that the removal of partitioning including the stall dividers will adversely affect the structural stability of the building and necessitate invasive structural works. Furthermore, the replacement of elements of the roof structure is proposed, including new timber trusses to the eastern range of the building, alongside doubling up of member elsewhere. It is not clear whether this work is fully justified, bearing in mind the historic nature of the building.

This aspect of the proposal is at present in my opinion unacceptable, and requires reconsideration with a more conservative approach to plan form and fabric.

Within the east range and bothy extensive internal works have already taken place, so that little of the early plan form remains evident. The works to plan form in this area are not therefore considered contentious, although the submitted structural survey indicated extensive works including the replacement of the floor structure, and mentions the removal of the lower portion of the chimney. This work does not seem to be reflected in the submitted plans- can the applicant please clarify, and provide further justification for this loss of fabric?

- The proposed new insulated internal plaster and concrete slab throughout will result in some loss of character where original finishes such as exposed brickwork or flooring are present. However, it is accepted that insulation must be introduced, and in this particular context there is unlikely to be a way in which this can be achieved without a degree of harm. On balance, this aspect of the proposal is not considered contentious, subject to detail.
- The proposed new steel beams and façade posts are shown within the western part of the south range only, in order to stabilise the façade. Further information on this work, including a justification for it and detailed drawings of the works involved, and their relationship with the existing fabric will be required for informed comment – see above.
- The repair of existing timber trusses is not considered contentious, subject to detail. Can the applicant please clarify what is proposed where this is not possible? We would expect historic fabric which is beyond repair to be replaced like-for-like – see also above.

I note that the submitted DAS suggests the works to consolidate office space within the buildings at Havelock Farm should allow for parts of the Grade I listed mansion house to be freed up to *'support and enrich the wider visitor experience'*, and for the removal of temporary portacabins which are currently within the gardens. Whilst both of these aspects might arguably be considered to attract some benefit in heritage terms, as these works do not form part of the current proposal, it is not possible to afford them any significant weight in the consideration of the application before us.

In summary, while the principle of the conversion is considered acceptable, aspects of the proposed external and internal works, notably the proposed windows and doors, solar PV array, and works to the internal plan form and features of the southern stable range, are contentious as shown, and require reconsideration, to ensure that the requirements of the new NPPF at HE4- HE6 and paragraph HE7.2 are met.

Links to the relevant Historic England guidance, as referred to above:

[Adapting Traditional Farm Buildings - Best Practice Guidelines for Adaptive Reuse | Historic England](#)

[The Adaptive Reuse of Traditional Farm Buildings - Historic England Advice Note 9 | Historic England](#)

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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