

From: Emily Wade <Emily.Wade@midsussex.gov.uk>
Sent: 13 February 2026 11:49:14 UTC+00:00
To: "Hamish Evans" <Hamish.Evans@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: DM/25/1708 and 1709 - Sunte House, farmyard application

Hi Hamish

Further comments on the above application following the receipt of revised plans. My apologies for the delay in getting these to you, which has been caused by pressure of other work.

My previous response to the proposal raised a number of concerns regarding the proposed works to the barn and farmyard buildings. These original comments are attached below and for ease I will add further comments regarding the manner in which the revised applications have addressed the concerns raised **in red**.

In summary, although significant positive steps have been made concerns remain, which include issues also raised by Historic England, which require further amendment and/or clarification.

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.

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



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From: Emily Wade

Sent: 10 October 2025 12:45

To: Hamish Evans <Hamish.Evans@midsussex.gov.uk>

Subject: DM/25/1708 and 1709 - Sunte House, farmyard application

Hi Hamish

Comments on the above applications.

Sunte House is a substantial Grade II* listed house located in a semi-rural position towards the northern edge of Haywards Heath. From the heritage statement it is understood that the earliest parts of the building were constructed in the late 17th or early 18th century, apparently replacing an earlier house on the site. The house was extended substantially to the north west around the mid 19th century; a further phase of extensive alteration occurred in the late 20th century, when internal alterations were made at ground floor within the later 19th century extension, and at first floor throughout the building.

The kitchen and formal gardens around the house, as well as the southern approach and circular driveway appear to date from the mid 19th century. The gardens contain a further two Grade II listed structures, an 18th century gardener's cottage and 18th century garden wall located a short distance to the north east of the house. There are also a trio of detached 19th century outbuildings directly to the north of the house known as the dairy, toolshed and garage, which would be regarded as curtilage listed, and contribute positively to the setting of the house.

The setting of the house also includes the former home farmstead of the estate, located to the north east of the house and adjacent to the above mentioned separately listed wall and gardener's bothy. The farmyard includes a large timber framed, weatherboarded barn dating originally from the late 17th- early/mid 18th century, which would appear to have been altered and/or partly rebuilt during the 1980s, a late 18th/early 19th century stables and cowshed, and a mid 19th century byre. A mid 19th century cottage forms the north west corner of the yard. These buildings are regarded as curtilage listed, and have group value with Sunte House and the Grade II listed garden buildings, contributing positively to their setting.

Sunte House would be considered to possess architectural interest based on its design, construction and craftsmanship, historical illustrative as a very good example of a late 17th/early 18th century country house of some pretension, altered and extended in response to changing socio-economic circumstances and the needs and desires of successive owners, historical associative value in connection with one of its 20th century residents, the noted anthropologist and writer Geoffrey Gorer (1905-1958), and

aesthetic value. It also, as above, has group value with the listed structures within the garden, curtilage listed domestic buildings around the house, and the curtilage listed historic farmstead to the north-east.

The farm buildings within the farmyard, although altered, will possess architectural interest based on their construction and craftsmanship, historical illustrative value as examples of buildings of their type and period, and aesthetic value based in part on the use of vernacular materials viewed within the landscape from which they were drawn. They also possess group value with the house and associated ancillary garden and domestic outbuildings.

The current application follows on from pre-application advice. It relates to the curtilage listed farm courtyard and staff cottage, however it should be noted, that concurrent applications have been submitted in relation to works to the house itself and associated ancillary domestic building, and that in some ways the impact of the proposals on the setting and special interests of the listed house and garden structures, and the various curtilage listed buildings may be cumulative.

With respect to the barn, the proposal has been further amended following on from the most recent pre-application advice to reduce the scale of the rooflights, which are now considered on balance acceptable. However, the form of the extension to the southern end of the building does not seem to have been revised, and the objections previously raised in this respect, namely that the extension to the existing roof form obscures the original and characteristic form of the building, remains pertinent. I would again advise that this is reconsidered. Given that a first floor is not now proposed to this end of the building, the roof level to the extension could be lowered to sit above the ground floor, retaining the original roof form and providing a clearly differentiated and subservient lower roof structure to the addition.

The extension has been revised to lower the roof to a single storey. This is welcomed as it allows the existing main roof form to the barn to remain unaltered and completely legible, and renders the addition appropriately subservient to the building. However I note that Historic England have raised concerns, which I would agree with, in relation to the design and materiality of the revised extension: *'the large extent of glazing creates an out-of-keeping, domestic appearance to this important former farm building, while the use of a zinc clad roof, intended to distinguish the contemporary intervention, does not sympathetically relate to it.'* This aspect of the proposal therefore requires further consideration.

I note that as raised at pre-application the proposed western elevation of the barn does not seem to accord with the internal sectional elevation in terms of the height and detail of the barn door opening, including the glazed transom. This requires clarification- we would expect the original form of the opening to be respected and historic fabric including framing above the doors to be retained. Is the glazed transom to be overlaid externally to the retained frame, as suggested in the submitted DAS? If so, a sectional drawing should be provided to illustrate this. If this is the case, I would also question

why the framing to the transom appears to be horizontally subdivided whereas the members of the historical timber framing are principally vertically set out. The DAS suggests louvres, however vertically arranged openable glazing should be considered if ventilation is required. The framing to an external light sitting over the retained timber frame should be minimal, and any necessary subdivision to the glazing should reflect the position and vertical emphasis of the timber frame again which it will be seen.

This aspect of the proposal has been amended and is now considered acceptable, subject to detail which could be reserved by condition.

Can the applicant also please provide an external elevation of the west side of the barn with the barn doors shown open, to illustrate the appearance of the glazed infill to the doors in this context? As it stands, I have some concerns that the offset position of the glazed door within this infill may not relate well to the symmetry of the overlying timber doors.

Further information has been provided regarding the design of the glazed doors, which is acceptable subject to detail which could be reserved by condition.

With respect to the new openings between the main barn and the western catslide (DG03.1 and DG06.1), as well as the new openings in the southern end wall at ground and first floors, the Heritage Statement received with the current application notes that the material to be removed constitutes re-used historic timbers. As such, although the evidential value of the material may be, as suggested, diminished, it still holds a level of historical interest which should be respected in the design of the current proposal. Loss of such material should be avoided where possible. For example, rather than the formation of two new openings in the original western elevation of the barn to access the western catslide where it is proposed to create a kitchen and separate cloakroom/WCs, a single opening could be made, with access internally within the catslide between the new rooms created therein. In addition, with respect to the openings to the southern end wall, removal of fabric is shown on the proposed first floor plan drawing which appears unnecessary as the barn is not to be floored at this level to this end of the building. This should be removed from the scheme.

Further information provided demonstrates that the western elevation of the main barn at ground floor, where the catslide attaches, is constructed of modern blockwork. The new openings in this position are therefore not considered contentious. The revised sectional drawing 'Barn Proposed Sections' appears to show the existing fabric at 'first floor' level to the barn's southern elevation is now retained, however it would be helpful if the applicant could confirm that this is the case, and that any removal of fabric is now confined to the lower level required to create access at ground floor level into the proposed extension. I would also suggest that to minimise the loss of historic fabric at this level the openings to either side of the retained central post at ground floor could be reduced. An internal elevation would be helpful to demonstrate both points.

As it stands, the works to the barn while in some respects acceptable require in other respects amendment and/or further information to ensure that the special interest of this curtilage listed structure and the contribution which it makes to the setting of Sunte House are preserved. In particular, the form of the extension to the building should, as previously advised, be reconsidered, a point which I note is also made by Historic England in their response to the proposal.

Although the proposal with respect to the barn has moved forward with positive amendments to the extension and other works, further revisions are necessary to fully address the Council's and Historic England's concerns, and to preserve the fabric and character of the building.

The proposal also affects the remaining buildings within the former farmyard, and the staff cottage. Historic England have made a number of comments and suggestions in respect of this application with which I would agree. In particular, it is also my opinion that the proposed elevational treatment of the buildings, whilst a step in the right direction, does not do enough to preserve the agricultural character of the buildings, or to reflect their former uses. Notwithstanding that the buildings are much altered, these 'ad hoc' changes can reflect a typical approach to updating of ancillary agricultural buildings over time, as the needs of a farmstead evolve, and 'tidying up' or comprehensively sweeping away these later changes can detract from their character. For example, the re-use of existing openings instead of removing these in favour of new doors and windows can help to retain a building's character, even where these may be later introductions. These issues were raised at pre-application stage, and remain pertinent now.

The proposal has been further revised to reduce the size of some of the proposed new openings to the courtyard facing elevations of the farmyard buildings, and to amend the cladding/facing material and detailing to other areas including the west elevation of the cowshed and the north elevation of the byre. The proposed slate roof to the stables has also been revised to show reclaimed clay tile.

Whilst aspects of these revisions are welcomed, notably the use of clay tile to the stables roof, and the reduction in the amount of glazing to the courtyard elevations of the buildings is noted, I remain of the opinion that the proposal does not do enough to retain the agricultural character of the buildings. This should include the re-use of existing window and door openings in favour of introducing new ones. The scheme continues to attempt a comprehensive 'tidying up' and rationalisation of the elevations which detracts from their character, which as previously noted relies partly on later alterations and a 'make do and mend' approach which is typical of the later evolution of historic farmsteads. In my opinion, this aspect of the proposal continues to require reconsideration to address these issues, which have been raised consistently from pre-application stage.

The submitted DAS includes mention of the method of insulation of the roofs to the affected buildings within the farmyard. This information raises a number of issues:

- W.r.t. the byre, the insulation is shown sitting between and under the rafters, so that it would appear that the entire structure of the roof would be concealed internally. This will adversely affect the character of the building. Can the applicant please provide a justification for this strategy? If the reasoning is to avoid raising the height of the roof and its junction with the adjacent listed garden wall, can the implications of an alternative strategy to place the insulation partly between and partly above the rafters and trusses, allowing at least part of the timbers to remain visible internally, be clearly set out so that an informed decision as to the preferable approach can be reached?

Presumably, insulation to roof and walls of the byre is not required within the spaces marked for use as plant room, garden store and mower store? Can the applicant please confirm?

If an acceptable method of insulation to the space marked as changing room, shower and WC cannot be established it may be preferable for these to be relocated within the adjacent cowshed, with an appropriate reduction in the size of the gym space.

- W.r.t the cowshed and stables, the information provided is contradictory, with one annotation stating '*STABLES AND COW-SHED: warm roof with insulation above and below rafter and partially exposed timber rafters*' whilst the annotation to the sectional detail states the insulation will be above and between the rafters. This requires clarification.
- W.r.t. the barn, the proposal appears to be for insulation above, beneath and below the rafters, so that the timber framing would again be largely if not entirely concealed (there is no mention of the principal trusses). This will have an unacceptable impact on the character of the building internally, and requires reconsideration so that the insulation is reduced in depth and/or relocated to a position solely between and above the rafters, so that a reasonable depth of each timber remains exposed internally.
- Care should be taken that all drawings and annotations, including the full sections of the buildings in question, are accurate and consistent in terms of the treatment of the frame internally and demonstrate that the framing will remain exposed.

Revised and further information regarding the method of insulation to the farmyard buildings and barn, which appears generally acceptable in its approach, subject to detail which could be reserved by condition. I would however be grateful for clarification on a couple of points:

- The application continues to refer to the primary members of the structural frame to the roofs and/or walls of these buildings. I would take this to mean trusses, principle rafters and wall posts but not secondary rafters and wall studs. For clarity, can the applicant please confirm that in all cases the secondary rafters

and wall studs (where present, for example to the barn) will also remain exposed to view.

- Can the applicant please confirm the intention with respect to the roof above the proposed plant room? Drawing no. 302 P02 shows that spaces G18 and G19 (Potting Shed and Equipment Store) within the byre will be uninsulated, but the adjacent plant room G03 is not mentioned, although the roof is depicted similarly on the drawing.
- Can the applicant please provide typical existing and proposed eaves details for each building which illustrate any impact arising from the raising in height of the roof ridge and how this will be addressed.

We do not appear to have a similar level of detail provided with respect to the walls to the buildings concerned. This also requires explanation- where framing is present, this should again remain exposed. With respect to the listed wall against which the byre is set, a detailed proposal will be required which also considers the potential impact on the fabric of this wall of installing an internal lining against it. How can we be assured that there will be no adverse impact from this work in terms of breathability or other issues?

This information has been provided with respect to the solid walls and is acceptable, subject to detail which could be reserved by condition. See above w.r.t. the timber framed walls.

The application drawings in general (i.e. across the farmyard) mention the retention of primary timber frames, structural elements and original trusses should be protected, refurbished, retained or reinstated, as well as potential replacement of structural steels and timbers, and general repairs. The submitted structural report also indicates that repairs, sometimes quite extensive, will be required to the former farm buildings. Further information on the nature and extent of these works will be required- this should include as appropriate frame drawings, a schedule of works and method statements, including details of materials to be used, to ensure that the impact on the historic fabric of the buildings is acceptable. Although this greater level of detail could potentially be required by condition, I would at this point like clarification as to the wording of this aspect of the proposal in that it implies that secondary or minor elements of the frame etc. may not be retained. All historic fabric should however be kept wherever its condition allows.

I do not think unless I have missed something that we have received this clarification, which should be provided. Again, primary frame members and structural elements are mentioned.

With respect to the proposed solar PV panels, although this was raised at pre-application stage they still do not appear to be shown in detail on the proposed elevational drawings. Notwithstanding this I would agree with the concerns raised by HE to this aspect of the proposal.

This element has been withdrawn from the scheme, which addresses this concern.

In summary, although amendments have been made in some respects to the scheme seen at pre-application stage, significant areas of concern do remain which require addressing by further reconsideration of these aspects of the scheme. In addition, further information is required in some respects. As it stands, the proposal would not be considered to preserve the special interest of the curtilage listed buildings within the farmstead, or their contribution to the settings of Sunte House and the associated listed structures. This would fail to meet the requirements of District Plan Policy DP34. In terms of the NPPF, I would place the harm caused as less than substantial, such that the balancing exercise set out in paragraph 215 will apply.

Thanks,

Emily

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Planning Services
Tel: +44 (0)1444 477385
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