

Mid Sussex District Council Planning Services

Conservation Officer Comments

Application number: DM/26/1228

Site address: Land west of London Rd, Handcross

Description of Development: Outline planning application (with all matters reserved except for access) for the erection of up to 55 dwellings, including affordable homes, together with green and blue infrastructure, vehicular access from London Road, pedestrian/cycle access from London Road, the provision of utility services structures and the demolition of an existing agricultural building.

Date: 21/09/2026

Location and description of site:

The application site is a field to the west of London Road on the northern edge of Hassocks village. It is bounded to the east by the cut of the A23, with fields and woodland beyond. To the west of London Rd are the grounds of Handcross Park School. A small lodge building (Hyde Lodge) is located adjacent to the northeast of the site.

Potentially affected heritage asset(s), their significance, contribution made by setting to this, and contribution if any made by site.

Designated heritage assets:

1) Nashlands Farm

Grade II listed 17th C or earlier farmhouse and associated historic farmstead of 19th C curtilage listed farm buildings.

Architectural interest based on construction and craftsmanship, historical illustrative value as good example of Sussex farmhouse of its period, aesthetic value based in part on use of vernacular materials. Farm buildings likely similar as buildings of their type and period. Group value.

Rural setting, which contributes positively to historical illustrative and aesthetic interest.

Site c.340m away on opposite side of A road, but contributes to rural character of approach to the farmstead from London Road, provides separation from Hassocks village. There is a historical relationship of function with the farmstead as the site formed part of the farmlands attached to it.

2) The Hyde

Grade II listed c.1835 country house, with associated estate buildings, likely to be regarded as curtilage listed (or failing this as NDHAs -see Hyde Lodge below).

Architectural value based on design, construction and craftsmanship, historical illustrative value as early 19th century country house at centre of estate, aesthetic value, group value with estate buildings including Hyde Lodge. Estate buildings similar values as buildings of their type and period.

Historically isolated position, parkland and wider rural setting contribute positively to historical illustrative and aesthetic interest.

Site 1.5km away, but flanks the entrance to the historic approach to the estate from London Road, as evidenced by the presence of the lodge house. This demonstrates a historical relationship of function. Site therefore makes modest positive contribution to wider setting of the listed building and associated estate buildings.

Non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs):

Levels of significance identified refer to historical or architectural interest within the local Mid Sussex context.

1) Hyde Lodge

Early 20th century lodge house associated with the Hyde estate (see above). An attractive building in an Arts and Crafts style, retaining period features. Mid-level of interest, due to association with the Hyde estate; primary public-facing building of this group, which indicates the presence of the wider estate to the east.

Rural and wider parkland setting contributes to significance as part of a historic country estate. Site forms close and prominent part of the rural setting of the building and provides separation from the northwards spread of Hassocks village.

2) Handcross Park and West Lodge

Historic estate to the east side of London Road, opposite the site. The house, now in use as a school, appears to have been once resited, and twice wholly or partially rebuilt since the mid 19th century, most recently during the mid 20th century, and may be of relatively little interest in itself. However, a walled garden area with a central fountain survives to the northeast which is contemporaneous with the earliest of the three houses shown on historic mapping. This is likely to be of more interest, as is the range of former ancillary buildings now known as College Close, which also date from the mid 19th century or earlier – this range is recorded in the West Sussex HER as a

historic farmstead. In addition, a lodge house (West Lodge) survives on the London Road frontage to the southeast of the site. This dates from the late 19th century (1882 datestone), and is an attractive building in a prominent location. Associated gate posts, gates and railings form part of a group with this building and are also of interest (gates and railings possibly replaced). As with Hyde Lodge, the building and associated entrance signals the presence of the Handcross Park Estate to the east of the road. The surviving parkland itself may also be considered of interest as a historic landscape. Assemblage of mid-level of interest in the local context.

Rural setting contributes positively to the significance of the former estate buildings and parkland as components of a country estate. Site forms part of the close setting of the estate and in particular contributes to the nature of the historic secondary approach into the estate along the access now known as College Close (opposite the site) and along London Rd from the north towards the West Lodge.

3) Hoadlands Cottages

Short terrace of 3 late 19th or early 20th century cottages on the site of an earlier building of the same name. Arts and Crafts style, retaining period features including crest-bearing shields to twin gables. Of a low-mid level of interest. Possibly constructed as estate cottages (based on location and inclusion of the heraldic shields), in a rural setting to the north of the village.

Surviving rural setting contributes positively to significance as country/estate cottages. The site is directly adjacent to the north and a significant part of that setting.

Other buildings identified in the submitted Heritage Statement as NDHAs include Handcross Primary School and 9 and 10 London Road. In my opinion, the school has been so altered and extended that it would not merit consideration as an NDHA. 9 and 10 London Road are an attractive semi-detached pair but relatively late in date and in my opinion again of insufficient interest to be regarded as NDHAs.

Impact of proposed development on the nature of the site:

Site will lose its historic rural character and become suburbanised, as a further northwards extension of Hassocks village. Alongside the visual impact of the new built form and associated hard and soft landscaping, there will be an increase in noise and activity across the site.

Impact on affected assets:

Relevant Policy Context:

NPPF policy HE6.2 states that development proposals which would have a positive effect on a designated heritage asset should be supported.

In all cases, where harm to a designated asset is identified which falls within the spectrum below substantial harm or total loss of significance, the balancing exercise set out in paragraph HE6.4 of the NPPF will apply.

In undertaking this exercise, which is a matter for the Case Officer, it should be noted that the new NPPF requires that substantial weight should be given to an asset's conservation (HE6.1), and that any harm to a designated asset shall be of considerable importance and weight (HE6.3).

Paragraphs HE4.1 and HE4.2 will also be relevant. HE4.1 requires that development proposals should avoid or minimise harm to the significance of heritage assets, and instead conserve this significance. HE4.2 requires that any harm to, or loss of significance of a heritage asset should have a clear and convincing justification.

Paragraphs HE6.5 and HE6.6 relate to development proposals resulting in substantial harm to or total loss of the significance of a heritage asset, and state that consent should be refused unless it can be demonstrated that the harm is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits outweighing the harm or loss, or all of a number of criteria apply. Substantial harm to or loss of a Grade II listed building or RPG should be exceptional, and of a grade II or I listed building or RPG wholly exceptional.*

Paragraphs HE9.1 - .3 relate to Conservation Areas, and require that development proposals within or affecting the significance of Conservation Areas should retain and conserve buildings and other features which make a contribution to the character and appearance of the area where possible, and should consider the area's special interest in the design of the development. Proposals which conserve those elements of a conservation area that make a positive contribution to the area, or better reveal its significance, should be supported.

Where NDHAs are affected, paragraph HE7.1 requires that development proposals having a positive effect on an NDHA should be supported. Paragraph HE7.2 requires that where a development proposal would harm the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, this should be weighed against the benefits of the proposal and a balanced judgement made, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the non-designated heritage asset. Paragraph HE7.3 requires that where a development proposal would cause substantial harm to, or the total loss of, the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, it should only be supported where the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefits of the proposal, having regard to the scale of the harm or loss and the significance of the non-designated heritage asset.

The Council has adopted policies within the District Plan relating to heritage assets. (DP34 (Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets), DP35 (Conservation Areas) and

DP36 (Historic Parks and Gardens)). However, in the context of the new NPPF these policies can be afforded only limited weight.

General comments:

The proposed development will do away with the existing historic rural character of the site in favour of a suburban extension of Hassocks village. This will remove and reverse the positive contribution made by the site to the settings of the assets identified above. The level of harm to the significance of these assets will vary, depending on factors including proximity, intervisibility, and historical relationship of function. This harm is set out by asset below, according to the terminology required by the NPPF.

Designated assets:

Nashlands Farm- a low-mid level of harm

The Hyde – a very low level of harm

NDHAs:

Hyde Lodge- a mid-high level of harm to an NDHA of a mid-level of interest in the local context.

Handcross Park estate, including West Lodge – a low-mid level of harm to an assets of a mid level of interest in the local context.

Hoadlands Cottages- a mid-high level of harm to an asset of a low-mid level of interest in the local context.

Suggested mitigation.

Where harm arises, this will be necessary to meet the requirements of NPPF paragraph HE4.1, should the application be on balance positively viewed.

Significantly more robust native species planting (trees and hedging) along northern boundary of site, to screen views from approach to listed buildings. Strengthening of planting to the southern and eastern boundaries should also be considered as appropriate. Design of new vehicle entrance should minimise views from London Road towards the built form within the site.