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Sent: 11 December 2025 11:31:57 UTC+00:00
To: "Katherine Williams" <Katherine.Williams@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: Warninglid Primary School DM/25/2473

Hi Katherine

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.

The proposed development site, Warninglid Primary School, is a vacant school building located in a rural position just to the north of Warninglid. The school, which was opened in 1878, is a good example of a typical Victorian village school building. Its original form and features remain clearly perceptible despite unsympathetic modern additions. The building has group value with the former school master's house, which is adjacent to the north- this building has clearly been altered and extended, but appears to retain the historic house at its core.

In my opinion, as was discussed at pre-application stage, the school building merits consideration as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA) for the following reason:

- The age and architectural character of the building, as a good example within the local context of a typical Victorian village school, which retains numerous original features;
- The communal value within the local context of the building as a focus of village life for over 140 years; and
- Potential group value with the adjacent former school master's house.

The school is set within grounds which include hard surfaced play areas as well as a school field to the south. These grounds contribute positively to the setting of the building and to an understanding of its significance as set out above. The wider rural setting all around the building also contributes to the manner in which its character as a village school is appreciated.

There are also a number of designated assets within the vicinity of the site:

- Old Park House, Slaugham Lane.

This is a Grade II listed former farmhouse, later country house, located a short distance to the north east of the site. The building dates from the 17th century or earlier, but has substantial later additions made during the 19th and 20th centuries which relate to its transition from a farmhouse to a country house of some pretension. The former farmstead appears from historical map regression to have been located to the north east of the house, and has been lost. Several ancillary structures dating from the its development into a country residence during the 19th century survive, however, including a walled garden to the west of the house, and a kennels building to the north. These would be regarded as curtilage listed.

Old Park House is likely to be considered to possess architectural value based on its design, construction and craftsmanship, historical illustrative value as a good example of a 17th century or earlier Sussex farmhouse, altered and extended in response to changing socio-economic circumstances to form a country residence, and aesthetic value based in part on the use of vernacular materials viewed within the landscape from

which they were drawn. It also has group value with the curtilage listed structures within its grounds.

The house is set within extensive landscaped grounds which are an important part of its setting, and which contribute positively to an understanding of its special interest as set out above, in particular those parts of that special interest which are drawn from historical illustrative and aesthetic values. The wider rural landscape within which the listed building is set is also important in this respect.

The site forms part of this wider setting. There is direct intervisibility between the grounds of the house, including the curtilage listed walled garden, and the site, and it also contributes to the character of the approach to the listed building along Slaugham Lane, and to the context within which the house is appreciated from the public right of way (PROW) which runs north eastwards from Slaugham Lane past the eastern side of the site, at a remove of a couple of fields, and then directly past the eastern side of Old Park House and its grounds. In this respect, it is the rural character of the site as a historic village school in verdant grounds which makes a modest positive contribution through setting to the special interest of the listed and curtilage listed buildings at Old Park.

- Warninglid Conservation Area

Warninglid Conservation Area is centred on the historic core of the village, running southwards along The Street from its junction with Slaugham Lane, Cuckfield Lane and Warninglid Lane. Although there is not an adopted appraisal for the Area, the Council's document '*Conservation Areas in Mid Sussex*' contains a brief high level analysis of its key features. In my opinion, the significance of the Area lies fundamentally in its nature as the centre of a Sussex village which has grown up over many centuries in close connection with the surrounding countryside. As such, the surviving rural setting which is to all sides of the Area (albeit in some cases with a small amount of intervening modern development) will be considered to make a strong positive contribution to the significance of the Area and how this is appreciated.

The proposed development site lies within the rural setting to the north of the village and Conservation Area. Although there is a little distance between them, as we noted during our visit the intervening topography means that there is intervisibility between the village edge and the school grounds- the extent to which the Area itself is visible, or has views towards the site, would require further consideration as part of any further development of the scheme in terms of the potential impact of development on the site on the rural character of the Area's setting.

I would consider that the site makes a modest positive contribution, through setting, to the significance of Warninglid Conservation Area which lies primarily in its nature as the heart of a rural Sussex village which has grown up over many centuries in close connection with the surrounding countryside. The rural character of the former village school, and its historical and communal interest which is strongly connected with Warninglid village life, will make a positive contribution in this respect. Although direct intervisibility, if demonstrated, will enhance this contribution, it is also drawn from the impact of the site on the character of the wider approach to the Conservation Area along Slaugham Lane.

The current proposal, which follows on from pre-application advice, is for alterations to the existing school building to convert it to two four bedroom dwellings, with associated alterations and extensions, and single garages with attached car ports, alongside the construction of two new dwellings with attached garages within the grounds to the south of the building.

Firstly, I note that the submitted Heritage Statement does not consider the impact on the designated heritage assets mentioned above. An appropriately detailed Heritage Statement is a validation requirement, so this should be addressed by a revised and expanded, or addendum document.

With respect to the change of use, subject to your agreement as Case Officer, I would assume that we accept that an educational use is no longer viable on the site. In this context, the residential conversion of the school building is not considered contentious in principle in heritage terms, as this has the potential to provide a beneficial long-term use for the NDHA.

However, notwithstanding the revisions which have been made to the scheme following pre-application advice, I have concerns regarding the scale, form and detail of aspects of the proposal both in terms of the works to the existing building and the new build:

- In respect of the proposed works to the school building, in my opinion, notwithstanding the existing 20th century additions, the location and scale of the proposed new extensions to the south west of the original school building (including Bedroom 1, the garage and car port) result in these being unduly visually prominent in the context of the NDHA, partially obscuring views of the school from the adjacent road. I would recommend that the scale of the extensions to this southern side of the building is reduced, and that any necessary additional bulk is largely relocated to the rear (east) side of the site, away from the road frontage.
- Aspects of the detailed design of the alterations and additions to the existing school are also of concern in my opinion, including the extensive use of zinc fascias and roofing, and a lack of uniformity to the treatment of the fenestration. Whilst I can understand the intention to differentiate between new and old work, care should be taken that the new work does not overwhelm the original and sits comfortably alongside it. A complementary palette of materials will contribute to this. The juxtaposition of deep zinc fascias with tiled roofs also appears awkward, and although I would not necessarily disagree with the use of simplified fenestration to the extensions, rather than a facsimile of the original, there appears to be no consistency in window style.
- In respect of the new build development to the south of the school, at pre-application stage a reduction of the proposal to a single new dwelling was advised. Although there has been a reduction in the number of new units proposed the scale of the two houses now shown is increased, so that overall there has not been the reduction in site coverage which was required to reduce to an acceptable level the impact on the verdant character of this part of the site and the positive contribution it makes to the settings of the NDHA and of the above mentioned designated heritage assets. The number and scale of new dwellings also remains such that they appear overprominent within the setting of the school building. The impact on the existing character of the site is exacerbated by the landscaping works associated with the two new houses, including new or altered accesses, driveways, parking and other hard surfaced areas.

- At pre-application it was suggested that a contemporary approach to the design of the new dwelling might be appropriate, however as shown the new houses do not relate well to the context. The largely symmetrical elevational treatment, prominent gables with double height box bay windows, and attached garages have a formal, urban character which seems inappropriate for this rural site- as an identical pair this urban character is exacerbated. I would suggest alongside a reduction in number to one house, that a reduction in apparent scale by detachment of the garage, and a less formal, asymmetrical façade treatment should be adopted.

As it stands, in my opinion the proposal is contentious in terms of both its direct impact on the school building, and its indirect impact on the setting of the NDHA. It also raises concerns in relation to the impact on the settings of Old Park and the Warninglid Conservation Area. This is contrary to the requirements of District Plan Policies DP34 (Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets) and DP35 (Conservation Areas).

Design Principle DG53 of the Council's adopted Design Guide will also be relevant- this states that '*The primary objective of all conversions of traditional buildings must be to retain the character and appearance of the original building, and its defining architectural characteristics... Large extensions or ancillary buildings are sometimes less appropriate for conversions particularly if they dominate or detract from the character or setting of the original building and so detract from its character.*' In my opinion, the proposal currently fails to meet the requirements of this Principle.

In terms of the NPPF paragraph 216, I would suggest that the proposal as submitted results in a mid level of harm to an NDHA of a mid-high level of interest within the local context. In relation to paragraph 215 it also results in a low level of less than substantial harm, through impact on setting, to the designated heritage assets discussed above (this assessment may be refined following the submission of a more detailed heritage statement).

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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