

From: Emily Wade <Emily.Wade@midsussex.gov.uk>
Sent: 01 October 2026 16:17:45 UTC+01:00
To: "Catherine Cardin" <Catherine.Cardin@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: Birch House, London Road, Balcombe DM/26/2151

Hi Catherine

Comments on the above planning application.

The application site, Birch House, is one half of a handed semi-detached pair of late 19th/early 20th century villas located to the eastern side of London Road within the Balcombe Conservation Area. Although altered and extended, including by a substantial rear extension to Birch House, planning permission for which was granted in 2016, the pair retain their essential symmetry, in particular to the front elevation, and a number of period features. They made a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, which is enhanced by their group value with other house along this part of London Road which are of a similar period and style.

The current proposal, which was not preceded by pre-application advice, is for a loft conversion including a substantial rear roof extension in the form of a timber clad box dormer sitting across the principle rear roof slope and extending in a L shape down the side roof slope of the original rear wing, as well as three rooflights to the front roof slope.

Although the principle of a loft conversion may not be contentious, the proposal as shown raises significant concerns in respect of the impact on the character and appearance of Birch House, the villa pair of which it is part, and the wider Conservation Area.

- The principle of a box dormer to the rear of the house is in my opinion contentious, as this will not be in keeping with the period, character or architectural style of the host building.

As shown, the L shaped dormer would be significantly over scaled within the relevant roof slopes, would unbalance the rear elevation of the property, would be overly prominent in views of the house from the rear and from the side in partial views from London Road to the north, and would be unsympathetic in its form, design and materials to the host building.

The adverse impact of the scale of the proposal is exacerbated by the existing ground floor rear addition; cumulatively these two additions would appear overwhelming in their scale relative to the original building.

As well as the unacceptable impact this would have on the character and appearance of Birch House, it would also unbalance the original, designed symmetry which the building enjoys with its attached neighbour.

The detailed design of the proposal, including in particular the fenestration, is also not sympathetic to the original house, and in the case of the proposed French windows with side lights and Juliette balcony, further exacerbates the undue visual prominence of the addition.

The impact of the proposal is also exacerbated by the fact that views towards the rear of the building are likely to be more widely obtainable than may be the case in other circumstances due to the rising level of the land behind the house, so that properties on Bramble Hill and Haywards Heath Road (also within the Conservation Area) are likely to have views looking down onto and across the site.

For these reasons, the dormer would detract from the character and appearance of the Balcombe Conservation Area.

- Although the principle of one or possibly two modestly sized rooflights to the front roof slope may be acceptable, the three rooflights as shown are in my opinion excessive and would be unduly prominent within the front roofslope, further detracting from the appearance of the house, the symmetry of the attached pair, and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

For these reasons, the proposal is considered to detract from the character and appearance of the Balcombe Conservation Area. In terms of the new NPPF, I would place the harm as sitting within the mid range of the scale below that of substantial harm or total loss of significance. The balancing exercise set out in paragraph HE6.4 will apply.

In undertaking this exercise, which is a matter for the Case Officer, it should be noted that the 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.

The proposal is also contrary to the requirements of District Plan Policy DP35.

It is also contrary to the requirements of the Council's adopted Design Guide, in particular the following Design Principles:

- Design Principle DG49 (General Principles for Extensions) which requires that extensions should normally be designed to be well-integrated with the existing scale, form and massing allowing the original building to remain the dominant element of the property whether it has one or several additions, and that

extensions should typically complement and coordinate with the scale, form and massing of the original dwelling.

- Design Principle DG52 (Loft conversions and roof extensions) which states that dormer windows which are out of scale or out of character with the roofscape and proportions of a dwelling can have an adverse impact on the character of both the dwelling and the streetscape. *'The roof pitch and form are intrinsic to a building's character and roof extensions should be sensitive to this. Roof extensions and dormer windows that alter the existing ridge of the roof or significantly alter the roof profile of a building will not normally be acceptable.'*
- The proposal is also contrary to paragraphs 6.3.5 – 6.3.8 of the Guide, which relate to dormer design, and state that dormer windows should be visually subordinate to the roof slope, enabling a large proportion of the main roof to remain visible, that they should not be excessively wide, and that they should be set below the ridge line.

I would recommend that the application should be refused (if it is not withdrawn) and that the applicant should be advised to approach us for pre-application advice prior to the submission of any alternative scheme.

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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