

From: Emily Wade <Emily.Wade@midsussex.gov.uk>
Sent: 08 May 2025 14:42:40 UTC+01:00
To: "Anna Tidey" <anna.tidey@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: Blackbirds, Bramble Hill, Balcombe DM/25/0873

Hi Anna

Comments on the above planning application.

The application site, Blackbirds, is a detached modern house located within the Balcombe Conservation Area, built as an infill development between a run of mostly early 20th century houses to this western side of Bramble Hill. To the opposite side of the road is Victory Hall, the Grade II listed village hall, formerly the working men's club, which dates from c. 1901. The existing house on the site is intended to refer stylistically to the flanking early 20th century buildings, but is not a particularly successful composition, and makes at best a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of the Victory Hall.

The current proposal, which follows on from pre-application advice, is for various alterations and extensions to the property including:

- Replacement of an existing open sided porch and covered walkway to the southern side of the building with an enclosed porch under a pitched tiled roof and enclosed lean to addition.
- Introduction of a new window to the front facing gable at second floor;
- Replacement of an existing rear single storey element with a flat roofed extension on an enlarged footprint;
- Enlargement of the existing dormer to the main rear roofslope;
- Replacement of tile hanging at first floor to all elevations with render; and
- A new window to the northern side elevation.

To consider these works in turn:

- The replacement porch lean-to addition to the southern side of the building are not considered contentious, subject to detail. As was discussed in relation to a more ambitious scheme seen at pre-app, although the slight increase in bulk will result in some impact on the existing visual gap between the house and the adjacent Victory Hall, this is not considered detrimental to the street scene.
- The principle of a new window at second floor to the front gable was also discussed at pre-application and is not considered contentious. However, as shown the window does not appear sympathetic to the existing fenestration in its proportions or glazing pattern. A smaller opening, with a window to reflect those to the elevation below would be more positively viewed.
- The principle of the replacement of the existing rear extension along the lines now applied for was considered at pre-application and found to be acceptable. However, the current proposal is for an addition wider than the main rear elevation to the house- this will not be acceptable, as the extension does not appear appropriately subordinate to the host building, and with the proposed side extension wraps around the south western corner of the house. The sideways extent of the addition should be reduced to sit within the existing width of the main house, excluding the side extension now proposed. The

facing material to the extension would also benefit from amendment to brickwork to match the remainder of the house at ground floor.

- The existing dormer to the rear of the building is in my opinion already overscaled, and detracts from the appearance of the house. The pre-application proposal was for the removal of this feature in favour of two smaller dormers, which was considered to be an improvement over the existing situation. It is regrettable that the current application is instead for the enlargement of the existing window, which would exacerbate its negative impact on the appearance of the building and detract from its contribution to the wider Conservation Area. This aspect of the proposal is therefore considered contentious.
- The proposal to remove the existing tile hanging to the first floor of the building in favour of render was considered at pre-application stage and found to be acceptable subject to detail on the basis that it reflects the palette of materials to other existing buildings along Bramble Hill.
- The new window to the side elevation is not considered contentious, subject to detail.
- As a general point, the use of uPVC is noted on the plans, e.g. to the external door to the new side extension. uPVC is not a material which is generally considered acceptable in a conservation area context, unless it is present throughout the existing building. This should be amended to painted timber or possibly metal, as appropriate.

In summary, although the majority of the proposals forming part of the application are acceptable in principle, amendments are required in some respects. The enlargement of the rear dormer is not acceptable, and should be omitted from the scheme.

As it stands, the proposal is for the reasons given above considered to detract from the character and appearance of the house and of the wider Conservation Area contrary to the requirements of District Plan Policy DP35. The proposal is also contrary to the requirements of the Council's adopted Design Guide, specifically Design Principle DG49 (General Principles for Extensions) and paras. 6.3.5- 6.3.8 which relate to dormer windows. In terms of the NPPF, the proposal will result in less than substantial harm to the Conservation Area, so that the balancing exercise set out in paragraph 215 will apply.

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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