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Sent: 10 October 2025 12:45:05 UTC+01:00
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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 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.

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?

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.

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.

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

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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