

From: Emily Wade <Emily.Wade@midsussex.gov.uk>
Sent: 15 December 2025 15:19:18 UTC+00:00
To: "Andy Watt" <Andy.Watt@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: DM/25/2616 Land at HPP College

Hi Andy

Comments on the above planning application.

The proposed development site is an area of undeveloped land to the east side of Malthouse Lane, which now forms part of the campus attached to Hurstpierpoint College. The main school buildings, including the Grade II listed quadrangle and Star House, are located a short distance to the south west. Immediately to the east and south of the site are existing buildings forming part of the school- Ruckford House, which is a mid 19th century building now converted for school use, and Ruckford Three, which dates from the later part of that century. These buildings and the proposed development site are now surrounded by school playing fields.

Based on the information in front of us, the listed school buildings are likely to be considered to possess architectural value based on their design, construction and craftsmanship, as well as illustrative value as good examples of purpose built school buildings of the period, and aesthetic value. The open and verdant setting around the main campus, including the school playing fields and the wider rural setting, contributes positively to an understanding of the narrative of the school as a community presumably deliberately established within a bucolic context, and with a degree of separation from both Hurstpierpoint and Burgess Hill.

A short distance to north, separated from the site by a playing field, are a group of buildings associated with the former Ruckford Mill, a 19th century water powered corn mill which is Grade II listed. These include Ruckford Mill Farmhouse, which is an 18th century building and also Grade II listed. The farmhouse is now divided into two properties. There are a number of other buildings grouped around the former mill, some of which are likely to be regarded as curtilage listed, or otherwise as non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs), including a small barn to the south east of the mill itself, a pair of former mill cottages (Ruckford Cottage and Mill Cottage), and a further cottage (Rose Cottage) to the south and south west, all of which appear from historical map regression to date from the 19th century or earlier, and all of which have group value with the listed buildings. There are also a small number of more modern dwellings to the east and west of the mill grouping sharing the same access from Malthouse Lane.

There is a public right of way (PROW) which runs eastwards from Malthouse Lane along the mill access, before continuing southeast skirting the school playing fields. There are views from this path both of mill group and looking southwards towards the application site.

The various heritage assets at Ruckford Mill are likely to be considered to possess architectural interest based on the design, construction and craftsmanship of the buildings, and in the case of the Mill on the design and engineering of any surviving parts of the mill workings, historical illustrative value as good examples of a 19th century corn mill (and possibly farmstead) with associated dwellings and outbuildings, which will have operated in close connection with the surrounding farmlands, and aesthetic value based in part on the use of vernacular materials viewed within the landscape from which they were drawn. The group will also possess a degree of communal value for the way in which the mill when operational will have formed a focus of activity for the local farming community.

The existing setting of the mill group includes significantly the mill stream, which contributes strongly to the narrative of the buildings as a former working watermill, and also a wider setting of woods and farmland to the north and east, and the school's playing fields directly to the south. The surviving agricultural character of parts of the setting of the heritage assets also contributes to their special interest, in particular those parts of that interest which are drawn from historical illustrative and aesthetic values, reflecting the close relationship of the buildings with the farmlands which will originally have surrounded the mill. Although the setting to the south of the mill group is now taken up by school playing fields, their open and verdant nature and the presence of trees and hedgerows around them reflects their historical purpose as part of those farmlands.

The current application, which follows on from pre-application advice, is for the construction of 4 new dwellings, with associated access improvements, parking and landscaping, to provide staff accommodation on an undeveloped plot to the west of Ruckford House, an area which was formerly part of the gardens around the house, but is now occupied by trees and bushes. The proposal shows two pairs of semi-detached houses, with access provided by improvement of the existing entrance from Malthouse Lane to the south. Parking and turning areas are shown as an extension of an existing area to the north of Ruckford House.

In my opinion, although revised following pre-application advice, the proposal continues to raise a number of concerns in terms of the impact on the settings of the above mentioned heritage assets:

- Development on this site will result in the loss of a green space which currently contributes positively to the surviving rural character of the setting of the school and mill group. Although the site is relatively small, the vegetation within it currently provides a verdant backdrop to the adjacent school playing field, and also acts to screen and soften the existing adjacent school buildings in views from Malthouse Lane and from the PROW adjacent to the mill. Despite the additional screening which is now proposed to the north of the site, the proposal will result in a small but noticeable diminution of the surviving rurality of the context within which the heritage assets are appreciated, including the approach to them along the Lane. This will result in a degree of less than substantial harm

to the special interests of the assets, as discussed above, and the manner in which they are appreciated.

- Although the design of the proposed houses has been amended since pre-application stage, and aspects such as the palette of materials do now respond sympathetically to the context, their character as two semi-detached handed pairs remains distinctly suburban. This will exacerbate the adverse effect on the surviving rural nature of the settings of the heritage assets, as will the extensive area of hardstanding which results from the extension of the parking area to this side of Ruckford House.

As a result, the proposal, notwithstanding the amendments since pre-application, is considered to result in a degree of less than substantial harm, through impact on setting, to the special interests of the nearby heritage assets. Subject to further detail of the landscaping scheme and proposed planted screening I would consider this harm to be likely to be at the lower range of that scale. The balancing exercise set out in paragraph 215 of the NPPF will therefore apply.

If on balance the application is considered acceptable, I would recommend conditions including details of hard and soft landscaping - careful consideration should be given to the hard and soft landscaping around the site, to retain and enhance appropriate planted screening in native species, and to reduce the amount of new hardstanding to a minimum, for example by the use of 'grasscrete' or similar in place of asphalt or macadam where possible.

Other conditions if applicable should include:

- Details of roofing and facing materials
- Detailed drawings at an appropriate large scale, including sections, and annotated to show materials and finishes, of the following:
 - - typical examples of windows and external doors
 - - typical eaves detail
- Rainwater goods and other external pipework to be of painted metal

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>

Emily Wade Ma MSc
Conservation Officer
Planning Services
Tel: +44 (0)1444 477385
emily.wade@midsussex.gov.uk <http://www.midsussex.gov.uk>

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