

From: Emily Wade <Emily.Wade@midsussex.gov.uk>
Sent: 06 June 2025 10:06:10 UTC+01:00
To: "Andy Watt" <Andy.Watt@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: Rowfant Mill Cottage DM/25/0294 and 0295

Hi Andy

Comments on the above planning and listed building consent applications. My apologies for the delay in getting these to you, which has been caused by pressure of other work.

The application site Rowfant Mill Cottage is a Grade II listed building dating, from the list description, from the 18th century, with extensions dating from the 19th and 20th centuries. The Cottage is part of a group with Rowfant Mill, an 18th century water mill located just to the south west which is also Grade II listed. The mill pond, weir and stream survive adjacent to the buildings. The mill group are located in a rural position outside Crawley Down.

Whilst we do not have a detailed heritage statement based on a historic building survey in front of us, the original form of the Cottage appears to have been of a two storey, one room deep building, with a rear outshot under a catslide roof which contained the stairs to the first floor and to a cellar. The building was extended during the later 19th century by an addition to the north eastern elevation under a lean-to roof, with further additions during the 20th century of a flat roofed kitchen extension to the northern corner of the building, and a porch and conservatory to the rear.

There is an outbuilding in the rear garden of the Cottage which appears to date from the 19th or early 20th century, with an attached, slightly later, external WC. Although this building is currently in a poor condition, it contributes to the narrative of the site and in my opinion contributes positively to the setting of the listed building. It would be regarded as curtilage listed.

A further, larger outbuilding referred to as the barn is located to the south west of the house. This also appears to date from the late 19th century, and although its use is not entirely clear the surviving historic brick flooring which includes a drain suggests stabling of some kind, possibly with a hay loft over. Whilst it is also unclear whether the use of the building was associated more with the Mill or the Cottage (or indeed both if these were as I would suspect part of the functional whole), it would be regarded as curtilage listed. It contributes positively to the setting of the Cottage, and of the Mill.

There is also a well within the rear garden of the Cottage, between the house and the above mentioned outbuilding and WC. At present we have no information on the date or level of interest of this structure, but it is presumed to be of some age. As for the outbuilding, its presence and continuing legibility are likely to contribute positively to the narrative of the site and the special interest of the Cottage.

The current proposal follows on from pre-application advice, and is for a variety of works to the house and to the larger outbuilding. These include:

- Demolition of the existing rear conservatory and porch additions to the house and construction of a flat-roofed addition;
- Associated alterations to openings to the rear and side of the building;
- Internally, blocking of an existing doorway at ground floor, and installation of a bath on a raised platform within the existing bathroom at first floor;
- Conversion of the barn to create a playroom with shower room and mezzanine, with associated internal and external alterations.

Firstly, I would note that this application lacks an appropriately detailed heritage statement, which is unfortunate particularly on the back of the advice given at pre-application. The brief statement submitted, which is part of the DAS, is not adequately detailed and contains, for example, no proper analysis of the impact of the proposal on this historic plan form and fabric of the house or barn (bearing in mind that the barn is curtilage listed). This lack of a proper analysis of the special interest of the existing structures may be one reason why aspects of the current proposal are unsympathetic or lacking detail (see below). I would recommend that this is addressed with the assistance of an appropriately qualified and experienced historic building professional, ideally an architect with experience of conservation work who could also assist with the suggested revisions to the scheme.

To consider the proposed works in turn:

- As established at pre-application stage, the existing rear conservatory and porch are modern structures which are not of special interest, and their removal and sympathetic replacement is not considered contentious in principle.

At this stage, it was advised that given the modest footprint of the original building, any substantial addition would be likely to prove overbearing in its relationship of scale to the historic core of the Cottage, particularly bearing in mind the existing 20th century kitchen addition which it is proposed to retain. In response to this advice, the depth and width of the proposed replacement extension have been reduced, which also ensures the retention of the well externally to the building. On balance, given the existing additions to the rear, the footprint of the proposed addition as submitted is considered acceptable.

The flat roofed form of the extension is also not, in this context, considered inappropriate, in that it reduces the impact on the characteristic catslide roof to the rear of the Cottage, although I would suggest (repeating advice given at pre-application stage) that the height of the extension should be set down so that the flat roof sits below the level of the existing eaves.

The detailed design of the proposed extension is also contentious, and requires significant amendment. As shown, the unsympathetic design of the addition, including the form and proportions of the fenestration and the heavy fascia board, fails to relate appropriately to the context and detracts from the appearance of the building. It was suggested at pre-application stage that a light weight, substantially glazed treatment would be the preferred approach, to minimise the apparent bulk of the addition and to allow the original form of the building to be better revealed. The form and proportions of the fenestration, and choice of materials, should reflect the architectural character of the existing building and the rural context.

- In conjunction with this, the impact on the existing historic fabric and openings to the rear of the building should be reconsidered, to ensure that fabric and features of interest are

retained (if internalised). With a lighter weight elevational treatment, this would also aid in allowing the historic form of the building to continue to be appreciated, even in external views. The above mentioned more detailed analysis of the significance of the existing building, including its fabric and features, should feed into the revised scheme in this respect.

- The proposed internal alterations at ground and first floor are relatively minor, and are not considered contentious subject to detail, including of any new or altered pipe runs associated with the new bath, which should not cut through or otherwise damage historic fabric, including flooring and joists. Further detail of this aspect could usefully be included with a revised scheme.
- It is proposed to convert the barn outbuilding to provide ancillary residential accommodation. There would not be any in principle objection to the conversion, which has the potential to provide a beneficial long term use for the building, but as noted at pre-application stage this would be subject to detail, including how the building would be insulated without undue adverse impact on the internal character and fabric of the building. I would prefer to see detailed drawings of the proposal to insulate walls, floor and ceiling at this point, as it will be fundamental to the acceptability of the scheme that this can be achieved without undue impact on the building's character. This was a point also raised at pre-application stage.

This would include the impact on the surviving stable flooring, which contributes positively to the narrative of the building and should be retained, ideally exposed to view- the proposed plans suggest the flooring is to be retained but covered, but no detail has been given. We would need to see detailed drawings, including sections, to show the proposed floating floor.

The proposed conversion includes other internal and external works, comprising the installation of partitioning and a mezzanine internally, and alterations to the fenestration externally including creation of a new opening to the rear elevation to accommodate French windows with side lights, and blocking of an existing doorway to the south western elevation. In general, these works are not considered contentious, subject to detail, however I would suggest that the existing side door which it is proposed to infill should instead be retained fixed shut and covered over internally. This advice was given at pre-application stage, but is not reflected in the proposed plans now before us, which therefore require amendment. I would also like to see existing and proposed sectional drawings to show the mezzanine and stairs.

Given the contents of the structural report it would also be useful to have a commentary on how the construction of the mezzanine and stairs, and introduction of insulation to walls and roof, will be accomplished without placing additional structural loading on the brick walls of the building (ref. 4.2.6).

In summary, although the principle of the works is generally acceptable, amendments and further information are required to ensure that the special interest of the Cottage, and the setting and significance of the adjacent Mill, are preserved, and that the proposal meets the requirements of District Plan Policy DP34 and the relevant paragraphs of the NPPF.

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>



No ID? You can apply for free voter ID
Find out more at
electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID
or call 0800 328 0280