

From: Emily Wade <Emily.Wade@midsussex.gov.uk>
Sent: 15 May 2026 15:59:22 UTC+01:00
To: "Andy Watt" <Andy.Watt@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: DM/25/2716 Wickenden Manor

Hi Andy

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

Wickenden Manor is a substantial early 20th century former country house situated in an isolated rural position outside the village of Sharpthorne. It is a very attractive Arts and Crafts building of good architectural quality, which retains many period features externally, and was once owned by the Astors, who also owned Hever Castle. The house is set in a landscaped garden retaining terraces, garden buildings and a walled kitchen garden. A lodge house survives to the north, and a range of stables to the southwest. For these reasons, Wickenden Manor is regarded as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA), of special architectural and historical interest within the Mid Sussex context.

The house is now operated by the Netherhall Educational Trust as retreat centre.

Planning permission was granted in 2021 for works including a three storey extension to provide further accommodation, meeting rooms and kitchen, extension and change of use of the stables to create further accommodation, erection of a conservatory extension to the lodge, a new hard surface basketball and tennis court and installation of solar panel arrays within the walled garden. This approval was amended by a further application in 2024.

The current proposal is for further amendments to the permission, which is extant. These relate to the scale, form and detailed design of the extension to the western end of the Manor house, the detailed design of the extension to the lodge, and the detailed design of the works to the stables.

With respect to the works to the house, the revised extension is in comparison with the approved scheme significantly reduced in its terms of overall footprint and bulk. However, the element attaching to the western end of the house itself is more substantial, and the set back from the architecturally significant garden elevation is reduced. It is arguably in these respects less subservient in its relationship with the existing building than the approval. I also consider that the intersection between the new and existing roof forms to the western end of the existing house to the garden elevation is somewhat awkward. However, on balance, in the context of the existing approval I would not raise an objection to the revised form of the house extension on these grounds.

The architectural treatment of the revised extension is similar to the approved, being a pared back, contemporary interpretation of the Arts and Crafts style of the existing house. This is considered a sympathetic approach in principle, in that it relates appropriately to the context whilst also differentiating new from old. Details would be required by appropriate pre-commencement conditions, as with the approved scheme.

With respect to the lodge, the form and detailed design of the proposed extension have been amended from the approved lightweight glazed structure to a more solid brick-built infill addition of a greater footprint. This would be set off the existing building elevations by a linear roofline set below eaves level. Notwithstanding the offset, the greater scale and revised form and materiality of the extension are considered contentious, in that the extension is as a result overscaled, unduly prominent, and fails to appropriately preserve an appreciation of the existing characteristic U-shaped form of the building. Furthermore, the detailed design of the extension is not sympathetic to the host building. These changes are in my opinion retrograde, particularly given the discussions which took place during the course of the approved application, and this aspect of the proposal requires reconsideration to ensure that the character of the lodge, and its group value with the manor house, are respected.

The proposal for the lodge house now also includes replacing the existing windows with high performance timber casement windows of a different design to the existing, omitting the leading. Although the existing windows are uPVC, and their replacement with timber units is not considered contentious in principle (and would in fact likely to be considered an enhancement in terms of the framing material), the loss of the leading (which I would assume has been included in the uPVC windows to replicate the original design) is an unfortunate loss of character, and should be reconsidered. The proposed external insulation to the building is also a concern in terms of its impact on the detailing of the eaves and window and door reveals- further information including existing and proposed sections should be provided as part of this application, to demonstrate that these aspects of the building will not be adversely affected, as well as information on the nature and finished appearance of the insulation itself. The deep eaves are particularly characteristic and should be preserved. It would be helpful if the applicant could also provide a justification as to why the insulation cannot be fitted internally, which is often regarded as a better alternative in the context of historic buildings.

With respect to the works to the stables, although we have not been provided with demolition plans, from the annotation on the proposed elevations, and from comments in the submitted DAS, it would appear that the proposal is now to demolish and rebuild the existing structure, rather than to retain and extend it. Therefore, although the proposed form and elevational treatment of the building remain similar to the approval, the potential loss of the existing fabric and attendant loss of character is a concern, notwithstanding the stated intention to re-use the existing bricks. The buildings date from the mid 20th century, and although of less age and considerably less architectural interest than the manor house, do have some group value with it, and contribute to an understanding of the evolution of the estate and its functioning over time. Can the

applicant therefore please provide a) clarification of the extent of demolition and rebuilding which is proposed and b) a justification for this work?

In terms of the wider works within the setting of the manor house, the solar array within the walled garden area appears to be similar to the approved scheme, albeit reduced in scale. This is not considered contentious, subject to detail. I do however have concerns relating to the proposal to introduce parking adjacent to the driveway to the west of the walled garden- this is a relatively prominent location adjacent to the principal approach to the house, and in proximity to the garden frontage of the building. The introduction of vehicle parking in this area is likely to adversely affect the garden setting of the NDHA, including views and vistas in which the architecturally significant garden frontage of the house is appreciated, as well as the character of the approach to the building along the driveway. I would recommend that this aspect of the proposal is rethought and any necessary additional parking re-sited in a less prominent position to the rear of the building, perhaps as part of the area which is demarcated for priests' parking, which has been freed up by the reduction in the size of the extension to the house.

In summary, although on balance I would not object to the amendments to the extension to Wickenden Manor itself, subject to detail, I have concerns regarding the enlargement and change of design to the addition to the Lodge House, which run contrary to discussions held during the course of the previous applications, and which will in my opinion detract from the character of this building. Aspects of the additional works to the lodge, including the replacement windows and the external insulation, also require reconsideration or further justification. With respect to the stables, the extent of the proposed demolition may be a concern and requires clarification and justification. The placement of proposed new parking within the landscaped setting to the south of the NDHA is problematic and requires amendment.

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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