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Sent: 22 September 2025 12:00:56 UTC+01:00
To: "Joanne Fisher" <Joanne.Fisher@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: DM/25/1023 Crabbet Park Equestrian Centre

Hi Jo

Comments on the above planning application.

The proposed development site consists of a former site office, sheds and yard forming part of a series of stable yards and other ancillary buildings located to the south of Crabbet Park, which is a substantial former country house and estate set in a semi-rural position outside Crawley. The current proposal is for the demolition of the site office and sheds, construction of a single dwelling, and associated works. It is understood from the application documents that a further application for development of the remainder of the equestrian centre is intended to follow.

Crabbet Park House is a Grade II* listed former country house, rebuilt in 1873 in the Queen Anne style. There are a number of associated buildings grouped around the house including to the west a substantial turn-of-the-20th century tennis court and orangery, which is also II* listed, and to the north a former stables block, which according to the list description dates from the 18th century, but only appears on maps during the mid-19th century, and is Grade II listed. Historical map regression also shows the presence of a number of apparently ancillary buildings to the south-west of the house and orangery during the 19th century and later, one of which is the granary which forms part of the site office.

Crabbet Park belonged to the Blunt family from the 18th century, and was rebuilt by Wilfrid Blunt, a poet, and his wife Lady Anne Blunt who was a granddaughter of Lord Byron and daughter of Ada Lovelace. The Blunts established and ran a pioneering and influential Arabian stud at Crabbet Park, which continued until the 1950s under their daughter Lady Wentworth, when the stud was relocated and the stables became a racing yard, and later an equestrian centre.

Based on the information in front of us, it is likely that Crabbet Park House would be considered to possess architectural value based on its design, construction and craftsmanship as a very good example of a late 19th century country house in the Queen Anne style, historical illustrative value as a substantial late 19th century country house at the centre of an extensive estate, aesthetic value, and associative value based on the close relationship of Lady Anne Blunt and her husband with the development of the house and estate, including the Crabbet Arabian Stud. The other listed buildings associated with the estate would be considered to possess similar values as buildings of their type and period. They also have group value with each other.

It is not considered that the application building or any of the others within the Equestrian Centre would be regarded as curtilage listed, as the ownership of the Crabbet Park House and the centre were separated prior to the date of listing. However, the older buildings within the centre, including in particular the former granary which is part of the current application site, and which pre-dates the reconstruction of the house in 1873, would be regarded as non-designated heritage assets (NDHA), of interest within the local context partly due to their association with

Crabbet Park and the Arabian stud. These buildings also have group value with the listed buildings to the north, and contribute positively to their settings and special interests.

In terms of the principle of the partial change of use of equestrian centre to residential, given the long and significant association of Crabbet Park with equestrianism, including in particular the Crabbet Park Arabian Stud, the partial loss of the existing use is likely, in my opinion, to result in a degree of less than substantial harm, through impact on the character of the setting, to the special interests of the listed buildings at the heart of the estate. This level of harm would be compounded by any further application for redevelopment of the remainder of the centre. The proposed change of use would therefore require careful justification in heritage terms- this does not appear to be adequately addressed in the current application documents.

The demolition of the existing building on the site is also contentious in terms of the loss of the existing granary building which constitutes its eastern end. The granary dates, from the submitted Heritage Statement from the 18th or 19th centuries, and is an NDHA of a mid-level of interest within the local context, due to its age and its association with Crabbet Park and the Arabian stud. It is in a state of some dilapidation; however, although there is a brief description of its condition within the Statement, we do not have the detailed structural report which would be necessary to justify its complete demolition and consequent total loss of significance. We would expect such a report to be prepared by a conservation-accredited structural engineer, and to take a conservation-led approach, i.e. prioritising the retention and repair of the existing structure, to preserve its heritage value, where this is possible, and to provide a robust justification where this is not.

The current proposal also raises concerns in terms of the form and design of the proposed new development, which is for the reproduction of the granary structure, and the construction alongside it of linked two storey dwelling, with a cottage style appearance. The cottage has a domesticating impact on the site, which is at odds with its history of agricultural/equestrian use. The associated works within the yard to the south of the building including the bike and bin store, patio, and parking will exacerbate the domesticating effect of the new building. In my opinion, this detracts from the contribution made by the site to the settings and special interests of the listed buildings at Crabbet Park, resulting in a low level of less than substantial harm.

In summary, the principle of the new residential use, loss of the granary building, and the design of the development are considered to result in a low level of less than substantial harm, through impact on setting, to the special interest of the listed buildings at Crabbet Park. The proposal also results in a complete loss of significance of the existing NDHA on the site, which is regarded as having a mid-level of interest in the local context. These harms are not currently justified by the information contained within the supporting documents.

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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