

From: Emily Wade <Emily.Wade@midsussex.gov.uk>
Sent: 17 July 2025 17:08:23 UTC+01:00
To: "Tracie Axford" <Tracie.Axford@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: DM/25/1384 Mill Studio, Old Hollow, Copthorne

Hi Tracie

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.

Mill Studio is part of a group of buildings associated with Rowfant Mill, a Grade II listed 18th century former watermill, located in a rural position outside Copthorne. The group also includes Rowfant Mill Cottage, which is separately listed Grade II and also dates from the 18th century, and a curtilage listed barn. The Mill Studio and the attached property Lake Cottage are not regarded as curtilage listed, but they do appear from historical map regression to have 19th century or earlier origins, and have group value with the Mill and Mill Cottage. They may be regarded as non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs).

Based on the limited information in front of us (see below w.r.t. the absence of a heritage statement), it is likely that Rowfant Mill will be considered to possess architectural interest based on its construction and craftsmanship, including in particular any surviving elements of the mill machinery, historical illustrative value as a good example of an 18th century water mill, aesthetic value, and communal value as a former focus of the local rural economy. It also has strong group value with the other buildings within the mill group, including the Mill Cottage, barn, and the Studio and Lake Cottage, which would appear to have formed at one time a functional whole.

The Mill Cottage will have similar values as a modest rural dwelling of its period, part of the former functional whole of the Mill and the small community of people who lived and worked there. The curtilage listed barn, and potential NDHAs at Mill Studio and Lake Cottage have their own potential individual interests (although their former function is not in all cases currently fully understood), and again contribute to the group value of the whole complex of buildings.

The group value of the buildings at Rowfant Mill is particularly significant, contributing to both an understanding of the former functioning of the mill complex, and to its aesthetic value, which is high as a group of attractive period buildings in a lovely rural, mill pond-side setting.

The contribution made by setting to all of these buildings to their special interests is significant- this would include both the interrelationship of the buildings within the complex- their spatial arrangement around the central courtyard, and views both between and of them as a group, and also the wider setting of the former mill stream,

leat and pond, with beyond this the rural landscape beyond from which the corn which was milled would have been drawn.

The current application, which is retrospective, is for the retention of an air source heat pump (ASHP) which has been installed adjacent to the rear (north-west) elevation of the Studio.

Firstly, I note that we have not received a heritage statement with the current application, which would be a validation requirement as the pump is located within the settings of Rowfant Mill, the Mill Cottage, and the curtilage listed barn. This statement should be prepared according to the staged approach to the assessment of development within the setting of heritage assets which is set out in the relevant Historic England guidance GPA Note 3. This statement should also consider the impact of the proposal on the Studio and Lake Cottage in terms of their potential NDHA status.

Based on the information currently in front of us, and in the absence of a heritage statement, I would consider the current application contentious in terms of the impact of the ASHP on the settings of the adjacent designated and potential non designated heritage assets. The pump has been placed adjacent to the rear wall of the Studio, within the courtyard area which sits to the front of the Mill, overlooked by its principal façade. This would have been a working yard, at the centre of the mill complex, and both the yard and the arrangement of the buildings around it contribute to an understanding of the narrative of the site, and its former function. The views between the buildings across this yard also contribute to their group value.

In my opinion, the size, appearance and location of the pump in this context are such that it detracts from the settings of the adjacent listed and curtilage listed buildings, in particular the Mill, but also including the Cottage and barn, detracting from the special interests of these buildings and the manner in which these are appreciated, as well as the settings and significances within the local context of the potential NDHAs at Mill Studio and Lake Cottage. The suggestion that the pump could be screened by a louvred air intake screen or potted plants is not considered to adequately mitigate this harm- the screen would be only partly effective in hiding the pump from view and would in itself be an incongruous addition to the courtyard, and the planting could not be given any material weight given the mobile nature of the pots and the ephemeral nature of the planting contained within them.

The proposal is therefore contrary to the requirements of District Plan Policy DP34. In terms of the NPPF, I would identify the harm caused as less than substantial in terms of all of the designated assets, at around the low-mid point of that scale. This harm stands to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal (para. 215), bearing in mind the great weight that must be given to the conservation of the assets. In terms of the potential NDHAs, I would place the harm as low-moderate, to assets of a possible moderate-high level of interest within the local context (further information from an appropriately detailed Heritage Statement would be required to assess more closely the level of interest of these buildings) (para. 216 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.

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