

Delegated Decision

Sign off Sheet

Ref. No:	DM/26/0673	Case Officer:	Andrew Horrell
Application Type:	Householder Application		
Proposal:	Proposed single storey rear extension and minor internal configurations to main house and barn conversion to ancillary accommodation.		
Site:	Spicers Farm, Rowhill Lane, Balcombe, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH17 6JN, ,		
Validation Date	24 Mar 2026	Overall Expiry Date:	24 Apr 2026
Pre-Commencement Conditions Required:		Pre-Com Conditions Date Agreed:	
Recommendation:	Refusal	Recommendation Date:	8 Jul 2026
Target Date:	19 May 2026	Recommending Officer Signature:	Andrew Horrell

Date Legal Agreement Completed: (if applicable)		No of Representations:	0
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Signed and Agreed By:	Steven King	Date:	10 Jul 2026
Comments:			

MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL

DM/26/0673

**Spicers Farm, Rowhill Lane, Balcombe, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH17 6JN,
Proposed single storey rear extension and minor internal configurations to main house and barn
conversion to ancillary accommodation.
Mr Black**

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

None received

SUMMARY OF CONSULTEES

Ecology: No objection subject to conditions

Conservation Officer: The proposal because of the inclusion of the extension to the house, and the mezzanine and other aspects of works the barn as set out above, would be considered harmful to the special interest of Spicers Farm and the associated curtilage listed farm buildings. This will be contrary to the requirements of District Plan Policy DP34. In terms of the NPPF, I would place the harm caused to be less than substantial, at the mid-high level of that range, such that the balancing exercise set out in paragraph 215 will apply.

PARISH COUNCIL OBSERVATIONS

Subject to heritage officer consent, Balcombe Parish Council do not object to the proposed planning application.

INTRODUCTION

Planning permission is sought for a single storey rear extension and minor internal configurations to main house with barn conversion to ancillary accommodation with associated internal and external alterations.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None relevant

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

Spicers Farm is a Grade II two storey detached pitched roofed dwelling. The walls are a mix of mock Tudor render, hanging tiles, face brickwork and stonework with timber doors and windows. The detached pitched roofed barn characterised by a mix of timber cladding, brickwork and timber doors and windows.

To the west of the site is the garden with fields beyond, to the south of the site is post and rail fencing to fields beyond, to the north-east of the site is the farm track to highway beyond and to the west of the site is the driveway with detached barn to adjoining farm buildings beyond.

The site is outside of the built-up area of Balcombe and within the High Weald National Landscape (Formerly Area Of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

APPLICATION DETAILS

The proposed flat roofed single storey rear extension approximately measures 6.77m in depth, 5.35m in width with a height of 3.5m. This will have a rear and side timber window and side French doors with

sidelights. This serves a kitchen on the ground floor with a utility room, store and pantry within the cellar created by stone cladding matching the existing stonework at the dwelling.

Internal works include the existing kitchen changed to a dining room/snug, the smaller kitchen was changed to a WC and hallway and the existing WC changed to a store cupboard on the ground floor.

The access between bedroom 2 and en-suite of bedroom 1 blocked up on the first floor and within the loft bedroom 6, en-suite, plant space and play room/reading room are created with roof insulation installed between all roof timbers raising the ridge height by some 350mm.

The detached barn is to be converted in an annexe served by a bin store, two WCs, a kitchen, games room, three bedrooms and en-suites, an office, sitting room and kitchenette with a sitting room within the mezzanine with new walls located along existing truss centrelines and installed up to truss underside to expose in both sides.

External works include timber double doors to the front serving the bin store, Crittall style French doors with sidelights serving the kitchen/games room, new front metal windows serving bedrooms 1, 2 and 3, a new side window serving the sitting room. A glazed door with sidelight and window serving the office which will be served by a retained sliding timber door, a door with sidelight served by a single hinged timber door shutter serves the kitchenette and a replacement windows serving the jack and jill en-suite/bathroom and the hallway. The French doors is served a full height barn style shutters, The ridge height of all parts of converted barn increased by some 200mm for external insulation.

Within the roofslope, five rooflights to be installed on the rear and a replacement conservation roof light.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND LIST OF POLICIES

Planning legislation holds that the determination of a planning application shall be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Specifically, Section 70 (2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 states:

'In dealing with such an application the authority shall have regard to:

- a) The provisions of the development plan, so far as material to application,*
- b) Any local finance considerations, so far as material to the application, and*
- c) Any other material considerations.'*

Section 38(6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 provides:

'If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.'

The requirement to determine applications "in accordance with the plan" does not mean applications must comply with each and every policy, but is to be approached on the basis of the plan taken as a whole. This reflects the fact, acknowledged by the Courts, that development plans can have broad statements of policy, many of which may be mutually irreconcilable so that in a particular case one must give way to another.

Under section 38(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 if a policy contained in a development plan for an area conflicts with another policy in the development plan, the conflict must be resolved in favour of the policy which is contained in the last document to be adopted, approved or published.

Using this as the starting point the development plan for this part of Mid Sussex consists of the District Plan, Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) and Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan.

National policy (which is contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Policy Guidance) does not form part of the development plan, but is an important material consideration.

Mid Sussex District Plan

The District Plan was adopted at Full Council on 28th March 2018.

Relevant policies:

DP12- Protection and Enhancement of Countryside
DP15 - New homes in the Countryside
DP16 - High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
DP21 - Transport
DP26 - Character and design
DP34 - Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets
DP38 - Ecology

Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan

Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan was made on 22nd September 2016. Relevant policies:

Policy 1 - Built up Area boundary
Policy 3 - Design

Site Allocations DPD

The SADPD was adopted on 29th June 2022. It allocates sufficient housing and employment land to meet identified needs to 2031.

Relevant policies.

None.

Other Legislation

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Other Material Considerations

Mid Sussex District Plan 2021 - 2039 - Submission Draft (Regulation 19)

The District Council is reviewing and updating the District Plan. Upon adoption, the new District Plan 2021 - 2039 will replace the current District Plan 2014-2031 and its policies will have full weight. In accordance with the NPPF, Local Planning Authorities may give weight to relevant policies of the emerging plan according to the stage of preparation; the extent to which there are unresolved objections to the relevant policies; and the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the NPPF. The draft District Plan 2021-2039 (Regulation 19) is currently at Examination and hearings were concluded on the 19th March 2026. The District Plan remains at Examination until the Inspector has published his report, until that time only minimal weight can be given to the Plan and this planning application has been assessed against the policies of the adopted District Plan.

DPN1 - Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Nature Recovery
DPC1 - Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside
DPC3 - New Homes in the Countryside
DPC4 - High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
DPB1 - Character and Design
DPB2 - Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets

Mid Sussex Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

The Council has adopted a 'Mid Sussex Design Guide' SPD that aims to help deliver high quality development across the district that responds appropriately to its context and is inclusive and sustainable. The Design Guide was adopted by Council on 4th November 2020 as an SPD for use in the consideration and determination of planning applications. The SPD is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

THE HIGH WEALD AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY MANAGEMENT PLAN 2024-2029

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024 is also a material consideration and paragraphs 8, 11, 131, 135, 189 and 207 - 215 are considered to be relevant to this application.

The NPPF sets out the government's policy in order to ensure that the planning system contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 sets out the three objectives to sustainable development, such that the planning system needs to perform an economic objective, a social objective and an environmental objective.

Paragraph 12 of the NPPF states *'The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision-making. Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood plans that form part of the development plan), permission should not usually be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed.'*

Paragraph 39 of the NPPF states *'Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.'*

With specific reference to decision-taking paragraph 48 states that planning decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

Policy DP12 of the Mid Sussex District Plan in part states:

'The countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty. Development will be permitted in the countryside, defined as the area outside of built-up area boundaries on the Policies Map, provided it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District, and:

- *it is necessary for the purposes of agriculture; or*
- *it is supported by a specific policy reference either elsewhere in the Plan, a Development Plan Document or relevant Neighbourhood Plan.'*

Policy 1 of Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan has a similar ethos and states:

'Development proposals outside of the Built-Up Area Boundary will be required to conform to development plan policies in respect of the control of development in the countryside'.

Policy DP15 of the District Plan is deemed relevant when considering annexe accommodation within the countryside. The policy relates to new homes in the countryside and states in part that new 'granny annexes' that are physically separate to the dwelling will be defined as a new home and are subject to the same requirements as required for new homes in the countryside.

The proposal consists of an annexe in connection to the existing residential property and no evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that it would be used as affordable housing, or accommodation essential for agriculture or forestry. The proposal is also not considered to be of design of exceptional quality that would enhance the immediate setting or sensitive to the character of the area. The proposal is also located within the countryside and not contiguous to a built-up area.

It is acknowledged that the proposed annexe would contain facilities typically associated with independent living. However, given its close spatial relationship with the main house, and the proposed use in association with family members, it is considered that there would be a strong functional linkage and a high degree of interdependence. The accommodation is therefore not considered likely to operate as a separate planning unit.

Whilst the proposal would result in annexe accommodation in the countryside, it is considered that material considerations weigh in favour of the development. Given the way the site is arranged, it is not considered that the accommodation provided could easily be severed from the main house to create a new independent unit of accommodation.

Therefore, it is the Planning Officers view that in this case, because the proposal is not physically separate to the dwelling in terms of being an independent building some distance from the existing dwelling, it is not considered that this proposal should be treated as a new home in the countryside.

Notwithstanding this, it is recognised that the potential for independent occupation could arise in the future. If the application was recommended for approval, a condition would have been imposed to ensure that the annexe is used solely for purposes incidental and ancillary to the enjoyment of the main dwelling and shall not be occupied as a separate unit of residential accommodation.

It is therefore considered that the proposal would not give rise to a new dwelling in policy terms, and the degree of conflict with DP15 is limited and outweighed by the specific circumstances of the case.

Design, impact on heritage assets and the character of the area

The property is Grade II Listed and the detached barn by extension is curtilage listed.

Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states

'In considering whether to grant planning permission (or permission in principle) for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses'.

Policy DP34 of the District Plan is relevant to listed buildings and states:

'Development will be required to protect listed buildings and their settings. This will be achieved by ensuring that:

- o A thorough understanding of the significance of the listed building and its setting has been demonstrated. This will be proportionate to the importance of the building and potential impact of the proposal;*
- o Alterations or extensions to a listed building respect its historic form, scale, setting, significance and fabric. Proposals for the conversion or change of use of a listed building retain its significance and character whilst ensuring that the building remains in a viable use;*
- o Traditional building materials and construction techniques are normally used.*
- o Satellite antennae, solar panels or other renewable energy installations are not sited in a prominent location, and where possible within the curtilage rather than on the building itself;*
- o Special regard is given to protecting the setting of a listed building;*
- o Where the historic fabric of a building may be affected by alterations or other proposals, the applicant is expected to fund the recording or exploratory opening up of historic fabric'*

Principle DG11 of the Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD states:

'Heritage assets and historic landscapes should be celebrated, enhanced and preserved where appropriate, for the enjoyment of existing and future residents. Where appropriate and providing it does not cause harm to the heritage assets or their setting, they should be carefully integrated into development proposals as they help to reinforce a sense of place and local identity.'

Elsewhere new development should generally reflect the scale of adjacent areas and the settlement context within which it is located to deliver a coherent and consistent urban fabric. There may be potential to introduce a new character / development form and massing:

- On larger urban extensions; this will typically be within the middle of the site and associated with a new neighbourhood centre, spine road or the main open space.*
- In town centre locations defined as coarse grain areas and nearby sites identified on the brownfield sites register.'*

Paragraphs 210, 212 - 215 of the NPPF are most relevant and state:

'210. In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

212. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be).

This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

213. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

- a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;*
- b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.*

214. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and*
- b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation;*
- c) and conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and*
- d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.*

215. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.'

In terms of design, policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan states:

'All development and surrounding spaces, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings and replacement dwellings, will be well designed and reflect the distinctive character of the towns and villages while being sensitive to the countryside. All applicants will be required to demonstrate that development:

- o is of high quality design and layout and includes appropriate landscaping and greenspace;*
- o contributes positively to, and clearly defines, public and private realms and should normally be designed with active building frontages facing streets and public open spaces to animate and provide natural surveillance;*
- o creates a sense of place while addressing the character and scale of the surrounding buildings and landscape;*
- o protects open spaces, trees and gardens that contribute to the character of the area;*
- o protects valued townscape and the separate identity and character of towns and villages;*
- o does not cause significant harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants of new dwellings, including taking account of the impact on privacy, outlook, daylight and sunlight, and noise, air and light pollution (see Policy DP27);*
- o creates a pedestrian-friendly layout that is safe, well connected, legible and accessible;*
- o incorporates well integrated parking that does not dominate the street environment, particularly where high density housing is proposed;*
- o positively addresses sustainability considerations in the layout and the building design;*
- o take the opportunity to encourage community interaction by creating layouts with a strong neighbourhood focus/centre; larger (300+ unit) schemes will also normally be expected to incorporate a mixed use element;*
- o optimises the potential of the site to accommodate development'.*

Policy 3 of the Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan has a similar ethos and states:

'The scale, density, massing, height, landscape design, layout and materials of all development proposals, including alterations to existing buildings, will be required to reflect the architectural and historic character and scale of the surrounding buildings and to avoid any significant detrimental effect on the landscape and natural beauty of the High Weald AONB and the significance and character or appearance of the Balcombe Conservation Area, where a building will command a view.

Unless otherwise proposed in Policy 2, development proposals will be expected to demonstrate they accord with the provisions of the Balcombe Village Design Guide and with the following principles:

- i. approximately 75% of the total number of dwellings of the scheme, and especially the affordable homes, are no larger than 3 bedroom dwellings with a proportion suited to occupation by households of retirement age;*
- ii. approximately 25% of the total number of dwellings of the scheme to comprise dwellings of no more than 4 bedrooms;*
- iii. they comply with affordable housing requirements of the Mid Sussex development plan;*
- iv. new and improved utility infrastructure will be encouraged and supported in order to meet the identified needs of the community; and*
- v. new residential and commercial development will be permitted where there is sufficient infrastructure capacity currently available or where the necessary capacity can be provided to an agreed timetable.*

Proposals that involve the change of use of listed buildings within the settlement boundary for housing as 1, 2 or 3 bedroom units, including buildings judged to make a positive contribution to the special historic or architectural interest or character and appearance of the conservation area, will be supported provided it can be demonstrated they will sustain the significance of these heritage assets'.

Principle DG49 of the Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD states:

'Extensions should respond to the design of the original dwelling and applicant will be expected to demonstrate how local character has informed the design proposal. Extensions should also normally be designed to be well integrated with the existing scale, form and massing allow the original building to remain the dominant element of the property whether it has one or several additions.

Extensions should typically use simple, uncomplicated building forms to complement and coordinate with the scale, form and massing of the original dwelling. The design approach may benefit from coordinating with the existing pattern of window and door openings as well as employing facing materials to match those of the existing dwelling. Otherwise, it should demonstrate the appropriateness of the alternative approach.

Extensions should not result in a significant loss to the private amenity area of the dwelling.

There are two general approaches to extending a property:

*-designing in the style of the existing building by closely matching its facing materials, architectural features, window sizes and proportions; and
-designing in a contemporary style that takes its cues from key aspects of the existing building that might include its underlying form and proportions, facing materials, window design and other specific architectural features. The success of this approach is particularly reliant on high quality facing materials and finishes, and this will normally need to be demonstrated through detailed elevations and section drawings.*

Both approaches can create successful, well designed extensions that can be mutually beneficial to both the house and the wider area. All extensions and alterations should consider their impact on neighbouring properties (refer to Chapter 8 on residential amenity).'

The Design Guide also contains Principle DG51 which specifically relates to rear extensions.

DG51 of the Mid Sussex Design Guide states:

'rear extensions which are not visible from the street and do not negatively impact on neighbouring properties can be expressed in many forms, including by adopting a contemporary architectural approach. With reference to DG49, they should nevertheless have consideration for the character of the existing building and the relationship of the extension with the side boundaries and adjacent buildings and gardens.'

The Council's Conservation Officer has been consulted on the application and has provided the following comments:

'Spicers Farm is a historic farmstead located in a rural position to the south of Balcombe. The current proposal, which follows on from pre-application advice, relates to both the farmhouse and the former farm buildings within the historic farmstead.

Development and significance of Spicers Farmhouse:

The Historic Building Survey submitted as part of the Heritage Statement accompanying this application includes an analysis of the development of the farmhouse, which can be summarised as follows.

- The former farmhouse is a Grade II listed building, which, from the submitted historic building assessment, originated as a Medieval hall-house of a 3 cell plan centred on a 2 bay open hall and dating from the later part of the 15th century.*
- During the mid-late 16th century this house was modernised by the insertion of a hearth and partial flooring of the central hall.*
- Following this during the early 17th century a two-storey cross wing was attached at the northern end- this included integral attics, stair tower and cellars.*
- During the mid-late 17th century a substantial chimney stack was inserted within the southern bays of the building, possibly associated with the demotion of this part of the building (the original hall house) to a kitchen and service area. At this point an attic stair was added, suggesting that the first-floor rooms of the southern range were ceiled at this stage to create attics above.*
- Later, during the mid-late 18th century the roof of the southern range was entirely replaced- this roof structure although not original is of a high level of interest, particularly the engineered trusses to the southern bay. A hoist wheel, a very rare feature, survives from this period attached to the 18th century roof in front of the late 17th century chimney. Also, at around this point the west and east elevations of*

the south bay may have been rebuilt in masonry, and the timber frame elsewhere to the southern range and the stair turret of the cross-wing underbuilt.

- During the late 19th and early 20th centuries cladding by tile and weatherboarding was carried out, and further parts of the east and west elevations rebuilt in brick. Internal alterations took place and a new staircase inserted into the north bay of the south range. New windows were inserted into existing openings.
- Further internal alterations were carried out and windows replaced during the later 20th century.

The Survey concludes that the building is of a high level of significance, for reasons including the very high degree of survival of original and early fabric, floor plan and fixtures, dating from the late 15th to the late 18th centuries, as well as the Arts and Crafts era alterations to the property. More detail is given at 6.2.1 of the document. I see no reason to disagree with this analysis of the development and significance of the house.

Development and significance of the former farm buildings:

The surviving farmstead to the east of the house includes a substantial late 16th or early 17th century timber framed barn, with two attached 19th century single-storey brick buildings in a linear arrangement to the south, and further buildings attached perpendicular to the eastern side of its northern end. A brief historical map regression exercise shows that the farmstead has undergone progressive change over the past couple of centuries- during the later 19th century there was a large, enclosed yard between the farm buildings and the house, with a series of smaller yards sitting to the east, within and beyond the angle of the farm buildings. It would appear that the brick buildings to the south of the barn, which appear to have been cowsheds or dairies, were previously open to their eastern side onto these yards, which also included a number of smaller structures, including pig sties, which are now lost. During the latter part of the 20th century, the yards sitting in the angle of the farm buildings were enclosed under a large barn structure which now directly abuts the historic barn and attached brick buildings.

The surviving historic farm buildings including the barn and single storey buildings to the south of it would be regarded as curtilage listed. These buildings, as well as being of interest in their own right, have group value with and contribute positively to the setting of the listed house, enhancing its special interest.

A separate Heritage Statement has been submitted with respect to the farm buildings; this sets out the sequence of development of the farmstead in more detail.

The HS describes the barn as dating from the late 16th or very early 17th century, its construction perhaps contemporaneous with the addition of the northern cross-wing to the house. During the 17th century a further bay was added to the southern end of the building. The original purpose of the barn would have been for crop storage, as is evidenced by the waggon doors to either side of the building. It is suggested that following this period, the building may have fallen into disuse, prior to a campaign of repair and rebuilding during the 19th century, possibly commensurate with the re-ordering of the wider farmstead. These 19th century repairs and alterations appear to have been fairly extensive, but seem to have often sat alongside retained original fabric, so that a substantial quantity of the original framing survives.

The single storey buildings attached to the south of the barn are dated to the reconfiguration of the farmstead between 1840 and 1874. The HS suggests that the southern of the two buildings (B2) was originally an open fronted shelter-shed, and the northern (B1) a cow-house. As the HS notes, these new buildings were well planned and accompanied by a series of yards to the east which illustrated contemporary practice in stock management.

The HS assigns a high degree of significance to the barn, as a particularly interesting and rather rare example of its type. More detail is given at 8.2.1, however in the context of this application I would draw particular attention to the mention of the surviving 4-bay open plan interior, which is in the same form as was arrived at during the 17th century, despite later disuse and restoration.

The later buildings to the south are described as sufficient in fabric and form to illustrate their dates of construction, their intended function and their later evolution, which reflects changes in agricultural practice over time.

Viewed individually and as a group the farm buildings at Spicers Farm as well as illustrating changing carpentry and construction techniques over period spanning the late 16th to the 19th century also demonstrate changes in land management and agriculture, including the transition from arable to livestock farming which is characteristic of the High Farming period (after 1790, but particularly the 1840s to the 1870s).

Spicers Farm is particularly notable in that only 3% of farmsteads within the High Weald National Character Area retain a farmhouse and at least one farm building dating from the 17th century or earlier. The extent of the survival of the historic farmstead layout is also relatively unusual.

Proposed works to the farmhouse:

The current pre- proposal is for a number of internal and external alterations to the farmhouse. To consider these in turn.

1) Single storey extension to the west of the cross-wing.

An extension is proposed to the western side of the cross-wing. This is shown as being over two storeys, incorporating a basement accessed internally via stairs within the extension and externally via escape stairs within a lightwell to the addition's western end. The extension at ground floor level is shown with a flat roof with rooflights hidden behind a parapet and stone-faced elevations. A shadow gap sits between the addition and the existing house to both sides. The extension would be accessed by a doorway which would be created in the existing western elevation of the cross-wing by removing the fabric below the sill of the existing window to this elevation.

At pre-application stage concerns were raised over the principle of an extension in this position and I remain of the opinion that it is contentious. I note that the scale and form of the proposal at ground floor level have been reduced by the omission of the element wrapping around the north-west corner of the house. I also note that the HIA forming part of the HS is broadly supportive of the revised scheme. However, notwithstanding this in my opinion the amended proposal does not address the 'in principle' issues raised by an addition in this position and the adverse impact that it will have on the integrity of the surviving 17th century footprint and plan form of the house, including in particular the highly significant cross-wing. Furthermore, in my opinion the scale of the extension at ground floor, although reduced, remains overbearing, and the form and detailed elevational treatment are unsympathetic to the host building, resulting in an addition of a heavy and incongruous appearance.

The proposal would result in some loss of historic fabric due to the enlargement of the existing window to the western elevation of the cross-wing at ground floor to provide access to the addition. This brickwork dates from the early 19th century rebuilding of this elevation. Viewed in isolation of the above, I do not consider that this relatively modest loss of fabric would have proved contentious. (I note that in this respect the HS appears to refer to an alternative proposal- the comments at 7.2.4. do not appear to relate to the particular circumstances or nature of this aspect of the scheme.)

The current proposal also includes an extension at basement level below the ground floor addition, which was not seen at pre-application stage. Further information would be required for the Council to be assured that this would not adversely impact the structural integrity of the house, including the existing cellars beneath the cross-wing, but notwithstanding this I have concerns about the principle of such an element, which in my opinion will exacerbate the harm caused by the proposed extension at ground floor level. Although there is only a relatively modest lightwell adjacent to the western wing of the addition, this in itself will appear as an incongruous feature in the context of the historic building, and will in closer views increase the apparent scale and bulk of the addition.

For these reasons I consider that the extension to the building at both ground floor and basement level will be harmful to its special interest. I would recommend that these aspects of the proposal are removed.

2) *At ground floor relocation of an existing door from the entrance hall to a position within the cross wing*

As the submitted HIA notes there is clear evidence of a door in this position- as such this aspect of the proposal is not considered contentious.

3) *Insertion of partitions within the existing kitchen area to create a downstairs WC*

The northern partition proposed here sits on the line between the Medieval core of the building and the 17th century cross-wing. Reinstating a partition in this location is not considered contentious. There is no similar evidence for a previous partition in the position of the proposed eastern side of the WC enclosure, however the HIA notes that this area has been subject to previous alteration including the insertion of a staircase during the early part of the 20th century. The impact on the historic plan form of the building is somewhat mitigated by this and by the reinstatement of the partition between the core and the cross-wing. On balance I would not consider this aspect of the proposal to be contentious, although I would suggest that internal elevations (existing and proposed) should be provided to demonstrate the relationship of the WC fittings with any surviving exposed members of the timber frame.

4) *Removal WC adjacent to the chimney stack within the main range to convert the space to a storage cupboard.*

This aspect of the proposal is not considered contentious.

5) *Introduction of partitioning and a fitted cupboard(?) to the opposite side the chimney stack within the main range.*

I don't believe that this work was considered at pre-application stage, and it is not addressed by the submitted HIA. Can the applicant please provide further information on what is proposed here- is there to be fitted furniture adjacent to the stack? Is the partitioning full height? It would also be helpful to see photographs of the affected area, as we did not look at it during our site visit, and for a brief addendum to be made to the HIA to consider the impact of the works.

6) *Blocking of the doorway between bedroom 2 and the Jack-and-Jill bathroom.*

This is a modern doorway and its removal is not considered contentious.

7) *At attic level within the cross-wing, works to create a bedroom, storage space and ensuite.*

As noted in the HIA, the cross-wing included accommodation at attic level from the outset- this is evident from the deliberate provision of good head room, light from windows to either gable, and stair access via the original stair turret. Although there does not seem to be evidence that this space was previously subdivided, the principle of its more intensive use as part of the house does not seem therefore to be contrary to its intended purpose. I do have some concerns relating to the insertion of partitioning, but I note that this has been rationalised following pre-application to sit in a better relationship with the original frame. On balance, I consider that the changes to the plan form are acceptable, but further detail will be required of the following aspects:

- *Internal elevations of the proposed new ensuite to show how the necessary fittings will be accommodated without harm to or concealment of historic fabric.*
- *Details of pipe runs to demonstrate how harm or loss to historic fabric will be avoided. Details of any external necessary vents.*
- *Further information on the approach to flooring (see below).*
- *Detailed drawings of the partitioning in terms of its design and relationship with the surrounding historic fabric, to demonstrate that this can be achieved without harm to the fabric, and in a manner which is easily reversible.*
- *Details of the proposal to preserve the graffiti to the plaster of the cross-wing roof. This should be retained and exposed in a manner which will both preserve it and allow its continued appreciation as part of the space.*
- *Ditto, in respect of the comb-decorated daub to the south of the chimney within the cross wing.*

I would prefer to see this information as part of the application rather than by condition (assuming that a position is reached where a positive recommendation is otherwise possible) as these details will be fundamental to the acceptability of the works.

8) *Creation of a play room and plant room within the attic to the main range.*

As with the cross-wing attic, this space appears to have been intended to be accessible and usable as part of the house, at least since the insertion of the chimney stack and adjacent stair during the 17th century. The current proposal involves the installation of a partition towards the northern end of the space to create a plant room, with the remainder of the space remaining open. I would agree with the comments within the HIA that subject to detail this would allow enough of the attic space to remain open to allow for a continued appreciation of the original character of the room, subject to further details as set out below:

- Can the applicant please provide further detail of the intended use of the plant room? What equipment is to be placed here, and how will the installation be achieved without harm to the surrounding fabric? The details provided should include consideration of any necessary associated wiring, pipework etc.*
- Further details of any works to the flooring.*
- Confirmation that the wheel hoist to the chimney will be retained in situ.*

9) *Levelling of floors at attic level*

As noted at pre-application stage, the covering of historic floors may be regarded as contentious. I would like to see further detail of this proposal, on a space-by-space basis, which sets out the nature of the existing flooring and its level of interest, and includes typical sectional drawings to show the relationship of the proposed new floor with the existing. I would also suggest that the applicant reconsider the extent of the floating floor and whether this is necessary or justified in particular in areas such as the play room, bedroom or storage areas.

10) *Installation of insulation at roof level.*

Further detail is required of this work so that the impact on the character of the spaces and of the roof structure can be fully understood. The applicant should provide the following:

- Typical large scale sectional drawings for each part of the roof affected.*
- Typical large scale elevational and sectional eaves detail for each part of the roof affected.*
- Existing and proposed internal elevations of all affected parts of the frame, ideally cross-referenced with photographs.*
- Further information on the soot blackened timbers within the roof of the main range and how these will be protected, so that they remain exposed to view.*

11) *Replacement of existing rooflights.*

This is not considered contentious, subject to detail.

Works are also proposed to the curtilage listed farm buildings, in associated with their conversion to ancillary residential use. A structural survey has been submitted which indicates that the buildings should be capable of conversion, and as accommodation will remain ancillary to the house the impact on the character of the setting of the listed farmhouse will be reduced, in that no new separate dwelling is created, and there will be no requirement for subdivision of the curtilage, or other such works which might otherwise be necessary. As such, the principle of the conversion is not regarded as contentious.

To consider the proposed physical alterations to the buildings in turn:

1) *Externally to the barn it is proposed to glaze the existing barn door opening.*

This element of the proposal has been amended following on from pre-application advice to simplify the form of the proposed glazing, and is now considered acceptable subject to detail. Conditions would be required should a permission be forthcoming in relation to the relationship of the glazing with the head plate, which should be retained, and the design of both the glazing and the doors (noting the recommendations of the HIA in this respect).

2) Insertion of a mezzanine within the main barn space.

Concerns were raised at pre-application stage concerning this aspect of the scheme. I note the intention that the mezzanine should be structurally independent of the framing to be the barn, and that it will have only a low balustrade to the side facing onto the remainder of the space. However, I remain of the opinion that this is an unjustified intrusion into the floor plan and volume of the barn's interior, which as the HIA notes survives in the same form as was arrived at during the 17th century, despite later disuse and restoration, and which makes a strong contribution to the building's significance, as does the intact nature, and visibility, of the framing to the walls and roof, which would also be adversely affected. For these reasons, the mezzanine would be harmful to the special interest of the barn. Paragraph 213 of the NPPF that: 'Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.' Given the ancillary nature of the accommodation and the extent of the barn's footprint as existing, the mezzanine structure and the subsequent harm arising is in my opinion unjustified, and I would recommend it is removed from the scheme.

3) Formation of an opening in the northern wall of the barn to allow access into the adjacent store, which is proposed to be partly converted for use as WCS, with a bin store retained to the western side, with doors added;

Within the submitted HIA there is a detailed discussion of potential locations for the proposed new doorway which would avoid damage to the earlier members of the frame, and allow sufficient later fabric to remain to allow the form of this to continue to be appreciated. Whilst either of these options could be pursued, the door as shown appears to be a pocket door in a larger opening, which would involve the removal of at least one original stud. This is unacceptable, and should be revised in line with the findings of the HIA. Any revised detail should include a proposed internal elevation and section which also demonstrate how the original sole plate and plinth will be retained at the base of the door and any change in level addressed.

The remainder of the works to the northern lean-to are not considered contentious, subject to detail, with the exception of the loss of the doorway and door to its eastern side. I note the commentary in this respect within the HIA, and I would agree that rather than a simple recess to indicate the position of the doorway the door itself could be retained and fixed shut. Further detail of this is required, ideally during the course of this application, including an appropriate annotation on the proposed plans, and a detailed internal elevation.

4) Insertion of partitioning within the adjacent cowshed to create bedrooms and ensuite, adjacent storage space to be converted for use as an office, with access to a Jack and Jill bathroom created within the main cowshed, and southern cowshed subdivided with partitioning to create a 1 bedroom annexe with bedroom, living room/kitchenette and ensuite.

The extent of the partitioning has been modestly reduced since pre-application, and I note the point made within the HIA regarding the date of the fittings and the relationship of the partitioning and the roof trusses. On balance, this aspect of the proposal is considered acceptable. Detailed drawings of the relationship between the trusses and partitions would be required by condition if any permission were granted.

5) New windows to be added to the west elevation of both cowsheds and to the southern end elevation.

The number and scale of the proposed new windows have been reduced, and in general the proposal is in this respect now more sympathetic to the agricultural character of the buildings. However, the window

to the southern end elevation remains overscaled and somewhat domestic in appearance, and I would suggest that this is reduced to similar proportions to those proposed elsewhere.

6) *Existing door openings to the southern cowshed to be glazed.*

The design of the glazing has been amended following pre-application advice and is now considered acceptable.

7) *New rooflights to the eastern roof slope of the dairy and cowshed.*

A number of new rooflights are proposed to the side of the building facing away from the farmhouse. This is considered acceptable in principle, subject to detail.

8) *Insulation to all buildings*

Further detail of this is required in the form of detailed typical large-scale sections, internal elevations, and eaves details, to demonstrate the relationship of the insulation with the historic fabric including in particular members of the timber frame to the barn walls and roof and to the roofs of the dairy and cowshed.

The applicant should also supply details of the proposed treatment of the floors to all buildings.

In summary, as it stands, the proposal because of the inclusion of the extension to the house, and the mezzanine and other aspects of works the barn as set out above, would be considered harmful to the special interest of Spicers Farm and the associated curtilage listed farm buildings. This will be contrary to the requirements of District Plan Policy DP34. In terms of the NPPF, I would place the harm caused to be less than substantial, at the mid-high level of that range, such that the balancing exercise set out in paragraph 215 will apply.

I would also note that there are several areas where we currently have insufficient information for informed comment, which may or may not prove acceptable once this is provided".

Given the listed nature of the property, the proposed ground floor rear extension (and cellar extension) in terms of size and scale would be seen to be out of character with the existing dwelling and would be harmful to the special interest of the listed building.

Coupled with this, the proposal would result in some loss of historic fabric due to the enlargement of the existing window to the western elevation of the cross-wing at ground floor to provide access to the addition.

In terms of the barn conversion, as outlined above the conversion to annexe usage is deemed acceptable in principle. Whilst some of the external and internal works are deemed acceptable, the installation of a mezzanine floor to the barn would be harmful to the special interest of the barn. Given the ancillary nature of the accommodation and the extent of the barn's footprint as existing, the mezzanine structure and the subsequent harm arising is deemed unjustified in line with paragraph 213 of the NPPF.

The creation of a new doorway serving the bin store involves the removal of at least one original stud which would be harmful to the special interest of the curtilage listed barn.

It was also noted that insufficient information has been provided regarding the proposed roof insulation works to the barn and the impact on the structural integrity of the house from the creation of a basement level extension, with further information in relation to the historical impact from the introduction of a partitioning and fitted cupboard to opposite of the chimney stack on ground floor and greater detailed drawings being required in relation to pipes, vents, flooring, fittings and partitioning, insulation and plant room within the attic/loft to allow for sufficient justification for the works.

In terms of the impact, it has been identified that the proposed rear extension would result in less than substantial harm to the listed building. Where the harm would be less than substantial, in terms of the

NPPF, the criteria set out in paragraph 215 would apply. This states that *'Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use'*.

This is the balancing exercise that must be undertaken by the decision maker, ensuring that considerable importance and weight is given to the less than substantial harm to the heritage asset that has been identified.

The property remains in its original use, as a dwelling, and is not considered to be currently at risk. Whilst the barn and attached farm buildings with their conversion arguably means the retention allows for a continued viable use for them as curtilage listed buildings, it is Officers view that the harm caused to the heritage asset identified above is greater than the benefits of the scheme.

Notwithstanding the above, there is no compelling evidence to demonstrate that the proposal is necessary to secure the optimum viable use of the property as whole. The property remains in its original use, as a dwelling, and is not considered to be currently at risk.

Whilst it is noted that the proposed extension would allow for the enhancement of the living accommodation within the building, this is a private benefit and does not fall to be considered in the balance. Furthermore, the continued viable use of the building as a residential dwelling is not dependent on the proposal as the building has an ongoing residential use that would not cease in its absence.

In terms of impact on heritage assets, it should be noted that National Planning Practice Guidance states that public benefit 'should not just be a private benefit'.

Therefore, as no public benefits have been identified that would outweigh the harm identified in heritage terms, the proposal would fail the assessment within the NPPF and would not comply with policies DP26 and DP34, policy 3 of the Neighbourhood Plan and the NPPF.

Impact on the High Weald

The legal framework for AONBs, (also known as National Landscapes) in England and Wales is provided by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000 which at Section 82 reaffirms the primary purpose of AONBs: to conserve and enhance natural beauty. Section 84 of the CRoW requires Local Planning Authorities to 'take all such action as appears to them expedient for accomplishment of the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB'. The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act (2023) amended section 85 of the CRoW Act, to create a new duty on relevant authorities to 'seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area' when discharging their functions in AONBs'. A similar ethos is found within The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan which is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications in the AONB.

Paragraph 189 of the NPPF states:

'Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks.'

Policy DP16 of the Mid Sussex District Plan relates to the AONB and states that:

'Development within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), as shown on the Policies Maps, will only be permitted where it conserves or enhances natural beauty and has regard to the High Weald AONB Management Plan, in particular:

- o the identified landscape features or components of natural beauty and to their setting;*
- o the traditional interaction of people with nature, and appropriate land management;*
- o character and local distinctiveness, settlement pattern, sense of place and setting of the AONB;and*

o the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage'.

Given the domestic nature of the proposal and that the works are located in part within the domestic garden where it would be seen within the context of the existing dwelling and outbuilding, the proposal is deemed to conserve the nature of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It therefore complies with DP16 of the Mid Sussex District Plan and paragraph 189 of the NPPF.

Impact on neighbouring amenities

In terms of impact on neighbouring amenities, Policy DP26 of the District Plan states that it must be demonstrated that any development does not cause significant harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants of new dwellings, including taking account of the impact on privacy, outlook, daylight and sunlight, and noise, air and light pollution.

Given the nature of the proposal and the relationship with neighbours which are located well away from the dwelling and barn, the impact on light and outlook is deemed not harmful and the degree of overlooking and loss of privacy is deemed no less than the existing relationship.

The proposal thereby complies with the relevant part of policy DP26 of the District Plan in relation to neighbouring amenity.

Highways Impact

Policy DP21 of the District Plan among other matters requires that:

'The scheme provides adequate car parking for the proposed development taking into account the accessibility of the development, the type, mix and use of the development and the availability and opportunities for public transport; and with the relevant Neighbourhood Plan where applicable.'

The proposal is considered to maintain the current level of parking on the site. The proposal is not considered to alter the current access arrangements.

As such, the proposal is considered to comply with the Policy DP21 of the District Plan.

Ecology

Policy DP38 of the Mid Sussex District Plan relates to Biodiversity and seeks proposals to protect and enhance biodiversity.

The submitted bat roost assessment confirmed that Main dwelling, (B1) contained four confirmed roosts. The proposed extension on the north-western elevation of the property is not due to impact any known bat roots directly. The proposed installation of new insulation and raising the ridgeline will result in modification and temporary disturbance of multiple bat roots within the loft structure.

The Barn (B2) had two confirmed roosts. The proposed works to the barn into habitable accommodation will result in the loss of a common pipistrelle and brown long-eared bat roost. In the absence of mitigation, the work has the potential to kill or injure bats, if present at the time.

The submitted ecological appraisal recommends the provision of bat boxes, wildlife friendly planting and lighting.

The Council's Ecologist consultants have been consulted on the application and considered that the proposal is acceptable on ecology terms subject to conditions. This is agreed with by your Planning Officer. It is therefore considered that this proposal would also comply with the aims of policy DP38 of the Mid Sussex Plan and the NPPF.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity net gain is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This is a householder application within the meaning of article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. As a householder application this development is exempt from the requirement to provide biodiversity net gain.

PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

Planning legislation requires the application to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. It is therefore necessary for the planning application to be assessed against the policies in the development plan and then to take account of other material planning considerations including the NPPF.

The conversion of the barn to an annexe is in itself deemed acceptable in principle given its close spatial relationship with the main house, and the proposed use in association with family members, it is considered that there would be a strong functional linkage and a high degree of interdependence. The accommodation is therefore not considered likely to operate as a separate planning unit.

It is considered that the overall size, scale and massing of the proposed single storey rear extension and cellar extension would be harmful to the special interest of the grade II listed building. Therefore it is deemed to conflict with policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan and principles DG49 and DG51 of the Mid Sussex Design Guide.

The proposed alterations to the barn creating a mezzanine would also erode the existing historic fabric of the barn and harmful to the special interest of the curtilage listed barn.

As such there would be a harmful impact to the special interest of the listed building. The harm is considered to be less than substantial and thus para 215 of the NPPF applies. In this case there are not considered to be any material public benefits resulting from the development that would outweigh the identified harm.

The harm caused by the proposed development would clearly outweigh any public benefits and consequently the proposal cannot be supported. It is also relevant that the continued viable use of the building as a residential dwelling is not dependent on the proposals.

Moreover, insufficient information has been provided demonstrating the level of historic interest to both the barn and the main dwelling primarily in terms of the works to the attic and proposed roof insulation works.

The proposal is therefore considered to be contrary to the requirements of policies DP26 and DP34 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, The Listed Building and Conservation Area (LBCA) Act 1990, principles DG49 and DG51 of the Mid Sussex Design Guide and the requirements of the NPPF. The application is therefore recommended for refusal.

Decision: Refusal

Case Officer: Andrew Horrell