

From: Emily Wade <Emily.Wade@midsussex.gov.uk>
Sent: 24 September 2025 16:08:22 UTC+01:00
To: "Hamish Evans" <Hamish.Evans@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: DM/25/1705 and 1706 Sunte House- Works to house and gardens

Hi Hamish

Comments on the above applications.

Sunte House is a substantial Grade II* listed house located in a semi-rural position towards the northern edge of Haywards Heath. From the heritage statement submitted with a previous pre-application enquiry, it is understood that the earliest parts of the building were constructed in the late 17th or early 18th century, apparently replacing an earlier house on the site. The house was extended substantially to the north west around the mid 19th century; a further phase of extensive alteration occurred in the late 20th century, when internal alterations were made at ground floor within the later 19th century extension, and at first floor throughout the building.

The kitchen and formal gardens around the house, as well as the southern approach and circular driveway appear to date from the mid 19th century. The gardens contain a further two Grade II listed structures, an 18th century gardener's cottage and 18th century garden wall located a short distance to the north east of the house. There are also a trio of detached 19th century outbuildings directly to the north of the house known as the dairy, toolshed and garage, which would be regarded as curtilage listed, and contribute positively to the setting of the house.

The setting of the house also includes the former home farmstead of the estate, located to the north east of the house and adjacent to the above mentioned separately listed wall and gardener's bothy. The farmyard includes a large timber framed, weatherboarded barn dating from the late 17th- early/mid 18th century, a late 18th/early 19th century stables and cowshed, and a mid 19th century byre. A mid 19th century cottage forms the north west corner of the yard. These buildings are regarded as curtilage listed, and have group value with Sunte House and the Grade II listed garden buildings, contributing positively to their setting.

Sunte House would be considered to possess architectural interest based on its design, construction and craftsmanship, historical illustrative as a very good example of a late 17th/early 18th century country house of some pretension, altered and extended in response to changing socio-economic circumstances and the needs and desires of successive owners, historical associative value in connection with one of its 20th century residents, the noted anthropologist and writer Geoffrey Gorer (1905-1958), and aesthetic value. It also, as above, has group value with the listed structures within the

garden, curtilage listed domestic buildings around the house, and the curtilage listed historic farmstead to the north-east.

The farm buildings within the farmyard, although altered, will possess architectural interest based on their construction and craftsmanship, historical illustrative value as examples of buildings of their type and period, and aesthetic value based in part on the use of vernacular materials viewed within the landscape from which they were drawn. They also possess group value with the house and associated ancillary garden and domestic outbuildings.

The current proposal follows on from pre-application advice. It relates to the house, ancillary domestic buildings and the gardens, however it should be noted, that concurrent applications have been submitted in relation to works to the farm courtyard and staff cottage, and that in some ways the impact of the proposals on the setting and special interests of the listed house and garden structures, and the various curtilage listed buildings may be cumulative. The proposal is for internal and external alterations including changes to the plan form at all levels, a rear (northern) courtyard extension to the house, a link extension between the dairy and toolshed, demolition of an existing canopy and external staircase to the garage and construction of a replacement timber stair, construction of a new pool house within the former walled garden, and associated hard and soft landscaping. To consider these works in turn:

Internal and external alterations to the main house:

In general, the proposed internal alterations to the house have been revised in accordance with advice given at pre-application stage, and are not considered contentious. However, the proposed formation of a new hallway to the north of the retained service stair remains part of the proposals, and although some of the partitions to be removed are now labelled as modern, there appears still be a loss of historic fabric from the wall between the existing guest WC and storeroom. Given the previous extent of removal of historic fabric from this area, and as there is an existing access parallel to this through the stairwell, this appears an unnecessary adverse impact, and should be omitted, as previously recommended.

Internally to the basement it is now proposed to tank the perimeter walls with a studded cavity drainage membrane. I don't recall discussing this at pre-application stage and I don't believe that we went down into the basement during our site visit. Could the applicant please provide further information including typical elevational and sectional drawings to show the tanking works in relation to the historic fabric of the basement walls, detailed drawings of the works affecting to what appears to be a historic brick floor covering, and further, more detailed photographs of the basement to show its current condition. It would also be helpful if a brief addendum to the Heritage Statement could be provided which discusses the date and level of interest of the basement and of the fabric to the affected walls.

A robust justification for the proposed works should also be provided, beyond the one sentence contained within the DAS. Has a report by an appropriate specialist been

obtained, to identify what problems the condition of the basement is resulting in within the wider house, and what the most appropriate, least interventional, conservation-based strategy to address these issues would be?

The DAS also mentions the installation of plant to the basement area, but no details of this appear to be shown on the plans or elsewhere- can these be provided, including details of any associated works? What use is it intended to put the remainder of the space to? It is always good practice to adapt the use of historic buildings or rooms within them to suit their character, rather than the reverse, and I have some concerns here that the primary aim is to modernise the basement to provide a more 'usable' residential space, at the expense of its historic character. This seems unjustified given the scale of the property and the other spaces available within the ancillary buildings forming part of the estate, however I will await with interest the further information requested above.

It is also proposed to replace windows throughout with double glazed units. I note that Historic England have picked up in their comments on a lack of information with respect to this work, which has not been addressed by the plans subsequently provided by the agent (email of 12th September). I will await the resolution of this issue prior to offering any comment on this aspect of the proposal.

Further information on the proposed new rooflights to the main roof has been previously requested. Can the applicant please detail in each case the relationship of the new rooflight with the adjoining roof structure? Will any rafters need to be cut or trimmed? The submitted structural report suggests that this is the case, but further information will be required to assess the extent of the impact on the historic fabric of the roof. The Heritage Statement should also be expanded from only considering the impact on the external appearance of the house to comment also on impact on fabric.

Annotations to the plans indicate a full upgrade of heating, lighting and plumbing services. More information on these works would be required, in the form of drawings and a detailed method statement, to ensure that there is no adverse impact on historic fabric. This will be particularly important where new bathrooms/ensuites are proposed. This information could potentially be reserved by a condition, if listed building consent is granted.

The plans also note potential repairs to structural steels, timbers and chimney stacks. Further information will be required in respect of this work- this could potentially be required by condition, however the applicant should note that if very extensive work becomes necessary a further application for listed building consent may be required.

The submitted initial structural report includes a sectional drawing of the 19th century rear wing which suggests works may be proposed within the attic area to create a storage loft, including steel truss rods, a raised floor and dwarf walls. Can the applicant please confirm whether any part of this is new work and if so please provide further details including appropriately detailed plans, elevations and sections? The Heritage

Statement should be amended as appropriate to comment on the impact of this work on the historic roof structure. Is a new loft access also required? If so, this should also be detailed.

It is proposed to lift the existing roof covering to allow for the installation of insulation between the rafters and a ventilation zone above. Appropriate drawings including typical sections should be provided to show this work, and to illustrate any impact on the profile of the roof, eaves detail, and internal visibility of the rafters/other members of the roof frame.

Details of the proposed cleaning method for the roof tiles, brick and stonework should be required by condition on any eventual permission granted.

Northern courtyard extension:

With respect to the link between the dairy building and the northern elevation of the house, I note that Historic England have raised an objection in respect of the extent of the glazing to the elevation and roof, on grounds that it is considered that this disrupts the coherence of the reinstated form of the dairy. In light of these comments, I would suggest that the glazing to the roof is omitted, and that to the elevation reduced to a pair of French windows set in brickwork.

Link extension between the dairy and toolshed:

The proposed link extension is not considered contentious, as discussed at pre-application. The internal works to the toolshed appear to be relatively minor and should not adversely impact its character, although we will need to see details of the insulated floor, including typical sectional drawings. These could potentially be reserved by condition on any eventual permission.

Within the dairy, more extensive partitioning is proposed. More should be done here to work with the existing plan form- for example, it is unnecessary to relocate the door between the two ends of the building, with the associated loss of historic plan form and fabric. The internal layout of the building should be amended to allow this to be retained in its existing position, and new partitioning in general kept to a minimum. I do not agree with the (to my mind) rather illogical assessment within the heritage statement that while the partition wall (and presumably doorway) are possibly original they do not contribute to the building's special interest – I would consider that the plan form and fabric is of interest, even if the evolution of function of the building is not clearly understood at the present time.

With respect to the dairy building can the applicant please provide typical sections to illustrate the proposed installation of insulation to the roof? In many circumstances, covering of previously exposed rafters will be considered as contentious, and I note that the interior of the roof as existing retains period character. In this context, insulating below the rafters may not be considered acceptable- we would expect instead that insulation should be installed between and/or above the rafters. Can the applicant please also provide further information with respect to the existing Horsham stone slate

to the roof- I note the intention is to remove and then reinstate this, but is the applicant confident that the condition of the stone is such that it is re-usable in its entirety? If not, given the difficulty in obtaining new Horsham stone slate, what is the applicant's intention to make up any shortfall?

Can the applicant also please confirm that all necessary new external pipework, soil stacks, vents etc. associated with the new WCs to both buildings are shown on the elevations provided?

Works to the garage:

The removal of existing modern canopy is not considered contentious, and nor is the replacement external stair, subject to detail. Details will also be required of the proposed ASHPs to be located adjacent to the garage, including of size, number, and any associated enclosure.

New pool building and associated hard and soft landscaping:

Historic England has raised concerns regarding the scale of the pool building and its impact on the character of the historic walled kitchen garden, including the extent to which it conceals the surviving (albeit altered) part of the surrounding wall. I would echo these concerns, and would agree that although the footprint has been reduced from the initial pre-application scheme, the building remains over-scaled and over dominant within the context of the walled garden. HE has suggested that the size of the building is further reduced and that it is redesigned as a lightweight structure, and I would agree that this would be preferable. I also note that contrary to previous advice the opening in the garden wall to the northern side is retained as part of the current application. In my opinion, as previously stated, this further detracts from the character of the walled garden, which was designed to be self-contained and inward looking. This aspect of the proposal therefore requires further, significant reconsideration.

In summary, although further amendments have been made to the scheme, and further information provided which address some aspects of the concerns previously raised, there remain issues which require further attention/amendment, notably some of the works internally and externally to the house and dairy building, and the proposed new pool house. The concerns raised by Historic England are also highly relevant and should be addressed.

Alterations to access and parking area

Both MSDC and HE objected at pre-application stage to the changes to the historic pattern of access around the house, and to the new parking area proposed to the north-west of it. These works remain part of the scheme as submitted, and the HE objection is reiterated in their recent comments. It is however, subject to confirmation by the case officer, my understanding that these works may fall under permitted development rights, and that they will be withdrawn from the current scheme to be submitted instead under an application for a Lawful Development Certificate. This being the case, I will not comment here on this aspect of the proposal as originally submitted, unless requested to do so.

Comments on the parallel applications affecting the farmyard buildings to follow shortly.

Thanks,

Emily

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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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