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Sent: 26 March 2025 16:21:41 UTC+00:00
To: "Joanne Fisher" <Joanne.Fisher@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: DM/25/0445 Land South of Lewes Road

Hi Jo

Comments on the above planning application. This follows on from pre-application advice.

The proposed development site is a series of open fields fringed with hedgerow and trees to the south of Lewes Road, on the south eastern edge of Haywards Heath. The proposed site access from the road is between North Colwell Farmhouse and 90 Lewes Road. A public right of way runs south from Lewes Road between the Farmhouse and North Colwell Barn, just to the west of the site.

There are a number of heritage assets which would be affected directly or indirectly by the proposed works on the site:

Lewes Road Conservation Area:

The proposed site access is within the boundary of the Lewes Road Conservation Area, as is a narrow strip along its northern edge. The remainder of the site, including the majority of the field areas, is outside of the Conservation Area but within its immediate setting. Although there is not an adopted character appraisal for the Area, the Council's document 'Conservation Areas in Mid Sussex' contains a brief high level analysis of its key features:

'Lewes Road (A272) is situated on the east side of Haywards Heath, and is the main approach for westerly travelling traffic. The area is characterised by low density development, and represents the gradual transition from the countryside to the urban area. The following features make a particular contribution to the character of the Conservation Area:

- the variety of age and style of the buildings, most of which are large properties set well back from the road within spacious grounds;*
- presence of trees and hedges around and between the buildings;*
- the presence of grass verges, hedges and 'fingers' of agricultural land between dwellings which contribute to the rural character of the Area; and*
- the low density of development which creates a gradual transition from the countryside to the urban area.'*

The surviving open rural setting to the south of the Conservation Area is considered to make a strong positive contribution to its significance, in particular contributing to its transitional character, sitting at the boundary between the town and the surrounding countryside. This would include the application site, which although screened to an extent by planting along the northern edge of the fields, will be visible, and potentially prominent, from the properties within the Area, in particular from the upper floors, and in winter. The proposed site access lies within the Conservation Area and is created from the undeveloped eastern strip of garden to North Colwell Farmhouse. The site frontage onto Lewes Road is of trees and hedgerow, which would be lost by the creation of the access, which will also allow views into the site from Lewes Road.

Other than the view towards the access from Lewes Road (view 4), the submitted viewpoints within the LVIA do not consider the impact on views from within the Lewes Road Conservation Area.

Colwell House and ancillary buildings

Colwell House, which is at 108 Lewes Road, is located just to the north of the site. This is a Grade II listed early 19th century house, which is set in fairly extensive gardens. There are a small number of surviving ancillary buildings which may be regarded as curtilage listed or as NDHAs, including in particular the former stables to the north east of the house, and a former lodge house to the north adjacent to Lewes Road.

Colwell House would be considered to possess architectural interest based on its design, construction and craftsmanship, as well as historical illustrative value as a good example of an early 19th century villa of a moderate level of pretension, and aesthetic value. It also has group value with the surviving ancillary buildings around it. When constructed, the villa would have been within a rural setting, reflecting the aspirations of the then owners to a bucolic, but comfortable and stylish lifestyle, close to but outside of the then much smaller town of Haywards Heath.

As such, the surviving rural setting to the south of the listed building would be considered to make a strong positive contribution to its special interest, in particular those parts of that interest which are drawn from historical illustrative and aesthetic values.

The application site constitutes a large part of the wider rural setting of Colwell House, and is in close proximity to it, separated from the listed building and its ground by only a narrow strip of open paddock. Although there is planting along the northern boundary of the site, having visited Colwell House and its gardens it is my opinion that residential development of the scale and position proposed is likely to be visible if not visually prominent in views from the house and its gardens, particularly in winter.

The submitted LVIA does not include a viewpoint from Colwell House or its gardens.

North Colwell Barn

North Colwell Barn, which is just to the north west of the site is regarded by the Council as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA). This is a U shaped 19th century or earlier stone, brick and weatherboarded former farm building, part of Colwell Farm, the farmhouse to which (now replaced with a modern dwelling) was located just to the north east. Colwell Farm is listed in the West Sussex Historic Farmstead and Landscape Character assessment as a historic farmstead dating from the 19th century. The former barn appears from the available map evidence to be one of the earliest surviving buildings in the Conservation Area, and with its former agricultural use has evidential value as to the history and development of this part of Haywards Heath. On this basis I would consider it to be of a mid level of interest within the local context.

Based on the limited information in front of us, I would consider it likely that the Barn would be considered to possess architectural value based on its construction and craftsmanship, as well as historical illustrative value as a good example of an agricultural building of its type and period, and aesthetic value based in part on the use of vernacular materials viewed against the landscape from which they were drawn. As such, the surviving rural setting to the south and south east of the barn will make a strong positive contribution to its significance, in particular

those parts of that significance which are drawn from its historical illustrative and aesthetic values.

The proposed development site is directly to the south east of the barn and forms a large part of its close setting. It is also likely to constitute part of the former farmlands of the Lowlands Farm farmstead, and as such has a historical functional relationship with the NDHA, which strengthens its contribution to its significance. Although there is existing planting on the boundary between the site and the grounds of Lowlands Barn, there is likely to be some intervisibility between the two, particularly in winter. Given the proximity of the site to the NDHA, the proposal has the potential to have a marked impact on the character of its setting.

Again, the submitted LVIA contains no viewpoint from North Colwell Barn or its immediate setting.

The current proposal is an outline application with all matters reserved except for access, for up to 80 houses with associated landscaping, open space, infrastructure and vehicular and pedestrian accesses.

Although we have only an illustrative masterplan before us rather than a fully worked up scheme, it is clear that the development would have a fundamental impact on the character of the site, which would become suburbanised. This will remove and reverse the positive contribution which it currently makes to the settings of the above mentioned heritage assets.

In terms of the Lewes Road Conservation Area, as well as the likely impact on views from properties to the south of Lewes Road, there will also be an increase in noise, activity and light levels within the immediate setting of the Area, where there are now fields. These impacts will adversely affect the semi-rural character of this part of the Conservation Area, and the sense that it represents a transition from town to countryside. The new access from Lewes Road will also have a direct urbanising impact on this part of the Conservation Area. In terms of the street scene of Lewes Road there will be loss of trees and hedging along this part of the road, to the detriment of its transitional, semi-rural character. There may also be channelled views along the access road from within the Conservation Area in which the residential development beyond is visible.

As I noted in my preapplication comments, verified views would be useful in identifying the level of harm caused by the proposal to all of the identified assets, and it is regrettable that with one exception (the view of the access from Lewes Road) these have not been supplied. However, on the basis of the information in front of us I would consider that the impact on the Conservation Area is likely to be one of less than substantial harm, at around the mid-high range of that scale.

With respect to Colwell House, again the impact of the development on the existing wider rural setting of the listed building will be not only visual, but also in terms of increased noise, activity and light levels within close proximity to the house and its immediate garden setting, all of which will detract from the surviving historic rural setting of this country house. This will be detrimental to its special interest as identified above, and how this is appreciated. I would place the level of harm at less than substantial, at around the mid-level of that scale.

In terms of the NDHA at North Colwell Barn, I would place the level of harm caused to be around the mid-level, to an asset of a mid-level of interest in the local context. Again this will not be purely through visual impact, but also in terms of noise, activity and light levels. In the case

of the Barn, the level of impact is also affected by the likely historical relationship between the former farm building and the farmlands which were part of the farmstead.

In making this assessment of the impact on North Colwell Barn I am mindful that the area at the far western end of the site, adjacent to the eastern side of the land associated with the Barn, is shown as open space. This landscape buffer is however of limited depth and includes a play area, and therefore will not retain a rural character. The residential development to the east is open onto this space.

In weight which can be given to the retained or additional planted screening which is noted in several locations around the site will be limited, given that as is noted in the relevant Historic England guidance GPA Note 3 *'The Setting of Heritage Assets'*:

'As screening can only mitigate negative impacts, rather than removing impacts or providing enhancement, it ought never to be regarded as a substitute for well-designed developments within the setting of heritage assets. Screening may have as intrusive an effect on the setting as the development it seeks to mitigate, so where it is necessary, it too merits careful design. This should take account of local landscape character and seasonal and diurnal effects, such as changes to foliage and lighting. The permanence or longevity of screening in relation to the effect on the setting also requires consideration. Ephemeral features, such as hoardings, may be removed or changed during the duration of the development, as may woodland or hedgerows, unless they enjoy statutory protection.'

In this context, the fact that screening will be of seasonally variable and potentially ephemeral planting is significant. Furthermore, the screening in itself may be harmful, to the extent which it succeeds in divorcing the affected assets from their wider rural setting.

In making the above assessment of the proposal I have read and considered the submitted Heritage Statement, however I disagree with the conclusions within this document regarding the nature and in some cases the level of the significance of the various affected heritage assets, the contribution made by the site to these significances, and consequently the resulting impact of the proposed development.

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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