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Planning and Sustainable Economy
Oaklands
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By email to: andy.watt@midsussex.gov.uk

For the attention of: Mr A Watt

Mulberry Cottage/Planning Applications DM/26/1460-1/Landscaping/Objection/RH26 2HU

We are sympathetic to internal re-arrangements and have no argument with those now proposed for Mulberry Cottage; nor to the external works. And it is quite possible that, had the Applicants offered to discuss their plans with us before putting in their Application (or been around this week to field questions about it) we would have understood, and not been put into the position of objecting to, the 'minor Landscape proposals'.

By the way, 'Old Place' is the name by which the whole estate is known. This includes the old stables, and comprises some 13 or 14 dwellings, as well as the main house.

Landscaping is dealt with in points 7.16, 7.17, 7.18 and 7.19. of the Heritage Statement.

Point 7.16

'Modest lawned area calibrated to ensure that the domestication does not erode legibility or functional relationship ...'. We disagree with both the description of 'modest' and the extent of the erosion. See below for further explanation.

Point 7.17

The lawn may have been restricted to the easternmost sector of the Courtyard (please, it is not a garden), but we query the claim that that area is 'visually or spatially peripheral to the historic line of the carriage route and the core of the former service courtyard'. The proposed lawn extends right across the eastern portion of the courtyard, interrupting that line, both visually and physically.

Point 7.18

We do not understand the claim in 7.18 that 'the proposal would not see the division of the courtyard space which runs south from Mulberry Cottage, and Sundial Cottage, and west of White Lodge (White Cottage)'

Point 7.19

In point 7.19 particularly there is reference to 'minor, reversible, landscape interventions' being acceptable in certain circumstances.

We query the subsequent claim that the proposed lawn is 'minimal in extent'. It is proposed to cover one half of that part of the Courtyard area owned by the Applicants. We do not think that one half is 'minimal in extent'.

We also wonder what 'positioned where it will not interrupt key lines of movement' actually means? The proposed lawn would physically interfere with movement across the Courtyard.

If 'reversible' is to have its ordinary meaning, presumably the original Kempe paviers would have to be carefully lifted and then securely stored somewhere so that the change could be reversed in the future. What proposals do the Applicants have for this operation?

The effect of the proposal would be to break up the vista through to the main house and back again, in the course of damaging the historic courtyard in the context of Old Place; and possibly 'interrupt key lines of movement', if we have worked out by then what that means.

We think that the danger the Applicants have themselves questioned is whether they would be introducing too large a level of domestic quality to their part of Old Place. 'Domesticity' should have no material place here. The Courtyard is not a back garden; it is and always has been a paved area, originally a service yard to the old stables, an integral part of the whole.

The wall(s)?

It is not clear to us from the plans or the Application what the Applicants' intentions are with respect to possible walls at each (west and east) end of their part of the Courtyard. We have not been able to find any mention of walls in the Heritage Statement, but there is a passing 'reference' in two plans, one of them on page 3 of the Heritage Statement. On this plan, the eastern and western boundary lines are not drawn as single lines, but hatched double ones. What is the meaning of that? The other plan is in the Application itself; and in that plan there is reference, at the western end of the Courtyard, to a 'brick wall Approx 0.9 ht'.

Walls in our view would be rather domestic, carving up the Courtyard in a way that could never have been within the expectation of CE Kempe, and is contra-indicated by the Applicants themselves in paras 7.16 to 7.19 where, quite rightly, they talk of: 'relationship with Old Place' and the introduction of domesticity (7.16); the historic line of the carriage route (7.17); and the statement in 7.19 that ... 'care has been taken to ensure that this domestication does not erode the legibility of the historic yard or its functional relationship with Old Place'.

We think that walls would be not only turning the Courtyard into a domestic area, but would also represent a permanent, material, interruption to the views along the Courtyard from the stables through to the main house, and back again. However, if the Planners were minded to approve construction of permanent barriers, we would expect them to specify: height, thickness, style of top and type/colour of bricks.

Finally, we well remember Lady Hunt, once of East Wing, speaking for all the residents of Old Place, being most concerned that the Emergency Services should always be free to access all areas of Old Place. Walls would prevent that access.

Generally

We have no real objection to the wrought iron gates, proposed to be re-installed in the doorway to the Cottage, but so far as we are aware, they are not original to the original stables, nor to the adaptation of the stables into accommodation in the 1950s. Our understanding is that they were installed in the late 1980s or early 1990s as a security measure, allowing the main doors to be kept open. What stables would have fancy gates anyway?

In conclusion, we do not think either lawn or wall(s) meet the criteria laid down by the Applicants themselves, let alone what is allowed in a Conservation Area in a complex of historical significance. We think these plans, fine for elsewhere maybe, would in fact violate the historic authenticity of Old Place. So our objections are to the lawn and, if one or more are part of the Application, the wall(s).

