



Mid Sussex District Council
Planning Services
Oaklands
Oaklands Road
Haywards Heath
West Sussex
RH16 1SS

Our Ref: HY/HM/33472

Wednesday 20th August 2025

Dear Caroline,

RE: APPLICATION REFERENCE DM/24/3139 – BOWDERS FARM, BALCOMBE

I am writing to respond to the comments that have been received on the additional information submitted for planning application reference DM/24/3139, which relates to the following development:

"Change of use of wood shop to six Class E Use (Commercial, Business and Service use) units, together with associated works to the building and the use of adjacent land for ancillary car parking. Repairs to adjoining barn. (Heritage Statement and plans provided 09.05.2025. Location and block plans provided 16.06.2025)"

Consultation comments have now been provided by the Conservation Officer which provide a response to the Heritage Statement, elevational drawings and revised Block / Location Plans submitted to address the preliminary comments issued on 12th March 2025.

The response provides agreement that the buildings are not curtilage listed with the farmhouse, but they are regarded as non-designated heritage assets which have group value with, and contribute positively to, the setting of Bowders Farmhouse.

With this in mind, it is relevant firstly to note that the majority of works carried out to the building – namely those carried out to the western and southern wings – prior to the submission of the planning application, fall under the scope of permitted development rights available under Part 7 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as amended – the 'GDPO' – which allow for alterations to industrial and warehouse buildings.

This is due to the fact that the buildings are not listed nor curtilage listed, and the lawful use of a large portion of the building – comprising Units 1, 2 and 3 – falls under Use Class B2 (General Industrial), granted under planning permission reference 07/03409/COU and controlled by condition. The planning permission did not include any planning conditions removing the use of permitted development rights, therefore this part of the building benefits from Part 7, Class H of the GDPO.



It can be concluded therefore that the physical works to the southern and western wings of the building fall under permitted development and do not require further consideration.

Turning next to the northern wing of the building, the national planning practice guidance defines non-designated heritage assets as buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets. As far as we are aware, there is no existing record of the building being identified as a non-designated heritage asset and the owner has not previously been informed of such status. The building is also not listed on a Local List of Heritage Assets – we understand that Mid Sussex does not have a list at the time of writing – nor is it referenced in the Historic Environment Record.

It is the shared view of DHA and the applicant's heritage consultant Pritchard Architecture, that if the Conservation Officer is now seeking to classify the building as a non-designated heritage asset, this designation could only reasonably take effect from the date of formal written notification. As such, at the time of its local listing for planning purposes, the recently installed black wood-grain effect uPVC windows and doors on the building were already in place on the northern wing. Furthermore, it would offer no material benefit to change the windows and doors on the northern wing of the building to a material which differs from that used on the remainder of the building, particularly given the fact that the quality of uPVC used was carefully selected so that it was visually in-keeping with the building and would appear as painted timber window for any passing pedestrian.

The conclusions of appeal reference APP/D3830/W/25/3362137 (August 2025) are also relevant to the further consideration of this part of the application. The application related to the proposed installation of a solar array to the roof of St John the Evangelist church in Copthorne, Mid Sussex. The church is not listed but was identified in the Parish Council's own local list of Heritage Assets. At the time of the application the building was therefore a known and recognised a non-designated heritage asset, unlike the buildings within the application site.

The Inspector concluded that:

"Para 135 of the Framework requires development to be sympathetic to local character and history while not discouraging appropriate innovation or change. The proposal would be an example of appropriate innovation which would respect the character of the building by working with the existing elevations and not altering the shape, scale or overall appearance of the building whilst allowing the building to adapt and change to meet modern demands and continue to serve the community...."

"...The proposal would not provide a direct match in colour or texture to the existing roof covering. However, I do not consider the contrast with the tiles, especially on the upper roof slope which are a darker colour would amount to a feature that would draw the eye, given the size and prominence of the building in its surroundings."

The proposal would be visible from the surrounding area and introduce a new material to the NDHA. However, in my opinion the proposal would not harm the architectural interest of the appeal site, given the significance of the site as a NDHA lies largely in it being an example of a mid-Victorian church, and one of the earliest surviving buildings at the heart of Copthorne Village, neither of which would change. The proposal would show an evolution of the building using materials to meet modern needs..."



Unlike the St John the Evangelist church, the northern wing of the building would not have been a known non-designated heritage asset at the time that the works were completed. However, even when considering the appropriateness of the proposal in general design terms, the same conclusions can be made in so far as the proposals would respect the overall character of the building, which retains its overall form, layout and general appearance, while offering considerable improvements to the energy efficiency of the building as a form of innovation in accordance with the NPPF.

The high quality of material chosen by the applicant appears as a black treated timber and would be perceived as such by passers by, meaning that there would be no material impact on the overall appearance of the building, its character as part of the collection of buildings around Bowders Farmhouse, nor on the character of the High Weald National Landscape.

Fundamentally the application as originally submitted proposed a change of use of a building to support a commercial use, with tenants lined up to occupy the units within the building as soon as planning permission is granted. On the basis that the large majority of works undertaken fell under the scope of permitted development rights, and the remaining works align with those works and indeed enhance the appearance of the building as a whole (such as the improved materiality of the eastern elevation and maintenance works to the adjoining barn), we do not consider there to be any heritage or design matters which would outweigh the significant benefit to the rural economy and local community secured by this proposal.

Car Parking

The size of the parking areas has been questioned, and it was queried whether the car parking area can be reduced. The applicant is keen to retain as much parking as possible to ensure that there is sufficient space available for staff and visitors and to ensure that there are no reasons to put off passersby from entering the site due to a perceived lack of space. Similarly, the applicant is seeking to retain an open view of the building which is considered an attractive feature of Bowders Farm that has been screened from view for many years, and the visibility of the businesses within it will be important.

Nevertheless, the comments in respect of the appearance of the car parking area are acknowledged and it is proposed therefore to install a chestnut cleft post and rail fencing (of a height that sits lower than the line of sight between a driver and the building) along the northern and eastern boundaries of the car park, shown in green below. This would have the added benefit of creating a barrier between the car park and the main access to Bowders Farm for health and safety reasons.

It is also proposed to introduce soft landscaping in plant pots nearer to the entrance, as shown yellow in the extract below. This will help to soften the appearance of the car park from the road whilst retaining the desired parking provision. It is also notable that the parking bays shown below are not marked so parking within the site is likely to be less formal, with intervisibility between the cars and the building following occupation. We welcome Officer feedback on this point, and a revised plan will be issued accordingly.

Please note that there is a line of native hedgerow that has recently been planted along the boundary of Haywards Heath Road which falls outside the scope of this application but

will establish to provide screening to the long side of the car park from views from the highway.



Extraction

It has been queried whether some form extraction and odour control will be required to serve the Food and Safety team. The proposed café occupant will be supplied by the existing bakery to rear of the site so there will be no extraction requirements. The Balcombe Pie Kitchen will be making the pies on site but using a domestic oven as it is not a significant operation. The unit they will occupy is only 11sqm. A compliance condition could be added to any planning approval requiring details of ventilation equipment for future occupiers to be submitted and agreed on an as-required basis.

Yours sincerely



Hannah Young
Assistant Director
hannah.young@dhaplanning.co.uk