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Sent: 09 December 2025 15:13:01 UTC+00:00
To: "Stuart Malcolm" <Stuart.Malcolm@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: DM/25/2661 Land at Coombe Farm

Hi Stuart

Comments on the above planning application.

The proposed development site is an area of farmland and woodland to the east of London Road, south of Sayers Common. There are no designated or non-designated heritage assets within the site itself, but it wraps around the historic farmstead of Coombe Farm to the north and south- this farmstead contains three Grade II listed buildings, Coombe Farm House, Coombe Barn, and a detached granary. There are also a small number of ancillary buildings within the farmstead which may be regarded as curtilage listed. A public right of way (PROW) runs east-west through the site, passing just to the north of the farmstead. A further PROW runs south from this path, through the fields to the west of the farm.

The current application is accompanied by a heritage statement. Based on the information in front of us, including this statement, I would consider that Coombe Farm House, which is a late 17th to early 18th century building with a 19th century rear lean-to, will possess architectural value based on its construction and craftsmanship, historical illustrative value as a good example of a Sussex farmhouse of its period, and aesthetic value based in part on the use of vernacular materials viewed within the landscape from which they were drawn. It also has group value with the other historic buildings within the farmstead.

Coombe Barn is an 18th century timber framed weather boarded barn located just to the west of the farmhouse, as part of a courtyard of farm buildings, which includes a surviving ancillary building attached to the northern end of the barn which forms the northern side of the yard. The barn will possess architectural interest based on its construction and craftsmanship, historical illustrative value as a good example of an 18th century Sussex barn which is likely to have been altered and adapted over the years in response to changing agricultural practices, and aesthetic value based in part on the use of vernacular materials viewed against the backdrop of the landscape from which they were drawn. It also possesses group value with the remainder of the farmstead.

The granary building is located to the south of the house, and to the east of the main farmyard. It is an early to mid 19th century timber framed building set on brick piers. It will possess architectural value based on its construction and craftsmanship, historical illustrative value as a good example of a Sussex farm building of its type and period,

and aesthetic value again based in part on the use of vernacular materials, as well as group value with the rest of the former farm buildings.

The farmstead is recognised in the West Sussex historic farmstead and landscape character assessment as a historic farmstead dating from the 17th century.

The surviving rural setting of the farmstead is considered to make a strong positive contribution to the significances of the heritage assets and how these are appreciated, in particular those parts of those significances which are drawn from the assets' historical illustrative and aesthetic values. The site constitutes the great part of that rural setting, and is acknowledged in the submitted heritage statement to have changed little since the 19th century. The fields to the north and south of the farmstead are prominent in views from the house and former farm buildings, and their immediate settings, and constitute the major part of the context within which the farmstead is appreciated in views from the PROW which runs east-west through the site, partially following the line of the farm entrance track, and from the path which runs south from this to the west of the farmyard. The submitted heritage statement also confirms that at least the greater part of the application site constitutes farmland formerly associated with Coombe Farm- this historical relationship of function strengthens the contribution made by the site to the significance of the listed buildings. That the farmstead is now effectively severed from its historical rural setting to the east by the A23, which can be heard but not seen from the farmstead, only serves to heighten the importance of the remaining agricultural land around the listed buildings.

The current proposal is for outline planning permission for a residential development of up to 210 new houses in the fields to the north, east and south of the farmstead, with associated new access from London Road, internal access roads, parking areas, hard and soft landscaping.

The proposed development will have a fundamental impact on the character of the site, which will become suburbanised. The surviving rural setting of the historic farmstead at Coombe Farm, beyond the gardens immediately around the buildings, would be lost. This will remove and reverse the positive contribution which this setting currently makes to the significances of the listed buildings and of the farmstead as a grouping, harming these special interests of each of these buildings, and the manner in which they are appreciated.

The adverse impact will arise partly in terms of the harmful effect on views from the listed buildings and their immediate settings within the farmstead grouping. The site is currently prominent in views looking north, west and south from the farmstead- built development will be even more so. Although views to the north and west are currently partially screened by a hedgerow, it should be noted that this planting may prove ephemeral, and will not prevent a clear awareness, including views – some glimpsed, some more open- of the housing development beyond.

There will also be a very significant adverse impact on the context within which the farmstead is appreciated in terms of the approach to it along the entrance driveway (also a PROW), and as it is seen in kinetic views moving towards and past the farm on this PROW. At present, notwithstanding the dwelling at Stonecroft, this context is largely rural, with fields and woodland to either side of the track, which aid an appreciation of the former agricultural role of the buildings, and their historical relationship of function with the surrounding landscape. This context will be fundamentally altered, with the fields largely occupied by housing, and the track bisected by an internal access road. Any significant appreciation of the historical rural, agricultural context of the farmstead will be lost.

In respect of this aspect of the proposal's impact, it is noted that the illustrative masterplan has been amended since pre-application stage to set the building line of the development to the northern side of the western part of the farm entrance track slightly further to the north, with some planting introduced between the two. However, it is likely that the development will remain clearly visible from the track.

Views towards the farmstead from the PROW running southwards from the entrance track will also be very significantly affected- at present there are views towards the barn, which are partly screened by a hedgerow but give an indication of the presence of farm buildings in this location. These views are likely to be largely if not entirely lost as a result of intervening built form.

In addition to this visual impact, there is also likely to be a marked increase in business (people, car movements, etc.), light levels, and also of noise within close proximity to the farmstead, to the sides occupied by the development site. This is notwithstanding the adjacent A23. All of these factors will also detract from the current rurality of these parts of the setting of the listed buildings and the positive contribution this makes to their special interests.

The proposal would therefore be considered to fail to meet the requirements of District Plan Policy DP34 to preserve the settings of listed buildings. In terms of the NPPF, the proposal will cause less than substantial harm to all of the designated assets within the farmstead, through impact on setting. Based on the limited information in front of us, I would place this harm as less than substantial, at around the mid-high end of that scale, such that the balancing exercise set out in paragraph 215 will apply.

It is unfortunate that relatively little consideration appears to have been given in the development of the scheme following on from pre-application advice in terms of appropriate mitigation measures which may assist in reducing the level of harm caused by the development to the significances of the affected assets. Such measures could have included amendments to the layout of the development to set built form away from the closest or most visually prominent parts of the setting of the assets, provision of landscape buffers, and planted screening, taking into account both views from the farmstead towards the site, and views of the farmstead from the adjacent PROWs.

However, it should be borne in mind as noted in the relevant Historic England guidance GPA Note 3 'The Setting of Heritage Assets' that screening can in itself be harmful, for example where it severs assets from what remains of their original settings, and its usefulness in particular with respect to planting will be reduced by seasonality and possible impermanence. Whilst I would recommend that these measures should be given much greater consideration in the current application, it is therefore likely that such mitigatory measures will reduce rather than remove the harm caused.

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.

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