

Steve Ashdown

From: Emily Wade
Sent: 08 March 2024 15:58
To: Steve Ashdown
Subject: Land East of Ansty Way DM/23/2866 (Outline residential development)

Hi Steve

Comments on the above planning application.

The application site:

The application site is an extensive area of undeveloped countryside comprising fields, hedgerows, woodland and watercourses to the south of Cuckfield, and east of Ansty. It is bordered to the north by the A272 Cuckfield bypass and to the west by Cuckfield Road and Burgess Hill Road, and is traversed by a number of public rights of way (PROWs) which run through the site and on into the adjoining countryside, or into Ansty or Cuckfield village.

The proposed development and application documents:

The proposal is for a residential development of up to 1450 houses with a new 'local centre', primary school, care facility and sports provision. The proposal includes new access roads from the A272, Cuckfield Road north of Ansty, and Burgess Hill Road south of Ansty, with associated junctions, as well as a network of internal roads and pedestrian routes.

The application is accompanied by heritage information at Chapter 13 of the Environmental Statement (ES) main text, and a separate Heritage Statement at ES Volume 4 Appendix 1.

I have read and considered these documents but do not agree with their findings in all respects, in particular in terms of the exact nature of the significances of the identified assets, the contribution made by setting including the development site to those significances, and the nature and severity of the impact of the proposal on the assets and the manner in which they are experienced (which is generally underestimated). Partly as a result of this, the effectiveness of the suggested mitigatory factors in reducing harm where it is identified is overestimated.

I also note that these documents include no consideration of the impact on the setting and significance of Cuckfield Conservation Area, or of any non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs), whereas as identified below I think there are number of such assets which will be affected by the proposal.

Non Designated Heritage Assets within Mid Sussex

The Council does not currently maintain a Local List of buildings of architectural or historical value within the local context, however as is explicitly allowed within the PPG we do, from time to time, identify such assets during the course of the planning application process. In considering the current proposal, I have identified such assets at Highbridge Mill and at Laines Farm/Court Farm House. The reasoning, or evidence base, for identifying these buildings as being of interest within the local context is set out in my detailed comments below.

Affected heritage assets (designated and non designated).

There are a number of designated and non-designated heritage assets within, adjacent or near to the site which would in my opinion be affected by the proposal. I have considered these moving broadly south to north.

- Harvest Hill House, Burgess Hill Road

A Grade II listed early 19th century country villa located in a rural position between Ansty and Burgess Hill. From historic map regression the grounds appear to include a number of outbuildings which may be regarded as curtilage listed.

The house is likely to 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 country villa

of some pretension, and aesthetic value. It may also have group value with the potentially curtilage listed outbuildings within the grounds.

As such, the surviving rural setting of the house, which is to all sides of its grounds, is likely to be considered to make a strong positive contribution to its special interest and the manner in which this is appreciated. The application site is a short distance to the north east of the listed building. There is a PROW running eastwards from Burgess Hill Road which passes to the north of the listed building and along to the south of the site, in close proximity to it, before turning to the north to run through the proposed development.

The application site constitutes much of the wider rural setting to the north of the listed building, and also affects the character of the approach to it from the north along Burgess Hill Road and the above mentioned PROW.

- Upper Ridges, Burgess Hill Road, Ansty

A grade II listed early 17th century timber framed building in an isolated rural position to the south east of Ansty. The building is likely to be considered to possess architectural value based on its construction and craftsmanship, historical illustrative value as a good example of a modest rural Sussex cottage of its period, and aesthetic value based in part on the use of vernacular materials viewed within the landscape from which they were drawn.

As such, the surviving rural landscape all around the building will be considered to make a strong positive contribution to its special interest and how this is appreciated. The application site constitutes a large part of the wider rural setting to the north west of the cottage, and affects the character of the approaches to it along PROWs from the north and west, including vistas looking southwards towards the listed building.

- West Riddens Farm, Cuckfield Road, Ansty

A grade II listed 16th century former farmhouse with associated historic farmstead, which will include a number of buildings which would be regarded as curtilage listed. The farmstead is included in the West Sussex Historic Farmstead and Landscape Character Assessment as a historic farmstead of the Medieval period. The farmstead is located in a rural position to the south of Ansty.

The farmhouse is likely to be considered to possess architectural value based on its construction and craftsmanship, as well as historical illustrative value as a good example of a Sussex farmhouse of its period, and aesthetic value based on the use of vernacular materials viewed within the landscape from which they were drawn. The buildings within the farmstead also share group value with each other.

The curtilage listed former farm buildings within the farmstead would be likely to possess similar values as examples of agricultural buildings of their type and period.

As such, the surviving rural setting of the farmhouse and farm buildings, which is likely to include the former farmlands associated with the farmstead, makes a strong positive contribution to the special interest of the heritage assets and how this is appreciated. The application site is located in very close proximity to the farmstead, and occupies much of the land to the north, north east, and east of it, affecting the character of views from the farmhouse and farmstead in these directions, as well as longer distance views towards the farm from the PROW running eastwards from Ansty, looking across the intervening valley.

- Mount Noddy Cottage, Cuckfield Road, Ansty

A Grade II listed 18th century or earlier cottage, located within Ansty towards its southern end, to the east side of Cuckfield Road. Historical map regression shows that the cottage was built in a rural setting divorced from the hamlet to the north, but that development has spread south along Cuckfield Road during the later part of the 20th century, to surround the listed building and connect it with Ansty.

The listed building is likely to be considered to possess architectural interest based on its construction and craftsmanship, as well as historical illustrative value as a good example of a rural Sussex 18th century cottage, and aesthetic value based in part on the use of vernacular materials.

As such, the surviving rural setting to the east, west and south of the house makes a positive contribution to the special interest of the building and the manner in which this is appreciated. The application site constitutes the rural setting to the east and south- although this is not a direct relationship due to the modern development around the cottage, the fields to the south along Cuckfield Road make a strong contribution to the character of the approach to the listed building from this direction.

- Old Place and The Barn House, Cuckfield Road, Ansty

This pair of Grade II listed buildings, which lie at a short distance to the east of Ansty along a track which is also a PROW, constitute the former farmhouse and barn of Ansty Farm, which is recorded in the West Sussex Historic Farmstead and Landscape Character Assessment as a historic farmstead of the post medieval period. The former farmstead also includes a number of surviving outbuildings which are likely to be regarded as curtilage listed.

The former farmhouse is likely to be considered to possess architectural value based on its construction and craftsmanship, as well as historical illustrative value as a good example of a Sussex farmhouse of its period, and aesthetic value based on the use of vernacular materials viewed within the landscape from which they were drawn. The buildings within the farmstead also share group value with each other.

The Grade II listed former barn, which has now been converted for residential use, is likely to possess similar values as a good example of an agricultural building of its type and period.

The curtilage listed former farm buildings within the farmstead would also possess similar values.

As such, the surviving rural setting of the listed and curtilage listed buildings, which lies to all sides of the farmstead, makes a strong positive contribution to the special interests of the buildings and how these are appreciated. The application site completely surrounds the farmstead, and is in essence this rural setting. The fields and woodlands of the site also currently provide separation between the farmstead and Ansty, creating a sense of rural isolation. The above mentioned PROW runs eastwards from Ansty along the entrance track to the farm, and then continues east further into countryside also forming part of the proposed development site.

The character of the development site affects a wide range of shorter and longer distance views and vistas looking between the former farmstead and the surrounding landscape, including from PROWs. There are also currently reciprocal views between the farmstead and the mill group at Highbridge Mill (see below) across the site.

- Mackrell's Farm Cottage, Copyhold Lane, Cuckfield

A grade II listed 17th century former farmhouse, located in an isolated rural position to the south of Cuckfield. Mackrell's Farm is recorded in the West Sussex Historic Farmstead and Landscape Character Assessment as a historic farmstead of the post medieval period, although there are no apparent surviving outbuildings. The farmhouse is likely to be considered to possess architectural value based on its construction and craftsmanship, as well as historical illustrative value as a good example of a former Sussex farmhouse of its period, and aesthetic value based on the use of vernacular materials viewed within the landscape from which they were drawn.

As such, the surviving rural setting which lies all around the listed building will be considered to make a strong positive contribution to its special interest and the manner in which this is appreciated. The application site lies in close proximity to the north, west and south west of the Cottage, and constitutes a large part of its direct and wider rural setting, influencing the character of views from the listed building and its immediate setting. It also influences the character of the approaches to the farmstead along adjacent PROWs, and views from them.

- Lodge Farm, Copyhold Lane, Cuckfield.

Lodge Farm house is a Grade II listed 15th or early 16th century former farmhouse located in a rural position towards the western end of Copyhold Lane, a short distance to the west of the proposed development site. The former farmstead survives to the south of the house, and is recorded in the West Sussex Historic

Farmstead and Landscape Assessment as a historic farmstead of the medieval period. The farmstead includes a range of buildings around a yard including a former barn, which if not regarded as curtilage listed would be likely to be considered as NDHAs. PROWs run west and north in close proximity to the farmhouse and farmstead towards and into the site.

Lodge Farm is likely to be considered to possess architectural value based on its construction and craftsmanship, as well as historical illustrative value as a good example of a former Sussex farmhouse of its period, and aesthetic value based on the use of vernacular materials viewed within the landscape from which they were drawn. The buildings within the former farmstead would be likely to be considered to possess similar values as examples of buildings of their type and period – more information would be needed to determine if they would be regarded as curtilage listed, and if not their level of value as NDHAs within the local context.

As such, the surviving rural setting of the house and former farmstead would be considered to make a strong positive contribution to the special interests (or local heritage value) of the various assets at Lodge Farm, and how these are appreciated. Part of the site is in particularly close proximity to the north of the house, the remainder is a short distance to the west, and will have a significant effect on the character of the wider setting of Lodge Farm and the approaches to it along adjacent PROWs.

- Highbridge Mill, Cuckfield Road, Ansty

Highbridge Mill is a Grade II listed early 19th century former watermill, with attached later granary, located in a rural position to the east of Cuckfield Road. The Mill was a corn mill (hence the granary building), and would have served the surrounding farms.

As such, the Mill is likely to be considered to possess architectural value based on its construction, craftsmanship, and any surviving internal features relating to its function, as well as historical illustrative value as a good example of a water powered cornmill of its period, altered in the later 19th century by the addition of a granary, and aesthetic value based in part on the use of vernacular materials viewed within the landscape from which they were drawn. The building may also have some communal value as a historical focus of activity of the local farming community.

There a pair of cottages to the west of the Mill, which appear to date originally from the late 19th century, and may have provided accommodation for mill workers. These cottages may be regarded as curtilage listed, or if not are likely to be considered NDHAs due their group value and historical association with the mill itself - more information would be needed to confirm either way. The also possess group value with the Mill, and contribute positively to its setting and to the narrative of its development and functioning.

As such, the surviving rural setting all around the Mill group will be considered to make a strong positive contribution to its special interest and the manner in which this is appreciated.

The Mill will have a particularly strong relationship with the adjacent millstream and sluice, and any the surviving elements of the mill pond (now drained) which was located immediately to its north west, however the building was a functional part of the local rural economy and dependent on surrounding farms for its business, as they were on it for production of flour. The broader rural landscape of fields and farmsteads around the Mill therefore also makes a strong contribution to its significance, particularly those parts of its interest which are drawn from historical illustrative and aesthetic values.

The application site surrounds the Mill group to the north, east, south and west, with the exception of the existing entrance track from the north west and adjoining belts of woodland. The site is in close proximity to the Mill and forms the greater part of its immediate and wider rural setting. There are views towards and over various parts of the site to the north, south and east, both from the upper storeys in particular of the buildings within the group, and from their immediate settings. From the upper floor of the Mill Cottages there are reciprocal views across the site towards Old Place historic farmstead, which reinforce the likely historic relationship between this farmstead and the corn mill which is likely to have served it.

- Laines Farm and Court House Farm, Newbury Lane, Cuckfield.

These buildings are set to either side of a track (which is also a PROW) running south from Newbury Lane, just to the south of Cuckfield village. Formerly all part of Laines Farm, the farmstead (which is still in use) includes an attractive 19th century stone faced former farmhouse (now known as Court House Farm), with to the opposite side of the track a range of characterful farm buildings set around a courtyard (now Laines Farm). Some of these buildings from their appearance and a brief historic map regression exercise are likely to date from the 19th century or earlier. The farmstead is also recorded in the West Sussex Historic Farmstead and Landscape Character assessment as a historic farmstead of the post medieval period.

Based on their architectural character, apparent age, and the surviving coherent form of the historic farmstead, I would consider the surviving 19th century or earlier buildings forming part of the farmstead as an NDHA, of architectural and historical interest within the local context.

As a farmstead, the surviving rural setting of the buildings, including the fields to the east and west of the track, which are still in use as part of the farm, and the wider rural setting to the south, is considered to make a strong positive contribution to the significance of the NHDA within the local context.

The application site, which lies a short distance to the south of the farmstead on the opposite side of the A272, constitutes a large part of the wider rural setting of the farmstead. It influences not only the character of views from and to the farmstead, including along the PROW which runs through the farm and on southwards through the site, but also the character of the approach to it from the south along that PROW.

- Holy Trinity Church, Cuckfield, and associated tombs and lychgates.

Holy Trinity is a Grade I listed mid 13th century parish church located to the southern edge of Cuckfield village. The building is set in an extensive churchyard which includes a significant number (20+) of Grade II listed tombs, as well as two Grade II listed lychgates and associated walls.

The Church is likely to be considered to possess architectural value based on its design, craftsmanship, construction and decoration, as well as historical illustrative value as an exceptional example of a 13th century rural Sussex parish church, aesthetic value based in part on the use of vernacular materials viewed against the backdrop of the landscape from which they were drawn, and communal value as an historic focus of Cuckfield village life.

The tombs and lychgates may possess architectural value based on their design, craftsmanship, construction and decoration, as well as aesthetic value based again in part on the use of vernacular materials, and likely communal value in relation to the local people commemorated by the tombstones.

The church, tombs and lychgates also have group value with each other.

As such, the surviving rural setting to the south of Cuckfield, which is clearly visible in wide reaching views from the immediate churchyard surrounds of the church and the tombs to the south, will be considered to make a strong positive contribution to the special interests of the various listed buildings within the churchyard, in particular those parts of those interests which are drawn from historical illustrative and aesthetic values.

The application site forms a significant part of that rural setting, in particular affecting the character of views to the south west, as well as the character of the approach to the churchyard from the south along the PROW which runs northwards from the site across the A272 and into the village.

The church, in particular its spire, is a prominent local landmark due its height and its elevated position. There are numerous views looking towards the north from PROWs within the site, which reinforce its nature as a landmark building, and historical focus of the local community.

- Cuckfield Park and Lodge, South Street, Cuckfield

Cuckfield Park is a Grade II* 16th century country mansion located in an extensive parkland setting to the south west of Cuckfield village. The house has a formal garden around it which includes a II* listed 16th

century gatehouse and walls, and Grade II listed gazebo with further walling. The group also includes a Grade II listed c.1860 lodge house alongside the entrance driveway from South Street to the east.

Cuckfield Park is likely to be considered to possess architectural value based on its design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration, as well as historical illustrative value as a very good example of a country mansion of its period, and aesthetic value based in part on the use of vernacular materials viewed within the landscape from which they were drawn.

The associated gatehouse, walls and lodge are likely to possess similar values as very good or good examples of structures of their period and type. They also possess group value with each other and the house.

As such, the parkland and wider rural setting of the house and associated buildings will be considered to make a strong positive contribution to the special interests of the listed buildings and the manner in which those are appreciated, in particular those parts of those interests which are drawn from historical illustrative and aesthetic values. The application site is located a short distance to the south of the group, and although intervisibility may be limited, the development will affect the character of the approach to the buildings along the A272 and Cuckfield Road leading on to South Street.

- Cuckfield Conservation Area

Cuckfield Conservation Area covers the historic centre of the village, which has medieval origins, centred on the High Street, South Street and Holy Trinity Church, and extending to the east along Courtmead Road.

The Council has an adopted character appraisal for the Area, which notes that: *'An important characteristic of the conservation area is its relationship with the countryside. The western and southern boundaries of the historic core of the village abruptly meet parkland and countryside. A number of footpaths radiate from the village to the countryside. This interface of historic settlement and countryside is unusual in Sussex where more modern development has usually encircled the settlement.'*

The appraisal continues: *'The churchyard (which is identified as a distinct character area) is a quiet space for contemplation. There are magnificent views of the Downs to the south... Attractive open countryside is never far from the conservation area approached by a number of footpaths.'*

The management proposals also contained in the appraisal include the protection of views into and out of the Conservation Area.

In my opinion, the fundamental significance of the Area, as discussed in the Appraisal, lies in its nature as the historic core of a rural Medieval settlement, which has grown up over many centuries in close connection with the surrounding countryside. As such, the surviving rural setting of the Area, and in particular the surviving close relationship between the Area and the countryside to the south and west, including the far reaching views from the churchyard, make a strong positive contribution to the significance of the heritage asset and how this is appreciated. This will include not only views out of the Area, but also views looking towards it from roads and footpaths to the south and south west, and the character of the approaches to it along these routes, including the key road entry into the Conservation Area (and village) from the south along South Street.

The proposed development site constitutes a significant part of the wider rural setting to the south and south west of the Conservation Area, and in particular affects views looking south-west from the churchyard, far reaching views and vistas looking back towards the village from rural footpaths to the south of the A272, and the character of the approaches to the village along roads and footpaths from the south.

Impact of the proposed development on the character of the site:

Despite some areas of retained open space and woodland, the proposal would have a fundamental impact on the rural character of the site, which would be transformed into an extensive suburban enclave, with all the associated built form, hard landscaping, and increased activity (including vehicle movements), noise and light levels. The existing tranquil rural character of the area would be lost.

Impact on the affected heritage assets:

The impact of the proposed development on the site's rural character will remove and reverse the positive contribution it currently makes to the settings and the significances of the above mentioned heritage assets. The exact nature and extent of the impact will vary, and is discussed in more detail below:

- Harvest Hill House, Burgess Hill Road

The proposal includes a 'development block' located at a relatively short distance to the north east of this listed building, and adjacent to a PROW which runs south past the site before turning west to run across the northern boundary of the house's gardens to meet Burgess Hill Road.

The bulk of the site is a short distance further to the north, including a spine road and bus route, and affects the character of the approach to the listed building along Burgess Hill Road from this direction, as well as the degree of separation from Ansty village. A new roundabout allowing access into the site onto the spine road would be a particularly urbanising feature in this context, as well as the proximity of built form to the road.

The proposal will have a fundamental impact on a large part of the wider rural setting of the house to the north. Although direct intervisibility is likely to be limited, the relative proximity of the site including a key spine road as well as other access roads and a bus route will result in a noticeable increase in busyness, noise, and light levels which will have a cumulative effect on the current sense of rural isolation of the listed building. The character of key approaches to the house on foot and by vehicle will also, as above, be adversely affected. The proposed development would remove and reverse the positive contribution of this part of the building's existing rural setting to its special interest and how this is appreciated.

Impact: Less than substantial harm, low-mid.

- Upper Ridges, Burgess Hill Road

As discussed above, Upper Ridges is a short distance to the south east of the site. The house is currently located in an isolated rural position, and is passed by a number of PROWs which run up to and through the site by various intersecting routes. The parts of the site nearest to Upper Ridges and these PROWs, which represent key approaches to the listed building, are shown as development blocks or public open space.

As with Harvest Hill House, although direct intervisibility may be limited, the site constitutes a large part of the wider rural setting to the north west of the listed building. The relative proximity of the site will result in a noticeable increase in busyness, noise and light levels within the setting of the listed building, which will have a cumulative impact on its current (and historic) sense of rural isolation.

The proposed development would also have a marked impact on the character of several approaches to the listed building along the network of PROWs which run past it. This will be harmful to the current positive contribution made by setting to the special interest of the listed building and the manner in which this is appreciated.

Impact: Less than substantial harm, mid.

- West Riddens Farm, Cuckfield Road

West Riddens Farm is located in close proximity to the southern extremity of the site, which is shown as a series of development blocks, and includes a spine road, access roads, and bus route, accessed from a new junction with a roundabout on Burgess Hill Road which would be a short distance to the north west.

The site constitutes a large part of the existing rural setting of the listed building and associated historic farmstead, and is likely to include at least some of the farmstead's former farmlands. There will be extensive direct intervisibility between the farmstead, which has a relatively open aspect to the north and east, and the built development at the southern side of the site, resulting in a very significant impact on the rural character of views looking north, north east and east from the farmhouse and its immediate setting.

There will also be a marked increase in busyness, noise and light levels in close proximity to the farmstead, as well as a very significant impact on the character of the approach to the farm along Burgess Hill Road from the north. Existing views of the farmstead, including the listed farmhouse, from this road would be blocked. These are amongst the most significant public views of the listed building, as the farm buildings adjacent to Burgess Hill Road screen it from sight from the road from positions immediately to the west.

The development will also result in the loss of agricultural character of farmland which is likely to have been historically associated with the farmstead, as part of a functional whole.

The cumulative effect of these impacts on the contribution of setting to the special interest of the listed farmhouse and the historic farmstead, including curtilage listed buildings within it, is likely to be significantly harmful to the special interests of these heritage assets and the manner in which they are appreciated.

Impact: Less than substantial harm, mid-high

- Mount Noddy Cottage, Cuckfield Road, Ansty

The boundary of the proposed development site lies a short distance south of this listed building along Cuckfield Road/Burgess Hill Road, although separated from it the existing houses at West Riddens Cottages and Little Orchard. The site also wraps around to the east and north, although again separated from the immediate setting of the listed building by a shallow belt of existing development.

Direct intervisibility between the site and the listed building is likely to be limited, due to the intervening development, however the proposal will have a marked impact on the currently rural nature of the asset's wider setting, including in particular the character of the approach to it along Burgess Hill Road from the south, which is currently through open fields and woods, but would become urbanised, with the introduction of significant built form adjacent to the road, and a new road junction. This will reduce the extent to which the Cottage can be appreciated as a rural Sussex building, harming its special interest.

Impact: Less than substantial harm; low-mid.

- Old Place and The Barn House, Cuckfield Road, Ansty

The proposed development site would completely encircle the listed and curtilage listed buildings within this historic farmstead. The concept masterplan shows development blocks in close proximity to the south and west, with a 'public open space' incorporating a formal children's play area to the north and east, with further development blocks beyond.

The proposed development would fundamentally alter the existing rural setting around the farmstead, which would become urbanised. As well as the intrusion of highly visible built form encircling the farmstead, fundamentally impacting the character of views from the listed buildings and their immediate settings, including blocking views between the farmstead and other constituents of the historic landscape such as the buildings at Highbridge Mill, the development would result in a significant increase in busyness, noise and light within their surroundings, with a resulting loss of the current (and historic) sense of rural isolation that they enjoy.

It would also remove the existing sense of separation between the farmstead and Ansty to the west, as well as having a fundamental impact on the character of the approaches to the listed buildings along the PROW which runs east-west across the southern side of the farmstead, and on the backdrop within which the listed and curtilage listed buildings are appreciated in glimpsed kinetic views from this PROW.

Impact: Less than substantial harm; high.

- Mackrells Farm Cottage, Copyhold Lane, Cuckfield

The proposed development site is in close proximity to the south west, west, north west, north and north east of the listed building, which is a former farmhouse recognised as part of a historic farmstead. The concept masterplan shows development blocks to the south west and north west, with the spine road and

road bridge linking them running to the west of the farmstead. Allotments, a sports facility, and public open space are also shown to the north west, and north east.

The development site forms a significant part of the immediate and wider rural setting of Mackrells Farm Cottage, and also contributes strongly to the character of the approaches to it along the adjacent PROW running north- south to the west of the farmstead. The current proposal would remove and reverse the positive contribution which the site currently makes, through setting, to the special interest of the listed building, in that it would become suburbanised.

There is likely to be some direct intervisibility between the development on the site and the listed building and/or its immediate setting. Furthermore, the proximity of significant built form, and of the proposed spine road/road bridge would result in a marked increase in busyness, noise and light within close setting of the farmstead. This would have a significant adverse impact on the existing (and historic) sense of rural isolation enjoyed by the farmstead. The extent of the development is such that it would also remove the physical separation of the farmstead from the existing settlement at Ansty.

The proposal would also have a fundamental impact on the character of the approaches to the Mackrell's Farm along the adjacent PROW, including kinetic views looking towards the listed building from this PROW.

Given the proximity of the site to the historic farmstead, it is also likely that the development site may include part of the former farmlands associated with the farm. The loss of agricultural character of this land will potentially have a greater impact on the setting and special interest of the listed building for this reason.

Impact: Less than substantial harm; mid-high.

- Lodge Farm, Copyhold Lane

The proposed development site boundary is a short distance to the north west of the farmhouse and historic farmstead, where a 'public open space' is shown. Significant built form is located further to the west and north west.

The conversion of the existing fields to the north of the farmstead to a public park will remove their agricultural character, adversely impacting their positive contribution, through setting, to the special interest of the former farmstead and how this is appreciated. This use, together with the built form further to the west and north west, will also likely to result in an appreciable increase in busyness, noise and light within this setting, which will adversely impact the current (and historic) sense of relative rural isolation which the farmstead enjoys.

Furthermore, the proposed development will adversely impact on the currently rural character of the approaches to the farmstead along PROWs from the north and west.

As with Mackrell's Farm Cottage, it is also likely that the proposal will result in loss of agricultural character of fields forming part of the former farmlands associated with Lodge Farm.

Impact: Less than substantial harm; low-mid

- Highbridge Mill, Cuckfield Road, Ansty

The proposed development almost encircles the group of buildings at Highbridge Mill, and constitutes the greater part of the group's surviving rural setting. Although the mill buildings are set at a lower level than the site, there are extensive skyline views looking towards the site from the lower floors of the buildings and from their immediate setting. From the upper floors, there are wider ranging views across the site- for example the views looking south from the upper windows of the Cottages, discussed above, including reciprocal views with Old Place. The application site is also in close proximity to the southern side of the approach to the mill group from Cuckfield Road.

The proposed development would have a fundamental impact on the currently rural character of the landscape around Highbridge Mill, which would become suburbanised, with development blocks shown

in close proximity to the south west, north and north east. A short distance to the east, a spine road is shown bridging the valley down which the mill stream runs.

The proposed development would be highly visible from the mill complex, in particular in views from upper storeys of the building and from the entrance track, and would block the reciprocal views with Old Place mentioned above. It would also result in a marked increase in noise, business and light levels within the setting of the historic buildings.

This would remove and reverse the positive contribution currently made by this extensive part of the setting of the listed building and NDHAs to their significances and how these are appreciated.

Impact: Less than substantial harm, high

- Holy Trinity Church, associated tombs and lychgates

The Grade I listed church and associated Grade II listed grouping of tombs and lychgates are situated in a prominent position to the southern side of Cuckfield village. The church spire in particular is a landmark feature in many views towards the village from the countryside to the south, and the PROWs running through it. Likewise, the open countryside views looking southwards from the churchyard towards the distant Downs are key to placing this group of heritage assets within a rural village context, and form a significant aspect of the backdrop against which the assets are appreciated.

The proposed development site constitutes a very significant part of the wider rural setting of the Church group, and a key element of the vistas looking south from the churchyard. The PROWs running through it also afford a variety of views looking towards the Church and its landmark spire.

The development will have a fundamental impact on the nature of the site, which will become suburbanised. The northern part of the site, closest to Cuckfield village and the Church is proposed as a series of development blocks and a sports facility, but there are also likely to be views looking across the southwards extent of the site, with glimpsed views of the development here also possible.

- Impact: Less than substantial; mid-high.

- Cuckfield Park and Lodge, South Street, Cuckfield

The proposed development site is a short distance to the south of Cuckfield Park. Although intervisibility between the two is likely to be limited, the development would have a significant impact on the character of the road approaches to the Park from the south, and would partially erode the current (and historic) sense of the Park as the historic centre of a substantial country estate, in a rural, edge of village location.

Impact: Less than substantial; low.

- Laines Farm and Court House Farm, Newbury Lane, Cuckfield.

The proposed development site constitutes a large part of the wider rural setting of this historic farmstead, influencing not only the character of views from the buildings and their immediate setting, but also the character of the approach to the farm from the south along the adjacent PROW, including views looking northwards along this PROW (across the A road) from within the development site towards the farmstead.

The part of the site closest to the farmstead, and to the PROW, is shown as sports provision, including (it appears) built form and pitches, with beyond this a spine road. Whilst the sports facility use may retain more of an open nature than the proposed residential development to the west of the spine road, it would nonetheless clearly be of a suburban character. This would remove and reverse the positive contribution currently made by the site to the wider setting of the NDHA.

Impact: Mid level of harm to a NDHA of (based on the information available) a low-mid level of interest within the local context.

- Cuckfield Conservation Area

As discussed above, the proximity of the Conservation Area to the surrounding countryside is a key element of its character. This includes views into and out of the Area, and the character of the approaches to it along numerous PROWs leading into the CA, as well the key approach by road along South Street.

The development site occupies a significant part of the rural setting to the south of the Conservation Area, influencing views into and out of the Area, as well as the character of the approaches to it along PROWs approaching from the south, and the approach by road along Cuckfield Road which leads into South Street.

The suburbanisation of this very substantial part of the Area's setting will be harmful to the manner in which its character as the historic heart of a rural Sussex village is appreciated, and will adversely affect views looking from or towards the Conservation Area from the surrounding countryside. In many cases, views looking towards the village and Conservation Area from the PROWs running through the landscape to the south may be partially or entirely blocked.

The historic separation of Cuckfield village and the settlement at Ansty to the south will also be substantially eroded.

Impact: Less than substantial harm; mid-high.

Summary:

The proposed development would result in a fundamental impact on the currently rural character of a large area of land to the south of Cuckfield village, affecting the settings of a wide range of designated and non-designated heritage assets.

In relation to all the designated assets identified, I consider that a degree of harm would arise from the development. The level of this harm would be in all cases less than substantial, and would vary in severity within this broad spectrum depending on factors including the nature of the significance of the affected asset, the contribution made by the development site as part of the asset's setting to that significance and how its appreciated, and the type development or use which is indicated in this outline application within the relevant area(s).

Paragraph 208 of the NPPF will be relevant, which states that: *'Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.'*

Paragraph 205 will be relevant to the manner in which this balancing exercise is carried out. This states that: *'When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.'*

In carrying out the balancing exercise, the great weight which should be given to the conservation of all of the assets identified should be borne in mind, as well as the higher grade of listing of some of the designated assets affected.

With respect to the NDHAs identified, paragraph of the NPPF will apply, and states that: *'The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.'* I have set out my opinion on the scale of harm caused and the significance of the affected assets above.

Within the Mid Sussex District Plan (2014-2031) Policies DP34 and DP35 will be relevant.

Policy DP34 (Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets) states that: *'Development will be required to protect listed buildings and their settings. This will be achieved by ensuring that... Special regard is given to protecting the setting of a listed building.'* It also requires that: *'The Council will seek to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the character and quality of life of the*

District. Significance can be defined as the special interest of a heritage asset, which may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic.'

DP35 (Conservation Areas) states that: 'Development will... protect the setting of the conservation area and in particular views into and out of the area.'

I consider that the current proposal is contrary to the requirements of District Plan Policies DP34 and DP35 for the reasons set out above.

I would also consider the proposal to be contrary to Policy CNP1 (Design of New Development and Conservation) of the Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan, which states that:

'New development in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan will be permitted where it:

- a) Is designed to a high quality which responds to the heritage and distinctive character and reflects the identity of the local context of Cuckfield...
- b) Is sympathetic to the setting of any heritage asset.'

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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