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Arun District Council, Civic Centre, Maltravers Rd
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From: Martyn White <Martyn.White@arun.gov.uk> **On Behalf Of** Conservation Officer
Sent: 04 September 2026 16:30
To: Planning.Responses <Planning.Responses@arun.gov.uk>
Cc: Hebe Smith <Hebe.Smith@arun.gov.uk>
Subject: Y/35/26/P

Y/35/26/P

Address: Little Meadow Bilsham Road Yapton BN18 0JY

Proposal: Demolition of existing mobile home and replacement with 1 No self build dwelling sited at the front of site

Heritage Assets

Hobbs Farmhouse

Hobbs Farmhouse is a Grade II listed C.18, double pile, detached house of two storeys. The building is stuccoed (and painted) with a tiled roof; the main wing is gabled, and the rear wing is hipped. Mostly painted timber casements. It is interesting to note that the Victoria County History states 'Hobbs Farmhouse, called Bilsham Farm c. 1875 and evidently the true manor house of Bilsham manor, was erected in or shortly before 1718. The front, or principal elevation is orientated away from the site, facing southwards.

The building is of considered to be historical and architectural interest.

The immediate setting of the listed building is made up of the surrounding (former) farm buildings, and the existing garden spaces, which set it within its agricultural surrounds and provide its context as a former farmhouse. The farmhouse is viewed and appreciated from a number of perspectives, with one being from the lane and neighbouring land, which affords views of the principal elevation and a curtilage structure next to a pond feature.

Whilst the neighbouring farmyard buildings to the west of the farmhouse are now converted into residential dwellings, they are curtilage listed buildings. The farm buildings form a courtyard of a mixture of single and two storey buildings which are constructed of a mixture of brick and flint.

Also within its setting is the application site which is located to the east/south-east of the listed building.

The wider setting of the asset is made up of the rural agricultural fields which surrounds it, including the site.

Bilsham Area of Character (Non-Designated Heritage Asset)

The hamlet has recently been identified as a non-designated heritage asset (Area of Character) within the made Yapton Neighbourhood Development Plan. There are also a number of listed buildings in the hamlet, along with some locally listed buildings (also a non-designated heritage asset

Bilsham is a small hamlet of approximately 30 properties. It can be divided into two character areas: west of Bilsham road and east of Bilsham road. Collectively the area has a semi-rural character to it, being a low-density area surrounded by countryside and plenty of vegetation, along with what could be described as small clusters of development that follow the road pattern. Historic mapping identifies that there have been small amounts of development since the 1800's.

The development to the west of the road consists of a limited number of properties which are predominantly focused on the northern side of Bilsham Lane. Development includes Bilsham Manor, the old chapel (a 14th-century chapel used as a shed, but now converted into a private dwelling), Old Bilsham farmhouse and a handful of other properties. The lack of many of the features normally associated with the C.20 such as street lighting and pavements emphasises the rural qualities. As does, the vernacular nature of the buildings themselves.

Old Bilsham Farmhouse, Bilsham Manor and the Old Chapel are Grade II Listed Buildings and of architectural and historical significance.

There is more development to the east of the road, which stretches towards the comet corner junction (and the A259). These include Hobbs Farmhouse, which is a very attractive farmhouse and associated former farmyard, as well as two locally listed buildings (84 and 85 Bilsham Road). The locally listed buildings are non-designated heritage assets.

The area is surrounded by agricultural land which further adds to the semi-rural character of the area. These fields also provide some separation with the neighbouring settlements, the closest being Yapton.

Comments

Impact on Hobbs Farmhouse

The site forms part of the historic agricultural setting of Hobbs Farmhouse and, despite changes arising from neighbouring development, continues to provide an area of open land that contributes to the understanding and appreciation of the listed building as a former agricultural holding.

The proposed dwelling would introduce a domestic building into this open area and reduce the sense of openness around the farmhouse. The siting of the dwelling appears somewhat arbitrary and does not appear to have been informed by the historic layout of the farmstead. The dwelling would sit within what is currently open pasture and would appear as a separate domestic building rather than forming part of the historic farmstead group.

Design and Character

Although described as a barn-inspired design, the proposed dwelling appears primarily as a domestic dwelling rather than a traditional agricultural building.

Whilst the use of brick and flint reflects materials found within the adjoining farmstead, the overall composition, including the L-shaped plan form, projecting wing, domestic fenestration and detailing, lacks the simplicity and functional character typically associated with traditional agricultural buildings.

Whilst timber weatherboarding can be found on agricultural buildings elsewhere in Sussex, it is not a predominant characteristic of the historic buildings immediately associated with Hobbs Farm and therefore does little to reinforce the site's specific local distinctiveness.

The proposal therefore takes only limited cues from the historic farmstead and would not sit comfortably within that context.

Hedging and Mitigation

Hedge planting is proposed along the boundary, and its location is such that it would provide only limited mitigation to the proposed house. Any newly planted hedge would take a considerable period of time to establish and achieve sufficient height and density to filter views effectively. In the intervening years, the dwelling would remain readily perceptible from the shared access and from areas within the setting of Hobbs Farmhouse. Once fully established it would not be of a height sufficient to screen the height of the dwelling.

More fundamentally, planting cannot mitigate the principal heritage concern, namely the introduction of a permanent domestic building into presently open land that contributes to the rural agricultural character and setting of the listed building. While landscaping may soften visual impacts, it cannot remove the change resulting from the development of this currently open area of land.

Bilsham Area of Character

A key characteristic of Bilsham is its dispersed pattern of historic development interspersed with open agricultural land and verdant spaces. The application site forms part of this open framework, helping maintain the loose-knit rural character of the settlement and providing separation between historic farmstead groupings and later development including Little Meadow to the east.

Development of the site would result in the loss of part of the open land that contributes to the character of Bilsham through the introduction of a new dwelling and its associated domestic curtilage. In addition to the dwelling itself, the site would become a domestic garden and there would be no control over the future retention of planting or the introduction of other domestic features associated with the property.

This would diminish the contribution that the open land currently makes to the significance of the Area of Character. The proposal would also have a harmful effect upon the Bilsham Area of Character.

Conclusion

I note that the heritage statement identifies that “In terms of the NPPF, the works are considered to represent 'less than substantial harm', and within the spectrum of harm, to be at the lower level”. I find no reason to disagree with this assessment.

The proposal would result in harm to the significance of Hobbs Farmhouse through development within land that contributes to its historic rural setting and through the introduction of a dwelling whose form, appearance and materials do not successfully reflect the character of the historic farmstead. The proposed landscaping would not sufficiently mitigate these impacts.

The proposal would also result in harm to the significance of the Bilsham Area of Character, as a non-designated heritage asset, through the erosion of an open green space that contributes to the hamlet's rural and dispersed historic character.

The proposal therefore conflicts with Policies HE4, HE6 & HE7 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

In accordance with Policy HE6, any harm to a designated heritage asset is a matter of considerable importance and weight. The extent to which any public benefits justify the identified harm is a matter for the decision-maker. You will also need to have regard to the duties contained within Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended).

Martyn White
Principal Conservation Officer, Planning

T: 01903 737717

E: Martyn.white@arun.gov.uk

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