

**ADC Planning Consultation
Conservation/Design Officer Response**

Application Number	Y/44/17/OUT
Address	Land at Stakers Farm, North End Road, Yapton
Description	New residential development within the setting of designated heritage assets
Case Officer	Simon Davis
Date	27 July 2017

The site is presently an open, gently sloping green space and it is the central one of three new residential developments proposed to the west of North End Road. The listed buildings to the south, south east and north-east of the subject site are principally impacted by the adjacent residential developments. However, the listed buildings immediately to the east of the site are directly impacted by the current proposal and they include:

- Stakers Farmhouse, a Grade II listed building of the early 19th century.
- The Homestead, a Grade II listed building with a date-stone of 1734 and probable earlier origins.

To the rear (west) of Stakers Farmhouse, the south-eastern boundary of the proposal site briefly abuts the edge of the Main Road/Church Road, Yapton Conservation Area.

Para. 132 of the NPPF requires great weight to be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets and notes that significance can be harmed or lost through inappropriate development within their settings. The present proposal is reviewed in terms of the following Policies:

- Local Plan 2003: GEN 22 and Area 2:
- Emerging Local Plan 2014: HER DM1, 2 and 3.

Impacts on the settings of Listed Buildings

1. Stakers Farmhouse is part of a wider group of historic agricultural buildings and the Farmstead as a whole makes an important contribution to the special qualities of the Main Road/Church Road conservation area.

The rural context of the listed Farmhouse has been much compromised and only a narrow green 'buffer' to either side separates it from encroaching modern residential development to the north and to the south. The proposed development results in the loss of open farmland to the rear (west) which is essential to an understanding of the historic function of the building and its importance in the wider landscape.

Due to the relatively flat topography and the presence of intervening buildings, the new development is unlikely to be experienced in the background of views of the listed building from the public realm. However, it will feature strongly in views to the west from the listed building and entirely transform their quality from rural to suburban.

The proposal results in the listed Farmhouse being engulfed in a sea of residential development which obscures its intended function and diminishes its pre-eminence in the landscape. The distinction between what was historically a relatively isolated group of agricultural buildings and the nearby settlement of Yapton is entirely lost and the significance of the heritage asset is harmed in consequence.

2. The setting of The Homestead and its attached ancillary structures has been compromised by modern development to the rear. Due to the relatively flat topography and the presence of the intervening buildings, the new development is unlikely to be experienced in the background of views of the listed building from the public realm. However, views to the west from the upper floor of the Homestead will be transformed from rural to suburban by the expanse of new residential development. The proposal thereby further diminishes the quality of the wider setting of the Homestead and some degree of harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset ensues.

Impacts on the Main Road/Church Road Conservation Area

Only a small part of the south-eastern boundary of the proposal site abuts the conservation area, and a green buffer and well planted boundary treatment intervene. Due to the relatively flat topography and trees, shrubbery and existing buildings, there are few long views in either direction between the new residential development and the designated area. The physical presence of the new built form will therefore have little *visual* impact on the aesthetic qualities of the Main Road/Church Road conservation area. However, Historic England's guidance on the settings of heritage assets notes that harm can result from other impacts, such as increased activity and noise. The construction of a large number of dwellings in close proximity to the conservation area will inevitably result in greater volumes of traffic and generate a higher level of demand for local goods and services. Although these changes may not harm the significance of the designated area per se, they will diminish the traditional village ambience and alter the way in which the heritage asset is experienced.

As previously noted, the proposal results in harm to the significance of Stakers Farmhouse. The listed building is an important component of the Main Road/Church Road conservation area and harm to a key element diminishes the significance of the designated area as a whole.

Heritage impacts

For the reasons described above, the proposal results in some degree of harm to the significance of the conservation area and the two listed buildings to the east of the site. However, the level of harm is somewhat mitigated by the green buffer and well planted boundaries to the east of the development site. The ensuing harm is therefore less than substantial and in such cases, Para 134 of the NPPF advises that 'the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use'.

In terms of the conservation Policies cited above, it is recommended that an on-balance planning decision be made as to whether the wider benefits of the proposal outweigh the resultant harm to the significance of the affected designated heritage assets.

Design Quality

The importance of high quality, locally appropriate design is emphasized in Section 7 of the NPPF, with para. 58 advising that new development should establish a strong sense of place and para. 60 noting that it is proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness.

Historic England and CABI state in 'Building in Context' that when new development occurs in close proximity to designated heritage assets, design should be of the highest standard and new buildings 'recognizably of our age, while understanding and reflecting history and context'. Section 5.4 of the DAS suggests that an architectural approach consistent with this guidance will be pursued at Reserved Matters stage and this is likely to be welcomed.

Section 5.3 of the DAS notes that the scale of development will be reduced towards the development edges and that building heights 'will generally be two storeys...'. This is welcomed as compatible with local village models. However mention is made in other sections of small blocks of flats and more dominant landmark buildings, and it is questioned whether greater height in the built form is appropriate to the local context, where modestly scaled village buildings rarely exceed two storeys. Landmark buildings should be primarily defined by variety in detail and any increase in height kept to a minimum.

While the green buffer and well planted boundaries between the new development and the established buildings to the east are welcomed from the conservation perspective, it is nevertheless noted that both pedestrian and vehicular access is very constricted. This is likely to result in lack of connectivity between the new development and the existing settlement, and this aspect should be further reviewed elsewhere in the planning process.

The DAS suggests that consideration has been given to the design of a safe, welcoming amenity space with compatible uses. Clear delineation of public, semi-private and private spaces is achieved with a hierarchy of boundary treatments and streets are enclosed by active frontages, with 'landmark' buildings occupying strategic locations to facilitate legibility.

As the application is for outline permission only, detailed architectural proposals have not been provided at this stage. However indicative sketches/photographs suggest the new built form is designed and scaled to complement local models and a locally appropriate (indicative) materials palette is included.

When reviewing architectural details as part of a subsequent Reserved Matters application, the following aspects will be carefully considered:

- The rich texture of the neighbouring built form is a local characteristic and it should be given a modern interpretation and continued, so that a strong sense of connectivity between the old and the new is established. However, careful attention must be given to achieving variety and interest without creating suburban chaos.
- The 'scaling up' of modest historic forms to 21st century proportions and the random application of 'historic' elements unrelated to function, such as imitation chimneys, should be avoided.
- Contrived replicas of 'organic development' are usually unconvincing.

- Consistent window treatments across buildings of disparate form intentionally designed to suggest historic 'organic development', appear entirely alien and should be avoided.
- Attempts to match handmade vernacular materials with modern, mass produced alternatives are rarely successful and a better visual effect is likely to be achieved by using honestly contemporary materials which complement, rather than imitate, the traditional palette. Good combinations of modern materials and textures create visual interest and are more appropriate in the context of 21st century buildings.

Angela Haywood
Conservation/Design Officer