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Sent: 21 July 2021 10:44
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Subject: Y/71/21/OUT

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Land At Little Meadow And East Of Bilsham Road Yapton BN18 0JY

Outline application with access for up to 73 No. new dwellings (but retaining Oak Trees & Little Meadow dwellings), 405 sqm of new light industrial buildings as part of an enlarged employment site & Public Open Space. The existing junction of Grevatts Lane West & Bilsham Road will be closed & Grevatts Lane West diverted to a new access point to the South. This application may affect the setting of Grade II Listed Buildings & is a Departure from the Development Plan

Whilst the area does not have a formal designation either as a conservation area or as a local list non-designated heritage asset (Area of Character), there are a number of listed buildings in the hamlet. Further, there are a couple of locally listed buildings. I note that a basic heritage statement has been provided as part of the application, but this only focuses on the nearest one listed building.

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 the 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.

As Hobbs Farmhouse is a Listed Building, the neighbouring farmyard buildings are curtilage listed buildings, and require careful attention to ensure that their significance is not harmed. The farmhouse is an C18, two storey detached building with three windows. It is stuccoed and painted with a tiled roof. It is interesting to note that the Victoria County History states ‘Hobbs Farmhouse, called Bilsham Farm c. 1875 (fn. 219) and evidently the true manor house of Bilsham manor, was erected in or shortly before 1718. (fn. 220) It is of two storeys and rendered, with a tiled roof’.

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. The farmhouse and the former agricultural buildings are of architectural and historic significance, clearly being part of the development of the hamlet.

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.

Proposal

The proposal relates to the development of an additional 71 dwellings in the hamlet, with access being provided from a new access point on Bilsham Road. The development would also include commercial development and open space. The current application appears as a revision to a previously refused scheme. This application alters the number of dwellings, but also the illustrative layout of the proposed development, for instance, what was previously suggested to be open space is now to be developed for housing.

The site covers a large area of land to the east of the Bilsham Road, close to a small group of houses and a small employment site. Whilst it is acknowledged that the application does not need to supply much information, it is considered that the level of information supplied makes an assessment difficult.

Whilst the illustrated layout indicates that the existing/proposed vegetation would attempt to buffer the development from the closest listed and locally listed buildings, the development would still affect the area around which the buildings are experienced, which could be harmful. The proposal would represent a substantial increase in the number of dwellings in the hamlet and would be out of character. Any development of this scale in this location would also not reflect the linear, piecemeal development which is a clear element of the character of the hamlet. It is also assumed that development of this site would take the form of an average housing estate consisting of a mixture of standard house designs which are not found in the hamlet. This impact would be enhanced through the choice of layout and provision of other C20 features, such as lighting, junctions and pavements.

Based on a review of the illustrative layout it would appear that the location of the proposed formal open space and new junction would also be visible on entrance/exit of the hamlet, further affecting the existing character. Ultimately, such a development would suburbanise the area and erode the semi-rural character.

It is also considered that the provision of any new pathways alongside Bilsham Road (in full or part) will further suburbanise the hamlet, which at present does not feature excessive amounts of standard paving.

Grevatts Lane West, which appears on the Tithe map, would also be affected as part of the proposal which is unfortunate.

Conclusion

Whilst the proposed development is separated from the closest listed building and locally listed buildings through the provision of vegetation, it is considered that it would affect the setting of the heritage assets and the character of the historic hamlet of Bilsham.

The proposal is such that the impact can be described as causing less than substantial harm in accordance with paragraph 196 of the NPPF (2019). As such, you will also need to consider the public benefits that the development may achieve as part of your assessment of the application, along with the contents of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended).

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Please note: I work on Conservation for half of the working Week (all day Monday and Friday and Tuesday Afternoons)

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