

**ADC Planning Consultation
Response from the Historic Buildings Adviser**

Application Number	Y/99/13
Address	Land to the north and east of St Mary's Church, Yapton
Description	Outline application for up to 250 dwellings.
Case Officer	Cian Cronin
Site Visit	5 February 2014

Objection

There are two major concerns with this proposal. The first and most fundamental issue is the impact of the development on the setting of the Conservation Area and the Grade I listed St Mary's Church and the second is the total lack of supporting evidence or assessment of these impacts.

The application appears to largely disregard the significance of these assets and their setting as is evidenced by the Heritage Statement which is barely four pages long. The NPPF requires a more thorough and competent appraisal and on this basis alone should be **refused**. As quoted under para 128:

'In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance... '

The major factor in this scheme is the impact on setting, that being 'the surroundings in which an asset is experienced'. This includes views of the Church and those in and out of the Conservation Area which are extremely significant in this instance. The public footpaths leaving the Conservation Area to the north have long views to the horizon and the South Downs National Park, whilst to the north east, both the Cathedral and Arundel Castle can be seen across the immediate fields and countryside. The footpaths are in themselves historic routes and have provided aspects of the village and Church across fields from at least 1839 (see tithe map attached).

Far from being 'featureless arable fields' as claimed in the heritage statement, on the contrary, the agricultural landscape here facilitates open and un-hindered views across the countryside to other highly significant heritage assets, also as part of their setting. Looking back towards the village from the north, the Church and Conservation Area can be seen in their rural context,

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something that would be totally lost if surrounded by development. The idea that to 'cocoon and surround the church' would somehow represent an enhancement of the heritage asset is bemusing to say the least. Similarly, the suggestion that the application will provide public space to expose a 'largely hidden view', of the Church is equally baffling and misguided given that public footpaths already provide this aspect across the totality of the site.

The proposed siting and scope of the scheme will therefore not only block long views of the downs and other heritage assets, but will also impact the immediate historical and agricultural context of the village, raising other issues of setting which similarly have not been addressed.

The proposed gap between the historic village and the new development is symptomatic of this, its arbitrariness is symbolic at best, but ultimately meaningless and lacking any rigour in its assessment. As a consequence it also neglects more holistic impacts which could also undermine the setting and rural context of this part of the Conservation Area. English Heritage guidance on setting clearly outlines a number of physical features and factors which inform the experience of an asset. In this instance these might include:

- Topography
- Other heritage assets (including buildings, structures, landscapes, areas or archaeological remains)
- Definition, scale and 'grain' of surrounding streetscape, landscape and spaces
- Land use
- Green space, trees and vegetation
- Openness, enclosure and boundaries
- History and degree of change over time
- Experience of the asset
- Surrounding landscape or townscape character
- Views from, towards, through, across and including the asset
- Visual dominance, prominence or role as focal point
- Intentional intervisibility with other historic and natural features
- Noise, vibration and other pollutants or nuisances
- Tranquillity, remoteness, 'wildness'
- Sense of enclosure, seclusion, intimacy or privacy
- Dynamism and activity
- Accessibility, permeability and patterns of movement

The agricultural context of course contributes to all of these aspects and as noted has done so for a significant time. As such it assists in maintaining an ability to appreciate and experience the heritage assets in a meaningful way. Any large development will unfortunately impact this in quite profound ways that thus far are not all fully understood, though are likely to cause great harm. From English Heritage's list these are likely to include the following:

- Change to built surroundings and spaces
- Change to skyline

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- Noise, odour, vibration, dust, etc
- Lighting effects and 'light spill'
- Change to general character (eg Suburbanising or industrialising)
- Changes to public access, use or amenity
- Changes to land use, land cover, tree cover
- Changes to communications/accessibility/permeability

The suburbanization of these pockets of agricultural land and the related gentrification of land into park will therefore represent a radical shift in how the heritage assets are experienced in the future. One that has no historical basis and one that will fundamentally fail the test to 'preserve or enhance' the setting as required by the NPPF. Exactly how 250 houses will enhance and preserve the setting of the Church and Conservation Area has not been demonstrated, particularly given the loss of the Downs on the skyline; the loss of views to Arundel Castle and Cathedral and the loss of a solitary and largely quiet agricultural landscape which opens out to the extended countryside from the historic village core.

As can be seen on the tithe map, with the exception of some linear development along Church Lane, all significant development has taken place to the south west of the Church. Here building groups have evolved historically, possibly on the remains of a medieval open field system made up of strips of land. The Church and corresponding Manor (possibly on the site of Church Farm) would have been typical of this arrangement. The fields to the north and the historic setting they represent are thus largely preserved. Given this consistency, the idea of two large groups of housing, sitting largely detached from the village seems alien to the pattern of development here. It also serves to directly conflict with the remaining medieval core of the village and sever it from its historic relationship with the landscape.

This will, with the broader impacts on setting discussed above, represent a significant level of harm to both major heritage assets. One of the core principles of the NPPF is to preserve heritage assets as part of a holistic approach towards sustainability. This includes not undermining their special interest and ultimately, reason for protection.

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