22 January 2024

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MOCKBEGGARS FARM, UCKFIELD, WEALDEN, EAST SUSSEX: HERITAGE

An outline planning application (WD/2022/0648/MAO) was made in April 2022 on land to the south and east of Mockbeggars Farm, north of Uckfield, Wealden, East Sussex (centred on NGR 547545 122991). The proposed development comprises 60 no. dwellings, access and internal roads, parking, ancillary structures, landscapes and open space, drainage, and other associated works.

The Heritage Statement accompanying the application (September 2021) assessed in detail both the archaeological and built heritage elements of the Historic Landscape, detailing the historic use and development of the Site and its immediate environs, identifying the archaeological potential of the Site and the impact the proposals may have on archaeology and built heritage.

Consultee responses were received in May and June 2022 from the WDC (Conservation and Design) Heritage Officer and the ESCC County Archaeologist and are summarised below:

<u>WDC Conservation and Design Heritage Officer</u>

'I can confirm that I have no particular observations to make from a heritage perspective.'

<u>ESCC County Archaeologist</u>

'The information provided is satisfactory and identifies that there is a risk that archaeological remains will be damaged. Nonetheless it is acceptable that the risk of damage to archaeology is mitigated by the application of planning conditions'

The application was subsequently refused on grounds unrelated to Built Heritage and Archaeology and an Appeal lodged by the applicant, with a hearing date set for 6th February 2024. On the 9th January 2024 additional matters were raised by The Mockbeggars Residents' Steering Group. These included a list of heritage assets they felt had not been recognised or assessed (see The Mockbeggars Residents' Steering Group Statement of Case, 9th January 2024).

No additional response has been received from the Conservation and Design Heritage Officer or the County Archaeologist.

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Savills Heritage and Townscape response to the matters raised is set out below:

Mockbeggars Farm

Mockbeggars Farm is recorded on the Historic Environment Record (HER) as a non-designated heritage asset (HER Ref. MES32192) and lies immediately adjacent to the Proposed Development Area. As a non-designated heritage asset it is regarded as an asset of low significance.

The HER states that the farm dates to the 19th century and is formed of a loose courtyard with two sides of the yard formed by agricultural buildings and additional detached elements to the main plan. The farmhouse is set away from the yard, with all the traditional buildings remaining extant. The farm is not recorded on the HER as a former Coaching Inn and Barn as described by the Mockbeggars Residents' Steering Group and is likely a satellite farm associated with the Buxted Estate.

The significance of the farm is based on two main parts – the physical fabric of the farm and its setting.

The proposed development will have no direct impact on the physical fabric of the farm, from where the majority of its significance is derived.

The setting of the farm has a series of component parts of which the immediate setting of the farm, consisting of the farmhouse and barns around the courtyard, provides the greatest contribution to its significance. The proposed development will have no impact on the immediate setting of the farm which will be preserved and remain unchanged in its current form.

The farm's wider setting, which includes the paddocks and agricultural fields immediately adjacent to the farm, adds to the understanding of the farm and to its significance, albeit to a lesser extent than its immediate setting. This component of the setting of the farm will be impacted by the construction of the proposed development by introducing modern development into an area previously farmed by the owners / tenants of the farm. However, the wider setting has already been altered and eroded by the introduction of modern built form through the construction of the garage and caravan showrooms to the immediate west of the farm.

The extended setting of the farm consists of modern housing to the south and east and pockets of woodland, which add little if anything to the significance of the farm and will not be impacted by the proposed development.

In summary, the proposed development will have no direct physical impact on the farm but will impact on a component part of its wider resulting in less than substantial harm (towards the lower end of the scale) to the significance of the farm.

Spring Cottage

Spring Cottage is not recorded on the HER as a non-designated heritage asset and there is no list of locally listed buildings for Wealden. However, the building has been recognised by the Heritage Officer for Wealden District Council as a non-designated heritage asset due to its age and the fact that it represents a traditional roadside cottage of the 18th or 19th century which has not had extensions and retains its original form and character.

The significance of the cottage is based on two main parts – the physical fabric of the farm and its setting.

The cottage is located to the west of London Road and the proposed development will thereby have no direct impact on the physical fabric of the cottage, from where the majority of its significance is derived.

With regard to the setting of the cottage, it's immediate setting, consisting of its surrounding gardens and its position adjacent to London Road will not be impacted by the proposed development. The wider setting consists

of the agricultural fields to the north, south, and west of the cottage on the western side of London Road. All these fields will remain, and the rural setting of the cottage will be retained. To the east, the wider extended setting of the cottage has already been eroded through the construction of the car and caravan showrooms on the eastern side of London Road. The proposed development lies to the south of the showrooms within the extended setting of cottage and provides a limited contribution to the significance of the cottage. Any impact to the setting of the cottage would be negligible.

In summary, there will be no direct impact on the physical fabric of the building and the negligible impact caused to the extended setting of the cottage would result in no more than less than substantial harm (at the very lowest end of the scale) to the significance of the cottage.

Durrant House

Durrant House is not recorded on the HER or in any other way by the Local Authority as a non-designated heritage asset. It has some architectural, aesthetic, and historic interests but this does not automatically mean it should be treated as a non-designated heritage asset.

The main significance of the house is derived from its architectural and aesthetic interests as an Arts and Crafts House with some historic interest linked to its use during the Second World War. The natural sandstone outcrops, which have been suggested, but not proven, to possibly relate to prehistoric activity in the area make no contribution to the significance of the house.

The limited localised significance of the house is derived directly from its fabric (and limited historic interest) and not its setting. The proposed development lies within the wider extended setting of the house, but this makes no contribution to its significance and development within the Site would cause no harm to the significance of Durrant House.

Eagle Rock

Eagle Rock is not recorded on the HER or in any other way by the Local Authority as a non-designated heritage asset. The building has been refused for Listing on two occasions and at present is regarded as an unidentified non-designated heritage asset.

There would be no physical impact on the Eagle Rock which is completely surrounded by woodland and does not share its setting with the proposed development area. As a result, the proposed development would have no impact on and cause no harm to the significance of Eagle Rock.

Conclusions

The Mockbeggars Residents' Steering Group have stated that they believe the proposed development will result in substantial harm to Mockbeggars Farm, Spring Cottage, Durrants House, and Eagle Rock.

Savills Heritage and Townscape do not agree with this assessment, and we also do not agree with their definition of Substantial Harm, a level of harm they say is reached through causing severe or more than minor damage to an assets setting. For Substantial Harm to occur the proposed development needs to result in taking away everything that is significant about an asset (as defined by the NPPF).

We acknowledge that there will be some harm caused to the significance of Mockbeggars Farm due to changes to the wider setting component of the Farm. However, this would not be Substantial and would in fact equate to less than substantial harm (towards the lower end of the scale). There would also only be a negligible impact

to the significance of Spring Cottage, equating to Less than Substantial Harm (towards the very lower end of the scale), and no harm to the significance of Durrant House or Egale Rock.

This assessment has been made in accordance with paragraph 209 of the NPPF (December 2023) which states “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”.



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