



Historic England

Mr Matthew Porter
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Direct Dial: 0207 973 3627

Our ref: P01605423

23 March 2026

Dear Mr Porter

**T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990**

**LAND NORTH WEST OF SOUTHWATER
Application No. DC/26/0366**

Introduction

Thank you for your letter of 4 March 2026 regarding the above application for planning permission. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

Our advice focuses on Great House Farmhouse, a grade II* listed building and the reason for the consultation with Historic England.

Your own Conservation and Landscape specialists should advise on all other heritage and historic landscape matters, including about grade II listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets. You should obtain advice relating to undesignated archaeology from the County Archaeologist.

Background

Historic England previously provided advice to your Authority on 7th November 2022 on Outline planning application (DC/22/1916). This was for a strategic mixed-use development of up to 1,500 dwellings, employment, community, education and sports spaces and facilities, 5 gypsy and traveller pitches; public open space; landscaping and highway infrastructure.

In that letter, we objected to the proposals as they would have caused a high level of less than substantial harm, under the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework



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(NPPF), to the significance of Great House Farm.

We recommended that significant amendments would need to be made to the scheme to reduce this level of harm, which included: removing some parcels of housing development from within the setting of the farmhouse, so that it was not so encircled by development; creating more space between the farmhouse and new development to the west; as well as re-aligning the primary access road and housing so that it would be further away from the listed building. The Outline application was subsequently withdrawn.

We recently provided pre -application advice on the current proposals in our letter dated 8th December 2025. This is appended to the applicant's heritage statement.

Summary

We appreciate that the proposals are a draft allocation in the Regulation 19 Horsham Local Plan and the northern part of the site is an adopted allocation in the Southwater Neighbourhood Plan. A balance therefore needs to be struck between minimising harm and delivering the proposed strategic allocation.

Your Authority will need to give great weight to the conservation of this highly graded listed building, ensuring harm has been minimised, before weighing any unavoidable harm against public benefits, as the NPPF requires.

The applicant has taken on board our previous advice and made amendments to the proposals that have addressed the elements that were causing the most harm to the heritage significance of Great House Farmhouse.

A large green buffer would now be created around the farmhouse to provide a semblance of its rural setting and its appreciation as a former dispersed farmstead within the Low Weald. In addition, the applicant has moved the main spine road further away from the farmhouse.

As a result of these changes, we consider that the harm has been reduced from a high level of less than substantial harm, under the terms of the NPPF, to just below the mid-level within that range.

Landscaping, boundary treatments and lighting for the proposed development parcels near to the farmhouse should be designed to be rural in character, to reinforce the



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semblance of the farmhouse's historic rural setting.

We also recommend that the front elevation of the farmhouse is restored, which would be a significant heritage benefit to help offset the harm to some degree. This could be achieved through a section 106 agreement.

Historic England Advice

Significance of Great House Farmhouse and its farmstead

Great House Farmhouse is of significance as a late 16th to late 17th century, high status, timber framed farmhouse built on an earlier site associated with Sele Priory, bounded by moats or ponds and set within a relict medieval landscape.

Continuous agricultural occupation of the site of Great House Farm can be traced back to 1254, to Simon Terry, an assarter (a clearer of woodland to create fields for agriculture) and tenant of Sele Priory, which held the land until its early dissolution.

The land was endowed to Magdalen College, Oxford in 1480 then acquired by the Lintott Estate before passing by marriage in the 18th century to the Fletcher family. Much of the present field system associated with the farm is of medieval origin.

The associated farmstead contains farm buildings that date from the late 17th or early 18th century, and some of more recent times, which lie to the south-east of the house, outside the area enclosed by ponds and ditches.

The earliest of these, the barn, is shown on the 1844 Tithe Map, along with ranges of buildings to the south and east of the house, and a scatter of outbuildings to the north. Until relatively recently there were stock yards and pigsties immediately south of the farmhouse within an enclosure. The farm buildings, despite being modern in some cases and in poor condition, contribute positively to the significance of the farmhouse by illustrating its agricultural function.

In this area, agriculture resulted in a distinct settlement pattern of dispersed farmsteads and modest hamlets, which evolved from the medieval period. Ancient routeways that connect the isolated farmsteads to each other and the settlements beyond are also characteristic of the area.

To the south-east is College Farm, which has been largely absorbed into housing



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development. This building has historic associations with Great House Farmhouse as both were built on land that belonged to Sele Priory.

Great House Farmhouse can still be appreciated as a component of an historic landscape even though large-scale housing development has taken place on land to the south-east.

This is because undeveloped countryside containing ancient shaws (small strips of woodland), assarts (fields cleared from woodland), ancient hedgerows, routeways and dispersed farmsteads, still surrounds the farmhouse on all sides.

The medieval landscape setting of the farmhouse is one of the reasons given as a reason for its listing at Grade II*.

The Proposals

The proposals are for a residential-led development to provide up to 1,000 homes (a mix of C2 and C3 use classes), an employment area, local retail, community and leisure facilities, provision for nursery, primary and secondary school, gypsy and traveller pitches, landscaping, open space and new road improvements.

The Impact of the Proposals on the Significance of Great House Farmhouse

The new proposals have significantly reduced the harm to the heritage significance of Great House Farmhouse compared to the previous Outline application in 2022 principally by:

- Moving the main spine road further away from Great House farmhouse;
- Removing the parcel of development to the south and replacing this with sports pitches;
- Creating a greater buffer between Great House Farmhouse and the housing parcels to the west and setting the residential parcels within the framework of existing hedgerows and the Saxon manorial boundary;
- Removal of the allotments and retaining the land between Great House Farm and College Farm as open space;



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- Redesigning the parcels to the north-east of the farmhouse to provide an enlarged green open space and to safeguard key views;
- Creating a more informal arrangement for the proposed new barns that better reflects the historic layout.

Nevertheless, the proposals would still cause some harm to the significance of Great House Farmhouse. Taken as a whole the current proposals would cause just below a mid-level of less than substantial harm in the terms of the NPPF.

Planning Policy

a) Local and Neighbourhood Plans

The proposals will need to be assessed against Horsham's Local Plan Policies, the Southwater Neighbourhood Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

b) National Planning Policy Framework

The key policies within the NPPF to consider will be paragraphs 208, 212, 213 and 215, which require that: harm should be avoided or minimised; great weight should be given to the assets conservation and the more important the assets, the greater the weight; any unavoidable harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset should be clearly and convincingly justified by the public benefits of the proposal.

In addition, paragraph 219 highlights that opportunities should be sought for new development within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance, which would be a public benefit that would weigh in favour of the proposal.

c) Draft NPPG

DP3: Key principles for well-designed places a) Context: states that development should contribute to the restoration, reuse and integration of heritage assets.

d) Historic England Guidance

Historic England has produced Good Practice Advice Note 3: 'The Setting of Heritage Assets', which provides a framework to help assess the impacts of development within



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the setting of heritage assets.

We have also prepared a series of guidance documents relating to Traditional Farmsteads that includes: Farmstead Assessment Framework; Historic Farmsteads: Preliminary Character Statement - South East region; South East Farmsteads Character Statement and Adapting Traditional Buildings - Best Practice Guidelines for Adaptive Reuse.

We advise that the proposed layout of the proposed orchard barn area should reflect historic mapping and take on board the advice set out in our guidance in relation to the design and location of any new buildings.

Historic England's Position on the Proposals

The revised proposals have addressed many of the issues we raised in our previous advice and most significantly, the elements that were causing the highest level of harm. These changes have created more of a semblance of the farmhouse's historic rural setting and its appreciation as a former dispersed farmstead within the Low Weald.

In order to effectively reinforce this semblance of the former rural setting, it is crucial the roads are created to be as rural in character as possible; a network of connected open spaces is provided near to the farmhouse; soft landscapes edges rather than hard edges and rural type fencing are provided around the housing parcels that are in close proximity to Great House Farmhouse. In addition, floodlighting should be avoided on the sport pitches near to the farmhouse.

Your Authority should also look for opportunities to better reveal the significance of Great House Farmhouse in line with paragraph 219 of the NPPF. Restoration of the front elevation of the Farmhouse and repairs to the building would achieve this. Restoration of heritage assets is also referred to in the new draft NPPF Key principles of Well-Designed Places (Policy DP3).

Recommendation

Historic England does not object to the application on heritage grounds. We consider that the current proposals have addressed the most harmful elements of the previous scheme from a heritage perspective.



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It will be for the Local Planning Authority to weigh any remaining harm against the public benefits, including any heritage benefits.

We strongly urge your Authority to secure, through these proposals, the restoration of the front elevation of Great House Farmhouse alongside repairs to the building, which would be an important heritage benefit.

Your authority should take these representations into account in determining the application. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us. Please advise us of the decision in due course.

Yours sincerely

Alma Howell

Alma Howell

Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas

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cc: Sean Rix - Senior Conservation Officer



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