

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of the Plans Committee held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield on Monday 4 August 2025 at 7.00pm

Cllr. J. Love (Chair)
Cllr. D. Bennett

Cllr. C. Macve (Vice Chair)
Cllr. K. Bedwell

Cllr. S. Mayhew
Cllr. K. Butler

IN ATTENDANCE:

1 member of the public

Cllr. V. Frost

Cllr. P. Selby

Linda Lewis – Administrative Officer

Minutes taken by Linda Lewis

1.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members and officers were reminded to make any declarations of personal and/or prejudicial interest that they may have in relation to any item on the agenda.

Cllr. Bedwell declared a personal interest at item 7.0 Tree Preservation Orders due to 59 MALLARD DRIVE, UCKFIELD (TM/2025/0170/TPO) being her neighbour.

2.0 STATEMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON MATTERS ON THE AGENDA AT THE CHAIRMAN'S DISCRETION

None.

3.0 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

4.0 MINUTES

4.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2025

P28.08.25 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Plans Committee of the 14 July 2025, be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4.2 Action List

Members agreed to remove the following item from the Action List which appeared later in the agenda.

P96.05.25 WD/2025/0914/MFA LAND SOUTH OF COPWOOD FARM AND TO THE WEST OF THE A22 UCKFIELD BYPASS, UCKFIELD, TN22 3PT

It was noted that the clerk had placed The Draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) Consultation on the Action List to act as a reminder that this was to appear in the agenda of the 25 August 2025.

A member commented, 'That as elections were only held recently, he felt that there should already be a strong understanding of how local people felt, without needing to make costly surveys at this late stage.'

5.0 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

WD/2025/0736/MRM MOCKBEGGAR FARM, LONDON ROAD, BUDLETTS COMMON, UCKFIELD, TN22 2EA

Reserved Matters (appearance, landscaping, layout & scale) pursuant to Outline permission WD/2022/0648/MAO (Outline application for the development of 60 no.

dwellings, access and internal roads, parking, ancillary structures, landscaping and open space, drainage and other associated works. All matters reserved apart from access). Amended documents submitted.

A member commented that there was a rebuttal statement issued in July but no updated consultees reports to say that their requirements had now been met. Therefore, as they were not experts, it made it very difficult for the Town Council to comment on all points that needed to be considered as a whole on this application.

It was noted that there were changes to plot 1 and 2 - revised parking spaces and; changes to housing stock - more one bedroom rental properties.

Members saw no evidence that consultees' concerns had been adequately addressed on the following issues, as there were no responses shown on the Wealden District Council's website:

- Highways had requested a revised layout demonstrating direct surface and unobstructed access to cycle stores, and equivalent for car parking arrangements;
- Changes to the swept path analysis needed to be a revised design; widening on the bends and must ensure all sight lines were within public highway or footway, and avoid reliance on vehicles reversing on blind bends;
- The Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFA) and Southern Water had said that a complete Drainage Strategy, including survey results and technical evidence were essential before any determinations;
- Rother District Council had requested that noise mitigation and pollution control should be specified;
- The Tree Officer had requested enhanced street tree planting on both sides of the primary routes and that Wealden District Council's Standard Condition TPO 5N should be imposed to secure final details of tree planting and acceptable solutions from the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA).

Members discussed further the drainage strategy:-

The Chair confirmed that there had been a later drainage strategy report, which had been uploaded to the planning portal on the 16 July, and proceeded to read from this. She explained that although the revised drainage strategy had removed the requirement for long-term storage tanks, the two SUDs basins still remained. According to the document the Green run-off rates and the SUDs would be adequate. They had also ensured that water coming from the site would be clean to protect the wider catchment area.

Cllr. Bedwell gave specific points:

The downstream infrastructure and point of connection had not been surveyed, - was that now surveyed?.

She stated that it was necessary to know from the LLFA whether what was proposed was sufficient.

Planting and plan overview did cover some of the tree planting, although it was not known if this was adequate to meet the needs of the Tree Officer.

Cllr. Love responded:

The survey had been attached to the drainage report and contained various, maps, photographs and images, which showed that the system did not work because it was blocked/broken, and they would need to put in a new drainage system to connect it to the water course on the other side of the Road. The report mentioned putting in barriers to protect and ensure clean water.

She advised that there was a new plan proposing the drainage system.

The Chair stated that the rebuttal statement had answered the questions regarding the access. It was queried whether the placing of a four-car parking bay would be sufficient for the people of Ringles Cross

It was questioned as to when the Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) were going out as it would be essential that residents were given adequate time to comment. It was noted that they would not be able to apply for a TRO until the planning application had been approved.

The Chair asked the committee that having read the documents, whether there were any points that members wished to add to the Committee's response. She felt that this would enable the consultees to read them and it would give them the opportunity to reply.

P29.08.25 Following lengthy discussion it was **RESOLVED** to defer reaching a decision on this application, due to the material nature of the outstanding matters, in relation to highway safety, sustainable travel, drainage adequacy, landscape quality and compliance with planning conditions. Members could not make a decision until they were able to see evidence that these outstanding items had been resolved and acceptable to the consultees. Members requested to be consulted again once the consultee reports were available.

Members continued further discussion and raised additional queries: -

- i) How would the rebuilding of the drainage system, to connect to the water course impact London Road?
- ii) What impact would the proposed drainage system have on Mockbeggars Farm House and The Barn? - Would they be connected to the filtration system to ensure that water from those two properties was clean. Members would like assurance that the protective filter infrastructure not only went on the Mockbegger site, but that it would also go on the connection before it went underneath the road to connect the two properties;
- iii) As the site had evidence of 'running sand', would the drainage system cope with this and how?
- iv) The management plan for the life of the site, was welcomed, although it was questioned how the system would work if there was, for example, fire in one of the properties? How would the system work with dispensing clean water from such an event? It needed to be clean water due to it connecting to a water course where European Eels, ancient common land and wet and ancient woodlands were present;
- v) Bollards for lighting to protect the night sky was welcomed;
- vi) Concerns that vehicles from the businesses across the road would park in the layby and prevent buses from stopping there. Would they be placing 'no parking' signage?
- vii) When would the TRO be issued to the cottages for the loss of parking? Residents needed to be given adequate time in which to respond;
- viii) The parking being considered further down the road for the cottages was within a root protection area of ancient woodland, and this needed to be considered when surfacing;
- ix) It should also be noted that the house called Durrant House, above the site, had now been put forward for Listing by Wealden District Council, after the owner had withdrawn an application.

Members noted that the Town Council used Durrant House in their appeal documentation and had taken the Appeal Inspector and the Head of Planning to the Durrants site to show them that it was a Non-designated Heritage Site. Wealden District

Council refused to use this as a reason for the housing not to go ahead, yet now wished to get the house listed. It was questioned how was it possible for a building, whose setting had already been ruined, to now be considered for listing?

If it had been listed at the time of appeal there would have been a very good chance that the Inspector may have dismissed the appeal, because the setting around the listed building would have been ruined.

This was the one thing that was now being fought with Bird In Eye, because one of the things that Bird In Eye was dismissed for was the Oast House and the loss of its setting.

Therefore, members wished to include in their response, the original report of the Town Council that went to the Appeal, showing that the Town Council had said it was a Non-designated Heritage Site, and it was thought the Heritage Officer's report, used the wording of the Town Council.

P30.08.25 Members subsequently **RESOLVED** to ask Wealden District Council the above questions i) to ix) and to bring to their attention the paragraphs above regarding the original report of the Town Council and the report of the Heritage Officer. The clerk was instructed to attach to copies of these reports to the Minutes when sending them to the District Council.

Members wished to thank Cala Homes for listening to the Town Council regarding the size and the quantity of the houses and commended them on the system to protect the water course.

WD/2025/1731/F THE OLD QUARRY, SNATTS ROAD, UCKFIELD, TN22 2AP

Proposed extension to existing first floor balcony.

The previous application had included the first-floor balcony extension and the conversion of the garage into housing accommodation. Members had raised some questions and the first-floor balcony part was subsequently removed.

Members were concerned regarding light and noise pollution as this was in an area of habitats; ancient woodland, rockface, bats and newts. Through a conversation with District Cllr. D. Manvell we understood that the officer at the time also concurred with how members of the Town Council felt.

For this application there were no consultee reports to address the concerns that were raised previously. There was an arboricultural assessment and an ecological desk top study, but there were no consultee reports.

Cllr. Bedwell read an email she had that evening written to the Head of Planning, when she referred to this application to demonstrate where members were being asked to comment on an application that had no consultee reports.

[She wrote in her email that there were no consultee reports to give guidance on ecology, impact on ancient woodland or arboricultural assessment, and it was impossible to give considered feedback without knowing what experts see. Since the new web site, these reports were no longer added to the system and she was disappointed that this was another way of sidelining parish views. The Development Manager of Wealden District Council had made it very clear that it was not the role of the Town Council to be privy to consultee information and that the role of the Town Council was merely to comment on what was known and not to assimilate other information. Cllr. Bedwell wrote that she had hoped that those days were over and that now town and parish councils brought something important to the table and asked if that were not the case, what was the point of the Town Council.]

Certainly, recently with Cysleys Farm and Seghers Place it felt like all Town Council comments were being ignored and that the outcome of those developments would be poorer for that, as would our roads, infrastructure and impact of surrounding villages.]

Cllr. Bedwell affirmed that five years ago the committee was told to quote the NPPF, to give detailed responses, and that the committee would be privy to the consultee information. The ability of members to give a considered opinion was being reduced since Wealden District Council's new web site no longer showed those being consulted or the dates those reports were due, and consultee information was often not shown until the last minute. It was felt that the role of the Town Council was being removed and clarity was now needed on its role. As members were not experts how could they make an informed opinion without seeing expert reports.

P31.08.25 It was **RESOLVED** to object to the application on the same grounds as previously given to application WD/2025/0434/F (P79.03.25) and as follows, since due to lack of consultee reports it was not known that any of these concerns had been addressed. It was hoped that answers to previously raised queries would have been addressed within the consultee reports which members were not privy to.

The following grounds for objection as cited in the previous application were as follows:

- Members considered that light and noise pollution from the use of the balcony would be detrimental to wildlife, being in close proximity to where bats were, and its close proximity to ancient woodland, which was a core site of diverse habitats, and therefore against NPPF193C. The species affected would be roosting bats and bats commuting across the site, dormice and nesting birds. Whilst it was noted that badgers were not on the site, they were on Downlands Farm.

There was also concern regarding light and noise and impact on the highway, namely Snatts Road.

One member asked that the clerk also send a copy of the email of five years ago from the Senior Planning Officer of Wealden District Council in which he advised that members should comment quoting the NPPF, giving detailed responses and using consultee reports.

WD/2025/0914/MFA LAND SOUTH OF COPWOOD FARM AND TO THE WEST OF THE A22, UCKFIELD BYPASS, UCKFIELD, TN22 3PT

Variation of Conditions 3, 5, 28 & 31 of WD/2021/2001/MFA (variation of Conditions 10 & 11 of WD/2020/1244/MAJ (proposed development of a solar electric forecourt®, comprising 24 core electric vehicle charging points, a solar photovoltaic (PV) farm of up to 5.5mw and energy storage. The hub building was contain a mix of ancillary dwell facilities including WC's, coffee shop, retail, seating area, meeting rooms/workspace and a display area. Provision of car parking, hard and soft landscaping and access arrangements off the Copwood Roundabout. Diversion of public footpath) in order to enable the commencement of construction of the development prior to the construction of the main vehicle access and completion of a Section 278 Agreement and construction of the pedestrian and cycle access following the completion of the Copwood Roundabout improvements) to allow changes to the alignment and orientation of the solar panels and seek to increase the number of batteries in the energy storage system by consequence of using an alternative battery technology.

Since the Town Council had commented on this application on the 12 May and following a meeting with Invinity, further documents and information had been uploaded to the portal. Members had therefore asked if they were to be re-consulted. The Case Officer had advised that although it was not his intention to reconsult the Town Council, further comments could be submitted. This application was therefore included on this agenda, which was published on the 29 July. Unfortunately, on the 31 July the Officer made his determination to approve the application.

Members expressed dissatisfaction and queried why they were not being reconsulted, since there were updated reports and plans on the portal. The clerk was asked to minute that members felt this to be an 'indictment of the Town Council as representatives of the people of Uckfield, and hence an indictment of the people of Uckfield.'

The Chair explained that her thoughts behind bringing this item back to the committee was because members had had the conversation with Invinity that they were not using the lithium batteries, but were using other batteries. It was understood from the technical specification that this type of battery had a toxicity, and although it was not in flood zone 3, and only in flood zone 1, we did have times when higher water levels needed to be managed, and should there be an incident on site that required the fire brigade for example, those toxic levels would be of concern. Members had also asked for a consultation with Highways on safety in regard to if something were to go wrong ie. a fire or a vehicle crash and had also asked would there be any screening for the 90 x 20ft containers sitting on the edge of the road.

No further resolution was made on this application as a determination of approval had already been made by the Case Officer on the 31 July 2025. Members hoped that the above comments could be forwarded to the Planning Officer.

6.0 DECISION NOTICES

Prior Approval not required:

WD/2025/1173/P12

THE INSTALLATION OF 619 NO. ROOF MOUNTED SOLAR PV PANELS OF TOTAL INSTALLED CAPACITY 281.19kWp

UTOPIA LEISURE CENTRE, DOWNSVIEW CRESCENT, UCKFIELD, TN22 1UB

WD/2025/7501/T

THE INSTALLATION OF A 20M HIGH ORION STREETPOLE WITH 6NO ANTENNAS IN TOTAL, 2NO 300Ø DISHES, 3NO EQUIPMENT CABINETS TOGETHER WITH ANCILLARY DEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT

NEW TOWN CORNER SW, NEW TOWN, UCKFIELD, TN22 5YB

It was commented that this was urbanising a rural area and it was disappointing that the position of this could not be discussed.

Approved:

WD/2025/1436/F

SINGLE STOREY SIDE AND REAR WRAP-AROUND EXTENSION.

94 TOWER RIDE, UCKFIELD, TN22 1NT

WD/2025/1198/FA

VARIATION OF CONDITION 9 OF WD/2021/0903/F (CONVERSION OF EXISTING DWELLING INTO

2 NO. 3 BED DWELLINGS WITH THE ADDITION OF A REAR SINGLE STOREY EXTENSION AND FIRST FLOOR EXTENSION) TO ENABLE REGULARISATION OF THE CHANGES TO THE FLOOR PLANS, SITE LAYOUT AND EXTERNAL APPEARANCE OF THE DWELLINGS.

CLINTZ, SELBY GARDENS, UCKFIELD, TN22 5EF

Appeal Decision:

WD/2025/0227/F - 35 MANOR WAY, UCKFIELD, TN22 1DF - DISMISSED dated 15/07/2025

Withdrawn:

WD/2025/1370/AN 1 X NON-ILLUMINATED FASCIA SIGN.

33 HIGH STREET, UCKFIELD, TN22 1AG

Members noted the Decision Notices.

7.0 TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS

It was to be corrected that the Town Council were the applicant for TM/2025/0170/TPO and not TM/2025/0176/TPO as stated on the agenda.

TM/2025/0170/TPO

WORK TO ONE ALDER TREE WITHIN TREE PRESERVATION ORDER (UCKFIELD)
NO 19/2, 1990

59 MALLARD DRIVE, UCKFIELD TN22 5PW

Applicant – Uckfield Town Council

TM/2025/0176/TPO

POLLARD ONE WASOW TREE TO APPROXIMATELY 4M WITHIN TREE
PRESERVATION ORDER (UCKFIELD) NO 15, 2004

4 BROWNS PATH, UCKFIELD TN22 1LH

TM/2025/0184/TPO

REDUCE HEIGHT OF ONE OAK TREE WITHIN TREE PRESERVATION ORDER
(UCKFIELD) NO 45, 1985

27 SELBY RISE UCKFIELD TN22 5ED

A member raised concerns that to reduce the height of this tree would create an imbalance within the street scene as this oak was one of three being of the same height.

P32.08.25 Members **RESOLVED** to request that the Tree Officer of Wealden District Council visit the site to ascertain that these works were necessary for the health of the tree and for safety, and would request that he allowed the minimum reduction, due to the importance of this oak within the street scene.

Members noted the Tree Preservation Orders.

8.0 MEDIA RELEASE:

HOUSING CONSULTATION GOES LIVE TO MEET FUTURE NEEDS OF WEALDEN RESIDENTS

The consultation is open from 25 July to 31 August 2025.

Members felt that this was a waste of time and a waste of rate payers' money since by 2028 the District Council would not exist and it was highly likely that a Sussex Mayor would be taking over planning and housing.

There were fifteen questions in total, eleven of which were regarding the consultation which members agreed to respond to individually.

It was felt that the residents' responses to the consultation would be ones the District Council would not want to hear, or be able to do anything about, and that the District Council were not pushing back against government plans, as they were following government policy to the letter and to government given figures. It took no account of the 9,000 houses that had already been given permission.

P33.08.25 It was **RESOLVED** that members read the supporting documents and send their individual responses to the consultation.

The meeting closed at 8.08pm.

Built & Natural Environment Team



This form is used to provide a consultation response. The form is completed by a member of the B&NE Team.

Application Reference:	WD/2025/0291/F
Site:	Durrant House, Coopers Green Road, Uckfield, TN22 3AA

From:	Heather Hall, Heritage Officer	Date:	04/06/2025
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Recommendation	Objection
Summary: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Harm to a non-designated heritage asset, to be taken into account under Paragraph 216 of the NPPF	

Policy Considerations
<p>The NPPF Glossary defines a non-designated heritage asset as a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions because of its heritage interest.</p> <p>The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), at Chapter 16, sets the national agenda for 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment'. This, in particular, requires the significance of any heritage asset to be identified and assessed that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) and for this to inform future change in order to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal. Paragraph 202 of the NPPF states that planning should conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations.</p> <p>Paragraph 216 of the NPPF states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. 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.</p>

This national policy intent is addressed by 'saved' Local Plan Policies EN1 and EN27; Core Strategy Policy SP02; as well as Chapter 12 of the Wealden Design Guide.

Assessment

Durrant House has been identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions because of its heritage interest, owing to both its architectural and historic interests. The heritage issue for consideration is therefore the impact of the works on Durrant House as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA).

The 1840 Buxted Tithe Map shows the application site as plot 1250 comprising four acres of plantation known as The Warren, owned by Lord Liverpool of Buxted Place, now Buxted Park. The OS maps suggests that The Warren was laid out with walks and paths from the later 19th century, and linked to Buxted Park to the east via a path leading south off the main entrance drive, crossing the Five Ash Down Road and across the field into The Warren.

Durrant House, initially known as The Warren, is understood to have been built in The Warren in 1939 by the Uckfield builder Stanley Durrant. The house was extended in 1949 by the Durrant Brothers Builders & Contractors with the addition of the east wing. This was single-storey and set slightly away from the main house by a small yard, enclosed on the north and south sides by a stone wall. In 2001 permission was granted for a first floor extension over the east wing, which has not been implemented. At the time of the 2001 application, both conservatories to the south were in place. The larger one adjoining the eastern wing was to be removed as part of those works, and replaced by two smaller balconies from the first-floor rooms.

In its current form, the house represents a significant survival from the interwar period, with post-war alterations by the same builder, representing a later Arts & Crafts style country house named for the builder, Stanley Durrant. The building is constructed of local stone, provided by the former quarry within which it sits, in landscaped grounds with exposed rock outcrops, woodland pathways and a sunken garden, which provides a very interesting and original garden setting to the house. The existing floor plans appear to closely match those from 1949, with only minor changes. The sales particulars indicate significant internal features also survive from the interwar period, including Arts & Crafts style oak joinery, Crittall windows, stained glass and fireplaces representing the original high-quality detailing. It therefore is considered to have both architectural and historic interest as a non-designated heritage asset.

The architectural and aesthetic interests of Durrant House are clearly referred to in the sales particulars. It is therefore disappointing that the application is not accompanied by a heritage statement clearly setting out the significance, and an explanation of how the proposals have responded to that significance, as well as identifying any potential impacts.

The current proposal is for a first-floor addition over the 1940s wing, with a larger roof-deck balcony over the adjoining conservatory. Whilst this proposal is preferable to the 2001 permission, with its contrasting pitched roofs, the proposals would nonetheless considerably alter the form of the subservient eastern wing. The elevations indicate that this would be built over and retaining the existing parapet details as a string course or banding, which would be further replicated on the parapet above. This would have the unsympathetic and incongruous impact on the otherwise very clear form and cohesive appearance of the two-phase design by the Durrants. In addition, the proportions of the proposed first-floor fenestration do not appear to match the host dwelling, and would appear somewhat cacophonous together with the differing fenestration patterns of the ground floor conservatory and the new glass balustrading to the roof balcony. The proposed double-glazed aluminium windows would inevitably have much heavier proportions than the existing steel leaded lights (which are not shown on the existing or proposed plans), which would further call attention to this discordant feature.

On this basis, I consider that there would be an adverse impact on the significance of the non-designated heritage asset. Whilst presently unlisted, the non-designated heritage asset has a high degree of significance, such that it could qualify for statutory listing. Under paragraph 216 of the NPPF, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm to the non-designated heritage asset, in relation to its high level of significance.

Recommendations

On the basis of the above, I **object** to this application.

Paragraph 203 sets out the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Paragraph 135 c) of the NPPF makes clear that a development cannot be considered well-designed if it does not fit into its surroundings, including responding positively to its historic context. Paragraph 219 tasks local planning authorities with *looking for* proposals within the setting of heritage assets that enhance or better reveal their significance. With reference to the above, the proposals are in conflict with Paragraphs 203, 135 and 219 of the NPPF. The Wealden Design Guide also encourages high-quality, contextually-informed design, whereby conflict with this SPD should be afforded weight under Paragraph 139.

In summary, the NPPF recognises that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource that should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Under Paragraph 216, the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account, requiring a balanced judgement with regard to the scale of any harm and the significance of the heritage asset. In this instance, the impacts are considered to be disproportionate to the identified level of heritage interest of the Durrant House, a non-designated heritage asset of high significance.

Objection to WD/2022/648/MAO Mockbeggars

Appreciating the unknown sandstone landscapes adjacent to Mockbeggars which are rich in geodiversity, archaeological and ecological environments:

The following information has only recently come to light and, in part, contradicts the response from Wealden District Council refuting the objections to WD/2022/648/MAO: *'however it is apparent that by way of modern development the connections with the wider landscape have been lost'*. This may be true of the impact on known designated heritage assets, but once again not true of those undesignated assets, hitherto not having been assessed in this planning application. It also emphasises the importance of sites immediately adjacent to the planning application site being important ecological sites which serve to enhance the wildlife corridors. Much of which has apparently been dismissed by Wealden District Council as not being grounds for objection.

The following is yet another example of a collective failure to appreciate the rich and varied landscapes that are to be found north of Uckfield. In this instance the failure ranges from earlier biodiversity studies to map the Local Geological Sites that were identified in a project that ran for about ten years during the 1990s and early 2000s and all of the sites that were identified were subject to condition assessment surveys that took place between 2010 and 2012. 125 sites were identified then and there are currently no plans or capacity for any further designations to be made. Since this identification and designation process took place, some sites have been almost completely lost to development. An example of this is Keymer Tile Works (LGS: TQ31/61). The current landscape assessment done for this planning application fell short of comprehensive investigation together with a lack of local knowledge or understanding just how important this sandstone landscape is for history, archaeology, ecology, and biodiversity. Whilst the sites under discussion here are not under direct threat it is important that they are known about and fully understood.

A visit to Durrants (TQ475233) and Eagle Rock (TQ473233) on Thursday 2nd June 2023 showed that, adjacent to the Mockbeggars site are substantial Ardingly sandstone outcrops. Best visualised in the early Ordnance Survey Maps of 1908 and 1938 (Figures 1 & 2). These are massive sandstone outcrops with overhangs and splits in the sandstone rocks which are not dissimilar to those found locally at the Rocks nature reserve in Uckfield and slightly further afield at Eridge Rocks. No archaeological investigations have taken place here and the possibility of prehistoric, and more specifically Mesolithic activity is high, especially in those areas not subject to quarrying. No information on the quarrying that took place here has been found but the quarried landscape is a fascinating example of a surviving local sandstone quarry, quarried over time and later used as part of the 20th century garden (Figure 5). Elsewhere the rocks have been left untouched and are in their natural state (Figure 6).

Durrants, formerly known as the Warren, is an undesignated heritage asset, highly unusual, country house between Maresfield and Buxted in East Sussex (Figure 3). Built by local master builder Stanley Durrant, in sandstone on the site of a sandstone quarry in 1939, on completion the house was immediately requisitioned by the MoD and the large, flat roof was reinforced to support an anti-aircraft boufers gun for the duration of WWII. It lies above the fields at Mockbeggars and from the front and terrace of the house the development will be visible and the light pollution from the development will adversely affect the rich ecology which are to be found in such rare sandstone landscapes (Figure 4).

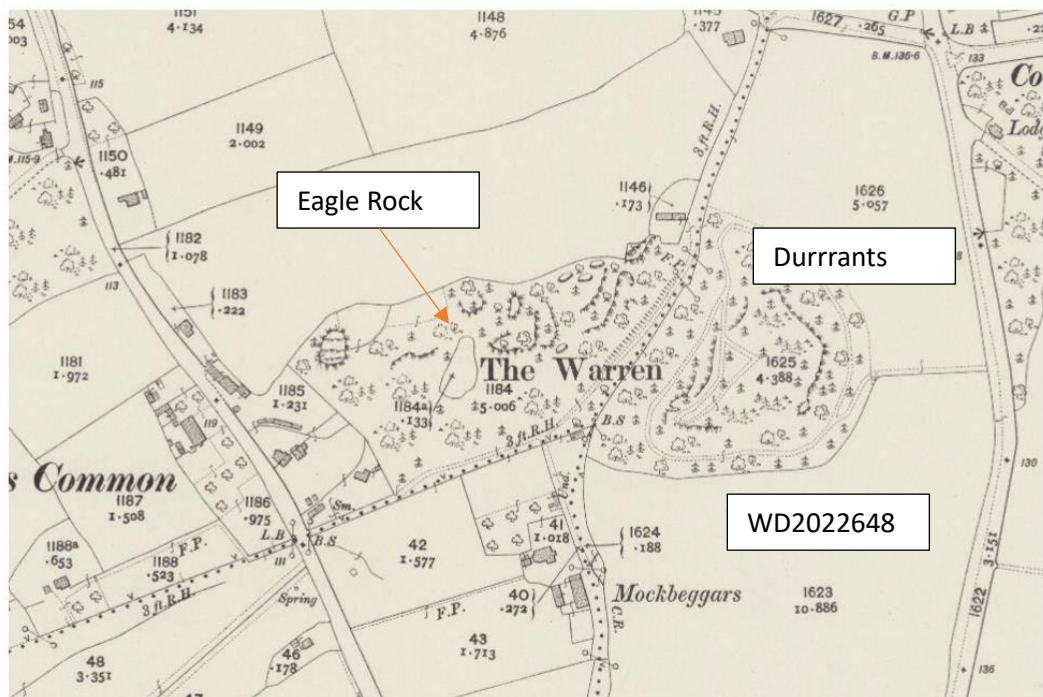


Figure 1 1908 map showing extent of rock outcrops adjacent to planning site

Durrants, formerly known as the Warren, was part of the Buxted Park Estate until it came up for sale in 1922, the land to the west, including Eagle Rocks, was along with Budletts part of the Streatfeild estate of Rocks Park.

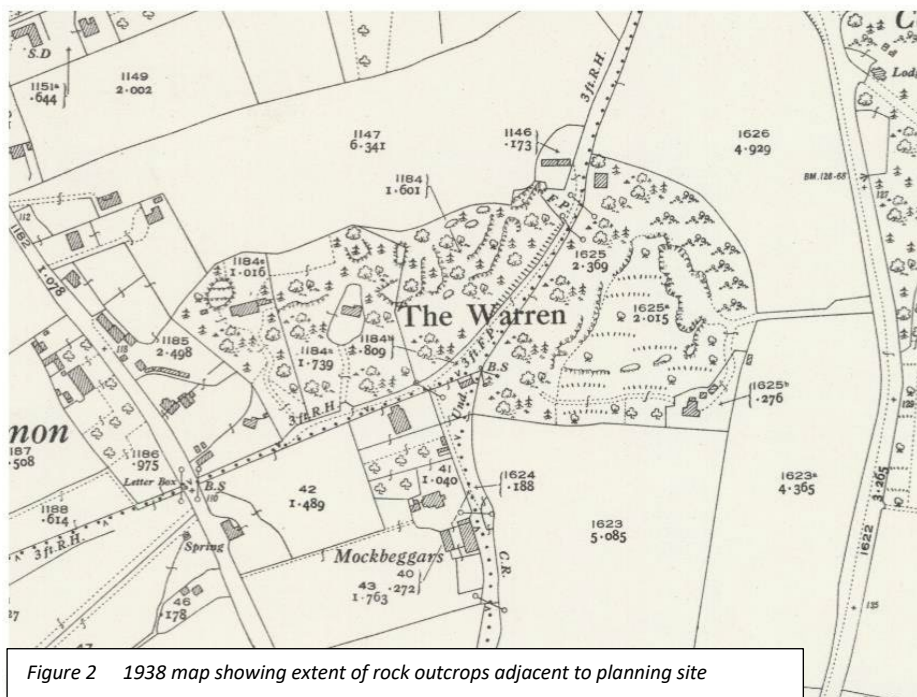


Figure 2 1938 map showing extent of rock outcrops adjacent to planning site



Figure 3 Durrant House



Figure 4 View from Durrants to Mockbeggars development field



Figure 5 Durrants quarry garden



Figure 6 Potential Mesolithic rock shelters

The house at Eagle Rock is yet another undesignated heritage asset, albeit one dating from 1980. The construction of the in-situ slab, steel frame and suspended steel wings with its glazed roofs, heat pump and passive energy collection was undertaken by specialist contractors, while the insulated ply and double-glazed walling and all internal construction and finishes were by carried out by students from the AA School of Architecture, alongside Ian Ritchie Architects and Hanscomb QS. The entire project managed by Ian Ritchie Architects. It was completed in 1981. It has been owned for the last 3 decades by Andy Earl and Sophie. It sits surrounded by its own massive Ardingly sandstone outcrops, which, in this instance, has not been subject to quarrying. More sandstone outcrops are scattered through the area which was once just known as the Warren. There are prolific examples of graffiti encompassing a wide range of dates (Figure 7).



Figure 7 Graffiti, Eagle Rock

Whilst this assessment was written primarily from an historical and archaeological expertise It is a given that such unusual sandstone landscape, and relatively untouched by modern development would support a huge range of ecological diversity. It has been said that Beckstein and Barbastelle bats may be using this locality. A comprehensive bat survey should take place before Wealden District Council make the final decision on this development and acknowledge the overall importance of this nationally important area. Moreover, this geology supports a wide range of mosses, ferns and liverworts (Figure 8).



Figure 8 Example of filmy fern, Eagle Rock

Below is just a brief example of relevant policies which should protect such landscapes:

Geodiversity: The High Weald's sandrock outcrops are important geological features and support nationally rare ferns, mosses, liverworts and lichens, a living legacy from the climate most of Britain experienced around 4000 BC.

NCA122 NE508 provides the additional opportunity to

1: Protect and maintain the sandstone outcrops and other geological features of the High Weald to promote greater understanding of geodiversity and the contributions that they make to the cultural heritage of the area.

The Warren is now under conservation measures from the current owner.

However, in conclusion it is likely that:

The development would impact upon and fragment the local ecological network. Ref: National Planning Policy Framework 2021 sections 174 & 179 and Wealden District Core Strategy Local Plan 2013 policy WCS12 Biodiversity.

From the outset the historic landscape assessment submitted by the developer has lacked information and Wealden, in seeking approval for this development to go ahead have dismissed the numerous ecological, hydrological and over-development concerns that have been submitted. This development should not go ahead in such sensitive site, nationally important site. All of the above information about this unusual geological site and how this has had an impact on the cultural, archaeological and ecological surroundings should be fed into the nascent Local Plan.

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