THE WORTHING SOCIETY

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SB/SCM

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Dear Ms Morin

WORTHING SOCIETY PLANNING CONSULTATION RESPONSE - AWDM/1471/22 :

DEMOLITION OF EXISTING HOUSE. ERECTION OF TERRACE OF 4no. TWO-STOREY DWELLINGS, GARDENS AND PARKING - FOREST BARN, FOREST LANE, WORTHING, WEST SUSSEX, BN13 3FD

Thank you for the opportunity of commenting on the above mentioned planning application which will adversely affect an undesignated heritage asset. I have now had the opportunity to discuss the plans with our dedicated Heritage Team and here are our representations:

1) THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The plans show the intention to demolish Forest Barn, circa 1790, identified as an undesignated heritage asset, to build four two-storey dwellings on what is a very compact site. The available area is quite limited (see below) and, in our opinion, the proposal would represent overdevelopment. There would also be a corresponding loss of amenity to nearby residents of Forest Barn Mews on the west side of the site.

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Aerial view of site

The applicant's Design and Access Statement appears to refer to Forest Barn as a 'ruin' and yet it seems the building, converted to a cottage in the 1980's, was occupied during 2020. It is unfortunate that the historic cowsheds at the rear have been allowed to become dilapidated. Nevertheless, there is apparently no reason why Forest Barn cannot be renovated and brought back into useful residential use.

NB: Unfortunately the distinctive flint boundary wall shown in the image below has already been removed.

2) HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The former farm building, currently known as Forest Barn, stands within a site which was formerly part of the Castle Goring Estate. It is situated immediately adjacent to the Castle Goring Conservation Area which is within the South Downs National Park (SDNP). The estate house, Castle Goring, is listed Grade I and was designed in the 1790's for Sir Bysshe Shelley, grandfather of the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. Forest Barn farm was constructed around the late C1800s and formed part of a group of farm buildings connected to the estate. Although most of the associated buildings have now been lost, Forest Barn survives as part of the layout of the original country estate and therefore has historical value. The building appears on the early Goring Tithe Map (image 1) and later ordnance survey map which clearly illustrates the connection to the Castle Goring Estate (image 2).

Goring Tithe map – Image 1

Figure 3: Ordnance Survey Mapping of 1875
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Image 2

3) APPLICATION FOR INCLUSION ON THE LOCAL INTEREST LIST

As a result of this application, Forest Barn is now recognised as an undesignated heritage asset important to the setting of the Castle Goring Conservation Area. Forest Barn, now under significant threat of demolition, is constructed in the traditional rural and vernacular style of Sussex flint with brick detail. There are very few buildings of this period which survive in the Worthing Area. We consider therefore, that the building is of local historic importance, particularly given the association with the Castle Goring Estate. Although converted to a cottage in the 1980's, the original footprint and early agricultural character of the building survive. In particular, a distinctive arched casement window in the west elevation is an important feature. The open land to the east elevation of Forest Barn gives a visual appreciation of the building and forms a pleasing green space as a buffer to the neighbouring urban style development.

The Worthing Society has recently submitted an application to the Conservation Officer to consider adding Forest Barn to the Local Interest List. We consider the character, materials, age and historical association of the building fulfils the criteria for inclusion on the Local List. At the time of writing we are awaiting a decision on the application.

4) IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMENT ON THE CASTLE GORING CONSERVATION AREA.

We consider the demolition of Forest Barn and the construction of four dwellings on this very compact site and limited green area, will be detrimental to the setting of the conservation area. Forest Barn and associated land is immediately adjacent to the Castle Goring CA. The views to and from the eastern boundary are important to the setting of the CA which was extended in 2016 to include Forest Barn Lane and Goring Way. The somewhat cramped appearance of the new buildings, requiring the loss of this undesignated heritage asset, would not enhance the CA. Therefore, in our view, the plans are not consistent with Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Please see below the map from the 'Castle Goring Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management' plan which shows the related views to the CA from the development site.

The extensions to the Conservation Area boundary were approved by the National Park's Planning Committee on 12 May 2016 and the revised map below shows the new boundary.

Figure 20. Elements making a Positive Contribution to the Special Character of Castle Goring Conservation Area, including listed buildings (red), unlisted buildings which make a positive contribution (blue), areas of woodland (green) and significant view (orange arrows).

The areas of 'significant views' contributing to the 'setting' of the CA are clearly shown on this map by orange arrows and one is located adjacent to the site of Forest Barn area in the southeast corner.

In addition, it is significant that the Castle Goring CA is within the nationally designated South Downs National Park (SDNP). Sussex flint buildings, such as Forest Barn, are an important feature of the historic villages in the South Downs and associated areas within the SDNP. This is referred to in the 'Conservation Area Character Appraisal' for the Castle Goring CA. Please see below the excerpt from the document:

"Castle Goring survives as a good example of a small country estate that developed in the late 18th and 19th centuries and which retains the various elements – main house, various estate buildings, and landscape features - which characterise such establishments".

ADVICE – *that anyone considering development, of any form, which affects Castle Goring Conservation Area or its setting should seek pre-application advice from the National Park Authority before submitting an application and, ideally, before starting any design works.*

We therefore consider that the Applicant has given insufficient weight to the close proximity of the site to the CA and the significance of historic Forest Barn to the overall setting. The national Planning Policy Framework, Section 16, states that our heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource for this and future generations.

5) THE UPCOMING WORTHING LOCAL PLAN

The Worthing Local Plan is nearing adoption by the Full Council so, in our opinion, significant weight should be given to policies DM23 and DM 24 for the 'Historic Environment.' These policies cover the strategic approach to the Historic Environment and identify the importance of Worthing's undesignated heritage assets and, I quote:

"They have been identified for their contribution to the character of the area in which they are located as set out in Worthing's Conservation and Heritage Guide. Their importance to the local area and community will be considered, and account will be taken of the desirability to sustain and enhance their significance and positively contribute to the essential character of these heritage assets. Other buildings and features of design and architectural interest not included above may also be considered undesignated heritage assets and therefore will also be subject to these requirements."

The Local Plan policies for the Historic Environment go on to emphasise the value of local views as they relate to our conservation areas which is a relevant consideration.

6) RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

a) National Planning Policy Framework Section 16
b) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990
c) Worthing Core Strategy 2011 (Policy)
d) Upcoming Worthing Local Plan: Policies DM 23 and DM24

CONCLUSION

For the reasons stated, the Worthing Society objects to this Planning Application which presents as overdevelopment of a compact site requiring the demolition of an undesignated heritage asset. In our opinion, the application is not consistent with the relevant planning policies. Forest Barn forms a 'footprint' in the early history of this area. Very few heritage assets were built in the 1800s and even fewer remain in the Worthing area or surrounding environs. Our heritage buildings are an irreplaceable resource and contribute to our sense of place.

Yours sincerely

Susan Belton

Mrs Susan Belton
Worthing Society Chair

CC: John Head, BSc(Econ),DipTp.MRTPI (Ret'd), Worthing Society Planning Consultant