

**Date:** 07 December 2023

**Title:** Report Item 09 – Black Robin Farm Planning Application

**By:** K Larkin (Deputy Clerk)

**Purpose:** To provide background information on the likely effects of the proposed development on East Dean and Friston

**Recommendations:** To note and discuss the report and documentation on the application, and to consider sending a formal response to the South Downs National Park Authority

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## 1. NEW PLANNING APPLICATION

The following application is currently under consideration by the SDNPA:

**SDNP/23/04238/FUL - Black Robin Farm, Beachy Head Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN20 7XX**

*Change of use of Black Robin Farm to a cultural and education centre with business studios, refectory and event space; including the erection of a new gallery building in place of the lambing barn (due to be relocated), the erection of a refectory building in place of the covered yard building (due to be relocated), the erection of an education building in place of the cow shed; the internal reconfiguration of the flint barn to form a welcome space and visitor shop; erection of a prep kitchen and learning kitchen in place of the west parlour; the erection of a boot room and covered walkway; the internal reconfiguration of the farmhouse and its ancillary flats to form business studios; internal alterations and recladding of the general storage barn to form events space; recladding of the holiday cottages and change of use to ancillary staff accommodation and facilities; new pedestrian access and works to the existing vehicular access, associated infrastructure, vehicle parking, and landscaping; and landscape enhancements*

2. Black Robin Farm is a disused dairy farm that sits on the downs above Beachy Head. The application site lies within the Meads Ward of Eastbourne Borough Council and would normally have been dealt with by EBC. However, the SDNPA has power to call in any major proposal that has a significant impact on the purposes of the Park, and they called this one in on 20 October. The application has been formally submitted to the SDNPA by Eastbourne Borough Council. The parish planning committee understands that the proposal would also have a significant impact on this parish, and has made contact with the SDNPA's Major Projects Team who have confirmed that the door is open for the parish to submit a comment before the application is determined.

3. Here is a link to a short video about the project, fronted by David Dimbleby:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WRSznSN2DAk>
4. Here is link to the Eastbourne Borough Council's own consultation on their future plans <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UK EASTBOURNE/bulletins/37788aa>. The project has secured £11 million of government funding from the Levelling Up fund.
5. Here is a link to the documentation on the SDNPA website:  
<https://planningpublicaccess.southdowns.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=S29NNPTUIMI00>
6. A landowner in the parish attended the parish planning committee meeting on 21 November, and commented in the Public Session that whilst the overall project seems of benefit, the addition of a further 100,000 visitors without traffic calming measures along the Beachy Head road or sufficient parking on site – the Horsefield and Birling Gap are included as solutions within the Workplace and Visitor Travel plan – is unlikely to be of benefit to the landscape or wider community.
7. It is suggested that the South Downs National Park Authority should be made aware that there is already such pressure on parking at Birling Gap in the tourist season that cars park along both sides of the verge on the Birling Gap Road, which is really only single track in some stretches, and that many visitors walk that route, which creates an hazardous mix of pedestrians and clogged vehicles. And tourism is only going to increase.
8. The promotional video states that there will be new walking and cycling routes as well as improved public transport. This is interesting in view of the fact that the SDNPA once had its own plan to introduce a cycle route that would pass through East Dean towards Eastbourne, but did not have the funds to do it. Maybe the implementation of such an infrastructure project should be built into the overall project, which has external funding?