Dear Mrs Burkey,

ROWDEN PARK, PATTERDOWN ROAD, CHIPPENHAM, WILTSHIRE
Application No 14/12118/OUT

Thank you for your letter of 29 December 2014 notifying us of the application for planning permission relating to the above site. We do not wish to comment in detail, but offer the following general observations.

**English Heritage Advice**

Rowden Park is a unique area of land to the south of Chippenham. Formed around the River Avon valley, the land has been designated as a Conservation Area (CA) that was last reviewed and enlarged in 1999. At the centre of Rowden Park CA is the Rowden Manor complex formed from a series of designated houses and converted farm buildings and a separately scheduled moated site. This historically fascinating and architecturally rich group of buildings is set within a rural context surrounded by grassland, copses and hedgerows on gently undulating topography around the river valley. Much of this part of the CA reads as common land formed on the edge of the suburban fringes of the town with access for recreational purposes along public footpaths and tracks.

This proposal is for a large primarily residential development of approx. 1,000 houses and a school to the west of the boundary to the CA on agricultural land between the B4528 and the western side of the CA. Whilst this is a massive green field extension to Chippenham, we understand that it has been agreed through the Core Strategy as a strategic site allocation.
We have inspected the Conservation Area and do not consider that there will be any direct adverse impact on the settings to the designated heritage assets within the central core around Rowden Manor. Indeed, we are pleased to see that the development does not intrude into the CA itself and that this land will be retained as a Country Park. The main impact of this scheme will be on the setting to the conservation area itself and to the rural landscape that dominates this entrance into the town.

On this basis, we would wish to understand that the following assessments have been undertaken or revisions to the design/layout undertaken in order to clearly establish the extent of impact or mitigate against the main impacts of this scheme;

- It would be helpful to have clear evidence to show how the development proposals have been informed through the use of the Historic Landscape Characterisation that is on the Local Historic Environment Record. The current setting to the CA is going to be markedly altered by the presence of this development so we need to be clear that the setting to the conservation area has been fully considered and the appropriate level of mitigation provided.

- The Conservation Area Statement provides a good insight into the significance of the CA; however, it does not appear to have made any assessment of the setting to the CA. This is likely to be due to the age of the document – published sometime before the English Heritage Guidance on CA Character Appraisals. We, therefore, wish to see a Heritage Statement for the development to address this matter in line with Paragraph 128 of the NPPF.

- In general, we believe that more efforts should be made to protect the setting of the CA by introducing more planting where appropriate and where this is not suitable allowing a larger buffer of land between the development and the CA.

- The most southerly part of the new scheme will be particularly conspicuous in the wider landscape. From the B road coming south towards Chippenham, there are various views across the landscape towards the CA. This land is also publically accessed from a number of footpaths that transgress this landscape, many parallel with the river. The fields that have been allocated for this development are important as they all contribute towards the setting of the CA. In this area, we wish to see a reduction in housing...
densities and/or more green space softening the edges of the development and providing a less formal layout to the housing to better reflect the rural character of its context. Consequently, the Masterplan needs to demonstrate how the development will merge into the landscape more naturally with a less artificial edge and reduce the predominantly formal layout of the streets and housing in this part of the scheme, thus making more effort to maintain the rural setting to the southern end of the CA.

We believe that the current scheme does not fully comply with Paragraphs 128 and 137 of the NPPF and would wish to see more work undertaken to ensure that the whole development is successfully integrated into the landscape in order to protect the setting of the Rowden Park Conservation Area at this strategically important entrance way into Chippenham.

Recommendation
We would urge you to address the above issues, and recommend that the application should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance, and on the basis of your specialist conservation advice. It is not necessary for us to be consulted again. However, if you would like further advice, please contact us to explain your request.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Power
Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas
E-mail: caroline.power@english-heritage.org.uk

cc Sarah Gostling- Conservation Officer