

Matthew Perks  
Senior Planning Officer  
Wiltshire Council  
Bythesea Road  
Trowbridge  
BA14 8JN



[matthew.perks@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.perks@wiltshire.gov.uk)  
by email

4 September 2018

Dear Matthew Perks,

**Planning application: 18/04656/FUL & 18/05278/LBC, Courtfield House, Polebarn Road, Trowbridge, BA14 7EG**

SAVE Britain's Heritage writes to object to this planning and listed building application. In our view, the proposed scheme causes substantial harm to the setting of the grade II\* listed Courtfield House and the Trowbridge Conservation Area in which it stands.

Courtfield House is a large grade II\* listed Georgian house, built for a wealthy Trowbridge cloth manufacturer. It was extended over time to include workshops and outbuildings. Constructed in brick, the main façade is elegantly decorated with stone detailing. The main house is complemented by the Polebarn Hall and the Dye-House Range, two 18th century buildings which are both listed at grade II. The garden wall and gate piers are also listed at grade II. The large orchard adjoining the Town Park further demonstrates the prominence of the historic house. The site is included in the Trowbridge Conservation Area.

The current planning application is for 21 new residential units, five of which would be within the historic house and sixteen in the orchard. The site would accommodate all ancillary facilities such as car parking, bin and cycle storage for a substantial number of new residents. This is a greenfield site with ancient trees, and it is unfortunate that the proposed master plan, site layout and landscape design do little to use the potential of the site in terms of its unique quality and character. Large parts of the remaining open green space would be turned into a car dominated tarmac expanse, with most of the historic value lost.

The proposed new buildings and the restoration of the historic house lack the amount of information that we would expect to see in this exceptional context. Currently, the proposal does not convincingly demonstrate how details, materials and finishes have been carefully selected to respond to the listed buildings.

### **Planning policy**

The current National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides the principles to assess this application on the extent of harm which would be caused to the designated assets (the grade II\* and grade II buildings and the conservation area) surrounding the development site.

Para 194 states that: "Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

- a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;
- b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II\* listed buildings, grade I and II\* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional."

In our view, the proposed dwellings would substantially harm the setting of Courtfield House (grade II\*) and the grade II listed structures on the site. The proposed scheme would fundamentally alter the quality of the historic orchard and the Town Park and therefore also substantially harm the Trowbridge Conservation Area. In our view, the amount of development on this site is not justified and we recommend an independent study to assess the viability of the scheme.

Para 195 states that: "Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
- b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use

We do not consider that the scheme complies with the requirements of para 195. Courtfield House has accommodated residential and commercial uses and lends itself to re-use and adaptation. In our view, the new private residential units do not compensate for the loss of

the orchard and the substantial harm caused to the setting of the grade II\* listed building and the conservation area.

Wiltshire Council's Core Policy 58 "Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment" aims "to ensure that Wiltshire's important monuments, sites, and landscapes and areas of historic and built heritage significance are protected and enhanced in order that they continue to make an important contribution to Wiltshire's environment and quality of life." Core Policy 58 continues: "Within the context of the specific characteristics of Wiltshire, development will be required to be sensitive to all heritage assets." We consider that the proposed scheme neither enhances the built heritage of Trowbridge nor is it sensitive to the listed buildings and conservation area.

We note that a local petition for the preservation of the orchard has been signed by more than 2,000 people, and more than 100 objections by local people against the scheme have been registered on your planning portal. We also note that proposals for the Trowbridge Community Orchard have been presented which include long-term management and maintenance strategies for a section of the site.

A grade II\* listed building merits a more sympathetic approach. We consider the current proposals and lack of appropriate design information to be unsuitable for this site, and recommend the client withdraws this application. We suggest exploring different options for Courtfield House and its orchard that lead to a less destructive outcome.

For the reasons listed above, we consider that the proposal should be refused.

I trust these comments are useful to you. Please contact me at this office should you need further comment or clarification.

Yours sincerely,

Thomas Bender  
Conservation Adviser