



BRIGHTER PLANNING CONSULTANCY

SHEDDING LIGHT ONTO THE PLANNING PROCESS

Leanne

Section 62A Applications Team

PINS

26 October 2024

Dear Leanne

Land adjacent to Village Hall, East of Cambridge Road, Ugley, Essex Application S62A/2024/0058

Further to the consideration of the Section 62 Application above, I am seeking to respond to the heritage comments made by Place Services and reported to the UDC Planning Committee meeting held on 16th October 2024. Having attended the Committee Meeting I am also seeking to respond to the heritage matters raised at the meeting.

Place Services consultation response dated 14 October 2024

There is no dispute between the two parties that the Village Hall should be taken to be a NDHA, however the heritage values of the standing building have been assessed on page 21 of the Heritage Statement (Brighter Planning Ltd) and the archaeological and architectural/artistic value has been assessed as being low. It is acknowledged as having historic interest principally due to it being a war memorial and its past associations with the Tennant family of Orford House. The old photograph on page 11 of the Heritage Statement (Brighter Planning Ltd) illustrates that the building has lost much of its aesthetic charm having originally been thatched. It is known to have been rebuilt after WWII and has been subject to a number of extensions. The heritage significance of the existing building is therefore assessed to be low.

The description of the application site on page 2 paragraph 2 of the Place Services letter is strongly questioned. The site is described as 'verdant and open.' The existence of mature trees on the site is agreed with but these strongly enclose the site and ensure the views into and across the site are extremely limited at any season.

The location is described as 'tranquil and isolated' – as set out in the Heritage Statement (Brighter Planning) the London Road which the site abuts is the historic London to Cambridge main road which is why inns were located at frequent intervals along it – most now being houses. Notwithstanding the building of the M11 further to the east of the site it

remains a busy B- road which links Saffron Walden to Stansted Mountfitchet and which is bus route. The site cannot be said to be isolated given that it is well related to the disbursed settlement of Ugley and the nearby larger settlements of Elsenham and Stansted Mountfitchet. The London Road is lined with a series of residential properties of a variety of ages, which form part of Ugley village and therefore the proposals would accord with this pattern of land use to the eastern side of the main road. Leading-off of the main road are side roads where additional housing which forms part of the village is located. The village Hall and car park (extended over time) has existed to the western side of the site for over 100 years and thus the western part of the site is a focal element for the village community.

It is accepted that the settlement form is not one of continuous development but there are gaps or breaks in the clusters of dwellings which exist, and the buildings are read within a soft landscape context or backdrop. It is not accepted that the cluster of buildings of The Square and around Orford House are 'separate settlements' these are simply clusters of buildings within the settlement of Ugley with their own specific focus and character.

The Heritage Statement in Section 4 acknowledges the strong landscape character of the site and considers the contribution the site makes to the various identified heritage assets. Its key contribution is providing a landscape context and backdrop to the heritage assets and treelined road frontage between the two identified groups of heritage assets. The heritage assets therefore are the prominent built form in this part of the street.

The impact assessment undertaken in the Place Services letter page 3 third paragraph assumes change equates to harm. In assessing the proposals, the Heritage Statement (Brighter Planning Ltd) has reached a different conclusion. Using the methodology of the Historic England Setting Guidance PAN3 the attributes and experience of the site have been identified. The trees are visually important to the character and appearance of the area and the development proposed seeks to retain these. Far from being an urban development the dwellings will be located within a sylvan setting. The existing landscaping to the road frontages of the site will be maintained. The new development will be set back into the site and effectively screened by the landscaping to the boundaries of the site and to a degree the village hall building. The designated heritage assets north and south of the site will retain their visual prominence to the main road and there will be no adverse impact on how they are viewed, understood, or appreciated.

The level of harm is considered in paragraphs 7.8 -7.11 of the Heritage Statement. There is no resulting loss of any heritage assets given that the village hall is retained adjacent to the application site. The finding of no harm is justified by the development proposal seeking the retention of the trees within and to the perimeter of the site, the lower land level within the site, the orientation of the buildings away from the main road, the setback location of the buildings and the scale and form of the houses proposed. The layout has been designed to retain the landscape character of the site.

Given that the two clusters of heritage assets are very much self-contained – one being an inward looking square of houses and the other having the focus of Orford house and the related former outbuildings associated with this residence – it is held that the appreciation

and understanding of these two clusters will not be undermined or harmed by the proposed development. The street frontages of the site and the inner eastern boundary will still be strongly enclosed by the mature trees. The two clusters of heritage assets will still be legible and separated by a street frontage of trees and their wider context and backdrop will remain one of trees and hedges.

The statement that the development would result in adverse environmental changes which would harm the setting of the heritage assets is not accepted firstly having regard to the existing setting and context of the buildings and secondly given that the landscape character of the site will be preserved and will effectively mitigate any potential visual impact of the development. The Place Services assessment does not consider the existence of the village hall on the western part of the site which has stood here since 1920.

The main visual impact noted in the Place Services objection is that of diurnal impact from lighting. It is maintained the screening and levels of the site will mitigate this and a condition can be added for external lighting to be agreed to ensure the location and form of lighting is appropriate.

It is noted that less than substantial harm is concluded to arise by Place Services whereas the Heritage Statement (Brighter Planning Ltd) finds no harm. The assessment reached in the Heritage Statement supporting the application is still held to be a correct one having had regard to the case presented by Place Services. It is held the impact which the Place Services assessment considers will occur cannot be sustained when the existing relationships and the design of the proposals are considered.

However, if the Inspector finds that some harm will result and concurs that less than substantial harm will arise then the public benefits set out in the Planning Statement will need to be balanced against this level of harm.

The debate at the Planning Committee

At the Planning Committee held on 16 October 2024, one of the Councillors questioned the past use of the site as a gravel extraction site. This is clearly shown on the OS maps included in the Heritage Statement - with the 1897 map denoting a gravel pit. The differing levels of the site reinforce this view. The Local Planning Authority have accepted the site has been previously developed.

The Councillors considered the development be out of character with the area. However, the two clusters of heritage assets illustrate that there is no one strong or harmonious character of built form to the locality. It is the landscape character of the site which is predominant, and this will be preserved. The pockets of development have their own distinct character, and this development follows this pattern with the built form being subservient to the landscape features on the site.

It is therefore maintained that whilst there will be a change to the land use pattern on the site this will not be a harmful change to the heritage assets in the locality and there are no sound heritage reasons to resist this development.

It is respectfully requested that the Inspector has regard to this response in reaching their decision.

Yours sincerely



Charmain Hawkins

Director