

Heritage Team Response

Date – 16/11/2023

Reference number - APP/21/01451

The Site

Southleigh Park Estate features the remains of an early 19th-century gentleman's estate including; the main house, the clock tower and gate lodge which are Grade II listed and a coach house, dairy and wall which are curtilage listed. The main elevation of the house is the south elevation which overlooks what was the park, including several large oak trees, and is now grazing for Southleigh Farm.

The estate was sold to the Plessey Company in 1969. A new entrance was cut from the Eastleigh Road, the kitchen gardens became a car park and a modern office block was built in the same area. In 1994 the estate, covering 15 acres, became the property of Snell & Wilcox and was developed into the headquarters of the business. Snell and Wilcox have since sold the site for redevelopment and it has lay vacant since 2019.

Proposal

Reserved Matters application for the scale and appearance of the development, the landscaping of the site and the layout of buildings pursuant to Planning Permission ref. APP/17/00863 (B) (*Outline Application (All Matters Reserved except means of access) for the demolition of 1983 office building and associated brick and glass corridor link and development of up to 70 residential units, associated landscaping, parking and infrastructure works*). Request to Discharge Condition 17 of Planning Permission APP/17/00863 (B) as amended by APP/21/01292 (Design Code) and Condition 26 of Permission APP/17/00863 (B) (viability assessment).

The original reserved matters application was submitted in 2021. Following negotiations with the LPA, an amended reserved matters scheme was submitted in October 2023 within the same application. The main changes from the original RM submission include:

- Revised layout
- Reduction in unit numbers – now 41no. units.
- Alterations to the layout of listed outbuilding (stables)
- Retention of more TPO trees throughout the site

Legislation

When assessing the proposal, the following legislation and policy context is taken in consideration.

Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ("1990 Act") requires local planning authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building, its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest when considering whether to grant listed building consent.

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires planning authorities, when considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

The need for the decision taker to attach considerable or special weight to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings has been reinforced through two recent high court

decisions of: Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Limited vs. East Northamptonshire District Council et al (2014);/ and North Norfolk District Council vs. DCLG and Mack (2014).

The above statute and its subsequent and consistent interpretation in recent high court decision emphasises the need for the policies of the NPPF to be implemented whilst always having regard to the need to give special or greater weight to the preservation of the setting of a listed building.

NPPF

The revised NPPF (September 2023) sets out in Chapter 16, the core principles relating to development affecting Heritage Assets that local planning authorities should consider in making planning decisions in the following paragraphs:

189. Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites which are internationally recognised to be of Outstanding Universal Value. These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

194. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

195. Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

196. Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.

197. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

199. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

200. 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.

201. 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.

202. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

Local Planning Policies

Policy CS11 (Protecting and Enhancing the Special Environment and Heritage of Havant Borough) states that planning permission will be granted for development that:

“Protects and where appropriate enhances the borough’s statutory and non-statutory heritage designations by appropriately managing development in or adjacent to conservation areas, listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments, historic parks and gardens, archaeological sites, buildings of local historic or architectural interest”.

Policy CP16 (High Quality Design) (1a) of the Core Strategy states that “Planning permission will be granted for development that is designed to a high standard, which helps to create places where people want to live, work and relax. All development should demonstrate that its design:

Identifies and responds positively to existing features of natural, historic or local character within or close to the proposed development site”.

Policy DM20 of the Allocations Plan states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that conserves and enhances the historic assets of Havant. It also states that application which affect, or have the potential to affect, heritage assets are expected to provide a Heritage Statement that:

1. Describe the significance of the asset and its setting, using appropriate expertise

and where necessary original survey, at a level of detail proportionate to its significance and sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal.

2. Sets out the impact of the development on the heritage assets and mitigation that is proportionate to the impact and the significance of the heritage asset, including where possible positive opportunities to conserve and enjoy heritage assets.

Assessment

In the original Hybrid approval (APP/17/00863), with regards to the outline permission, the following heritage response was provided by the LPA:

'New Housing Development in Grounds

The area of land where development is likely to have the least impact on the setting of the listed building is that to the north. While I have reservations about the amount of new development, the proposed location is basically correct in terms of limiting harm. The proposed new development is significant and will impact on the setting of Southleigh House. It is inevitable that the scale and number of the new buildings will make them a prominent feature within the site. However, this has to be balanced up with the fact that the current office buildings on site are incongruous features and that a number of dwellings are needed to make the refurbishment of the existing heritage assets viable. The applicant has also worked very hard to ensure the significant views to the south are maintained and a courtyard is re-instated to the north. In this particular instance it is therefore considered that the proposed development would not be detrimental to the architectural significance of the listed buildings or their setting. Although it is acknowledged that the setting of this building contributes to its significance, the new scheme allows for this setting to be substantially maintained'.

The outline scheme submitted as part of the Hybrid application cited 'up to 70 dwellings' within the grounds of Southleigh Park House, in addition to the units created by way of converting the listed and curtilage listed buildings. This number of new dwellings would have resulted in a loss of several mature trees across the site. However, the response above maintained that given the significant views to the south and the main setting of the listed building were to be substantially maintained and that a courtyard between the stable and coach house was to be reinstated, that the proposal would not be detrimental to the architectural significance of the listed buildings or their settings.

The current reserved matters application proposes a total of 41 new units (with a further 20 units being provided as part of the listed building conversions). Given the figure of 'up to 70 dwellings' was approved under the Hybrid application, this is a significant reduction in unit numbers. This has positive impacts in terms of the high density of new development surrounding the listed buildings and also that less mature trees will be lost from across the site, retaining more of the parkland and verdant character of the original Southleigh Park estate.

The character of the new development is explained in detail in an updated Design Code and Compliance Statement (September 2023) submitted with the application. The layout is divided up into 3 no. character areas including the southern gardens which SP House inhabits, the middle of the site where the stables and coach house sit and the northern area, which contains the lodge and listed wall. These separate areas have been used to inform materials, dwellings heights and density. SP House is characterised by its unique style knapped flint brickwork and castellated roofline. New dwellings will include timber canopies, proportioned casement windows with glazing bars and black rainwater goods.

The residential character of the site will be further refined into 2 approaches:

1. The Georgian Villa area is the one which will have most impact on the setting of Southleigh Park House, as these dwellings will be in closest proximity and face onto the front lawn which forms part of the formal, front setting to the house. Of course, this would have been much larger in its original form but the subdivision of the parkland to the south has reduced this.

Units 22-27 and 39-41 will face onto the front lawn of the main house, with the exception of units 35-38 which will form a row which fronts onto the courtyard rear to the front of the west wing of SP House. These dwellings vary in size, however, they are all to be constructed of grey brick to complement the main house, with contrasting red brick for quoin detailing and window surrounds. Roofs will be a mixture of slate and red/brown clay tiles. This is an appropriate palette of materials given the close proximity to the main listed building.

Unit 25 proposes the largest house on the development. This has been designed with blocked up window features which are a pastiche feature which is not overly successful and unbalances the front elevation. It is advised that given this is the largest property on the development, fronting onto the front lawn of SP House, that the design is reconsidered to achieve a better solution.

2. The Cottage Vernacular to the remainder of the site.

These dwellings would be constructed from similar materials but with the use of red instead of grey brick. The maximum height of buildings would be 2.5 storey to highlight corner junctions and would still be below the height of SP House and kept below 105.5m. This is important so as not to compete with the visual emphasis of the main heritage asset as the focal point of the site.

Overall, the use of decorative, lead porches, brick chimney stacks, panelled front doors, casement windows, slate / clay roofs, red brick quoin detailing around windows and string brick courses are all positive architectural details and will complement and integrate with the historic identity of the site.

Parking layout would be spread over the site and is required in the numbers proposed to meet the required parking standards. Careful design consideration has been made to keep this away from the LBs as far as possible. The newly proposed layout limits vehicular access along the back of the main house and now includes a footpath only which leads to the front of the house or the built development in the south west corner. This again is a positive step for the setting of the main house to the rear.

Overall, the proposed amended scheme has a less harmful impact on the heritage assets within the site due to the reduced housing numbers, retention of more mature trees, incorporation of a footpath to the rear of the building, use of traditional style high quality materials of the new dwellings. The scheme also retains the formal setting in the form of the front lane and pond area which forms an important part of the significance of the main house. As such, it is considered that less than substantial harm would occur to the heritage assets at the lower end of the scale, however, this harm is mitigated through the design approach and also, that the scheme has the overriding benefit of bringing the listed buildings back into use and protecting their longevity.

Section 106

The Hybrid permission included a S106 which included a clause relating to the phasing of the development, to avoid new residential units being developed ahead of the listed building, for which the conversion may never be implemented. As the conversion and refurbishment of the listed building is such an important consideration in terms of the principle of the development, I would request that the S106 is checked to ensure that this phasing is still relevant given the amended site layout plan and revised housing numbers. A Deed of Variation may be required.

Conclusion

The reserved matters application would result in less than substantial harm to the setting of the designated heritage assets however, this harm is mitigated through the sensitive design approach, so the level of harm is the lower end of the scale. Furthermore, the scheme results in the overriding public benefit of bringing the listed buildings back into use and protecting their longevity for future generations to appreciate.