

Committee Statement for 25th April 2016

Proposed New Estate Office for the Blenheim Estate

The Blenheim Estate businesses and workload to enact the World Heritage Site Management Plan has grown significantly over the last 10 years and the current Estate Office is now full to the extent that we no longer have space for meeting rooms.

Working together with officers from West Oxfordshire and Historic England, we have designed new offices, essential for the running of the Estate, that draw from the historic environment around them to make a positive contribution to local distinctiveness.

Officers from West Oxfordshire and Historic England support our proposal. In so doing, they recognise three things:

- 1) The need for the offices;
- 2) That the location chosen has followed an appropriate selection process and represents the most suitable site for the offices;
- 3) That the sensitive design approach provides appropriate, modern accommodation whilst respecting, and contributing to, the historic environment and local distinctiveness.

We have taken nearly two years to work up what we believe to be the best solution for the Estate, World Heritage Site and town of Woodstock.

Why this location

In reaching the solution we looked at all the options:

- Could we relocate to the Palace – but no room
- Could we relocate to elsewhere in the Park – only real option is Park Farm,
 - It is remote from the Palace and Woodstock
 - Conflict with vehicle movements and visitors as vehicles would all need to drive past the Palace
- Could we extend the existing Estate Office – yes but it wouldn't be an efficient structure AND more importantly it would involve extending to the south out into the Park and would be very visible from the Palace wider landscape

We went through this process internally, with Historic England and WODC Conservation Officers and concluded that the proposed site was the best solution because:

- The location is discrete and largely invisible from the wider landscape
- There is no visitor/vehicle conflict
- And most importantly – it allows the Estate Office to remain an integral part of the Town of Woodstock allowing staff, Estate business to interact with Woodstock.

The Estate and the town rely on each other, they have evolved together and if this synergy is to be optimised going forward the location proposed is the obvious choice.

Design and Materials

This has been given a lot of thought:

- The building was designed as single story to sit comfortable behind the existing Park wall.
- The layout on the site and single storey nature of the proposed building was specifically designed to preserve the setting of the adjoining listed building of Chaucers House.
- The entrance to the office will be through an existing but currently closed up access point.
- The view in through this entrance will be of an ashlar wall with a minimalist entrance so that visitors passing by will not see the office paraphernalia through large windows but an ashlar wall in keeping with the surrounding heritage assets.
- The elevation overlooking the Park, will be of tinted glass to reduce reflection, solar gain and glare, however this is several meters above the path and well screened by existing trees and it therefore largely invisible.
- The roof materials are proposed to be of weathered zinc or Terne stainless steel, again the use of natural materials will help blend the building into the surrounding area – we will provide samples to officers and would ask that this point is conditioned

Planning Issue

- The offices will play a hugely important role in ensuring the effective and efficient operation of the Blenheim World Heritage Site and Estate throughout the rest of the 21st Century. This will be to the significant benefit of Blenheim's wider role in helping to sustain and raise social, economic and environmental standards in West Oxfordshire.
- The offices will provide for sustainable economic growth. This is in line with Paragraph 9 of the NPPF, which requires the planning system to *"do everything it can to support sustainable economic growth."*
- Paragraph 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that sustainable development involves *"improving the conditions in which people work."* The current Estate Office is unsuited to the effective running of the Estate.
- The effective and efficient management of the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site cannot be separated from the sustainability of the heritage asset. Consequently, the management function is a fundamental part of the sustainability of the heritage asset. As a result of the need to provide sufficient and appropriate space, the development of suitable offices in the immediate environs of the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site is an essential requirement to enable the ongoing successful management and operation of the heritage asset.
- Paragraph 137 of the NPPF is also explicit in requiring local planning authorities to look for opportunities for

new development within World Heritage Sites and within the setting of heritage sites to enhance or better reveal their significance. As demonstrated, the proposed development achieves this.

In summary

- We have looked at all possible locations and concluded that this is the optimal site for a new Estate Office.
- The location and design have be evolved to create minimum impact of adjoining buildings and heritage assets
- The proposed scheme meets the Estates needs for the foreseeable future in ensuring the World Heritage Site can be effectively and efficiently managed in accordance with the World Heritage Site Management Plan
- The proposal has the support of Historic England

**Summary of submission by Mr Glyn Jones
Application No. 16/00557/FUL**

Mr Jones advised that the site had now been handed over by the developer, who he was representing, and so the site was ready to be redeveloped for use by the football club.

Mr Jones expressed the hope that the sub-committee would support the application and if a permission was in place the facility would be ready for the start of next season.

16/00647/FUL Garden House, Kingham

Jayne Cashmore, Oakwood Planning.

My name is Jayne Cashmore and I am the agent for this application. To my left is Dave Neale, a highways expert, from David Tucker Associates.

Speech:

Good Afternoon Councillors. We welcome your officer's recommendation to grant the application for the erection of a dwelling.

The application is only before you for determination because the Parish Council have raised an objection on highways grounds.

The County Council highways officer has no objections and considers the access would be safe. Dave Neale is the applicant's highways expert from DTA and will be explaining why the proposal is acceptable in terms of highways safety.

I wanted to briefly touch on some of the other planning matters. This application is a resubmission of a previous application for 4 houses. We have taken on board your officers comments and altered the scheme to reduce the development from 4 houses down to the 1 house now proposed. This has overcome all your officer's previous concerns.

The principle of a new dwelling in Kingham meets both your adopted and emerging policies.

Your conservation officer considers that the proposal will preserve the character of the Conservation Area and enhance the setting of Garden House.

No objections have been received from any consultee. The proposed dwelling will have no harmful impact on neighbours, is in-keeping with the character of the area, is of good design with traditional high quality materials proposed, and would have no harmful impact on ecology. The proposal meets local and national policy requirements and would be a positive addition to the village. The development would provide a home for the applicant to live in, which has been designed to meet her needs. It is a sustainable form of development. The parish council's objection on highways grounds is not backed up by any technical evidence and Dave Neale will now explain this further.

Notes:

Site: Garden House Grade II Listed. Conservation Area. AONB.

Principle: Kingham sustainable location for new development both in the adopted and emerging local plan. Number of facilities (primary school, church, village shop, post office, 2 pubs, play area, bus routes etc) Adopted –H5 (infilling). Emerging OS2 and H2 (undeveloped land within built up area).

Conservation: Heritage Statement. Preserve. Set back.

Listed Building: Garden in its current form doesn't hold any historic interest to prevent development – both the view of Council's conservation officer and applicant's heritage expert. Officer considers it to enhance the setting of the listed building by reducing the plot size and introducing a landscape buffer.

Character of area: mixed – variety of properties from various eras. No overriding character of plot formation. Linear development. Cul de sacs etc.

Design: Simple Georgian design reflecting simple traditional character of properties in the area. Natural stone and reproduction Cotswold stone slate roof.

AONB: Within settlement surrounded by resi dev – no harm.

Neighbours: Sunnysdene closest. 23m away which is 2m in excess of requirements. Garage closest – oblique angle and roof sloping away. Sunnysdene has two lounge windows facing north, but roof served by south facing windows. They have not objected.

Ecology – a couple of apple trees left in orchard. Most lie outside the application site and those that don't, would be retained.

Previous app – 4 dwellings. 1 at rear. Terrace of 3 to front.

Officer concerns – conservation officer – amount of development, too close to Cozens Lane
Planner – impact on neighbours – garage to Sunnyside and opposite on Cozens Lane

Ecology – old orchard.

Highways – parking arrangements.

Good afternoon Councillors,

The potential location of the new vehicle access onto Cozens Lane has been assessed in accordance with the characteristics and design of the existing highway network, alongside the appropriate national design guidance in Manual for Streets (MfS).

The applicant commissioned a speed survey in December last year which recorded speeds at less than 20mph in both north and southbound directions. Therefore the visibility splays provided and requested by the Local Highway Authority are in excess of those required by national guidance. The height of the wall is being lowered to ensure children and pedestrians can see, and be seen by a manoeuvring vehicle.

Traditionally visibility has been required with an emphasis on ensuring motorists had extensive splays and generous sightlines so that they could react to hazards ahead of them in plenty of time, based on the speed of road. Based on research used in the preparation of MfS, it is now accepted this encourages higher speeds because motorists feel comfortable with the speed that they are driving at, especially in residential areas. Therefore reducing forward visibility and using road alignments, encourages motorists to drive more slowly, which not only maintains and improves safety but can also help create places which are good for social activity and where movement by means other than the car is encouraged. This is the case with Cozens lane where pedestrians and vehicles mix in a shared space environment, due to vehicle speeds being low.

The width of the site access proposed is approximately 4m, which is in excess of normal requirements for single dwellings at between 3-3.5m. The site will provide a turning area to enable a large car to leave and re-enter the highway in a forward gear, removing the need for a vehicle to reverse on to the road.

A single dwelling of this size would typically generate a modest level of additional traffic which would have minimal impact on Cozens Lane and the adjoining local road network. Therefore in accordance with the requirements set out in the NPPF the impact of the development would not be material and I consider there are no highway or transport grounds for refusal.