



THE FRIENDS OF LYDIARD PARK

Registered Charity No: 1107635

Lydiard House, Lydiard Park, Swindon SN5 3PA

Richard Bell
Head of Planning, Regulatory Services and Heritage
The Civic Offices
Euclid Street
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20th August 2017

Dear Sir

Trustees:

Mike Bowden
Sarah Finch-Crisp
Robert Hook
Frances Bevan
Per-Axel Waresjö
Michael Gray

Chairman:

Revd Canon
Alistair Stevenson

Secretary:

Julie Holland

Application: S/16/1832

Land at Brook Cottage, Lydiard Tregoze Swindon SN5 3PA, Erection of four six bedroom Executive Homes, Triple Garages and Associated Works.

I am instructed to write on behalf of the Friends of Lydiard Park to register our objection to the planning application for four executive homes, triple garages and associated works on land contiguous with Lydiard Park.

We are concerned that this application has once again been validated without sufficient documentation to fully explain the proposed development and its impact on designated heritage assets. The absence of Heritage, Ecology, Landscape and Archaeological Assessments is disturbing as is the failure to submit a proficient Design and Access Statement, and we therefore urge the Council to review the validation once again.

Notwithstanding the paucity of the information submitted we are concerned that the bulk, height and massing of the proposed development would cause substantial harm to Lydiard Park and the various designated heritage assets that form this unique heritage location.

Brook Cottage and its grounds was formerly part of the Lydiard Park Estate until 1943 when it was sold by the St. John family under straightened circumstances. As a fragment of the historic estate it remains surrounded on three sides by the historic park and therefore forms an integral element of the designated historic landscape and setting.

On the North side of the development site is the main entrance to Lydiard Park on Hay Lane. This informal gated approach (Church Lane) is lined with mature lime trees which signify the rural atmosphere of Lydiard Park to the wider public. To present the backs and sides of bulky executive homes here would change the character of the lane into a sub-urban highway thereby diminishing the pervading mood that makes Lydiard Park such a very special place.

The West side of the development site is bounded by the brook leading onto rolling lawns up to St Mary's Church (Listed Grade I) and Lydiard House (Listed Grade 1). Although the proposed development would in part be screened by existing deciduous and coniferous trees (Leyland Cypress) along this boundary the cluster of new buildings on the inclined hillside (FFL levels at 104-6m) and the high ridge heights (110m) mean that the new development would be seen from the elevated position of the mansion and church (FFL level 110m) particularly in winter. This visible intrusion of alien forms into the setting of the Grade I Listed buildings would cause substantial harm to these heritage assets which are of national importance.

To the South side of the development site is the restored revetments (Listed Grade II) and ornamental lake (Level at 105m) from which the new development will be seen. The crenellated dam, lake and rolling landscape were carefully contrived in the 18th Century to achieve a picturesque setting for the Palladian mansion. To insert a cluster of executive homes into this historic setting over-looking some of the key heritage elements of the park would seriously compromise this delicate aesthetic and diminish the special ambience of the historic park.

This site forms an important part of the continuous green space that runs between Shaw Ridge Linear Park, Lydiard Park, Middleleaze Park and the brook. Whilst these spaces provide valuable public amenity they also form an important ecological corridor along which local wildlife thrives. To develop this site would interrupt these important green connections thereby diminishing the public realm and limiting vital natural habitats.

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Brook Cottage has been sadly over-developed many times so that it retains nothing of architectural or historic merit anymore. The applicant now seeks to expand this approach up the hillside with yet more bland and banal houses without distinction. Whereas the frightful mistakes meted out on Brook Cottage remain in majority hidden from view in the bottom of the valley the poor design of the proposed new houses elevated on the hillside would be a very visible blot on the historic landscape.

The Friends of Lydiard Park was founded 55 years ago, and over those many years of stewardship we have worked tirelessly to mitigate the impact of development on the historic mansion, church and park. This development proposal is particularly disturbing because it is within the boundary of the historic park, which combined with the poorly designed scheme would cause considerable harm to a place that we all esteem and cherish.

If consented this development would not only harm the designated heritage assets here described it would also create a dangerous precedent, leading to further inappropriate applications around the park.

It is for the reasons stated above that we urge Swindon Borough Council to refuse this application.

Yours sincerely

Revd Canon Alistair Stevenson

For and on behalf of the Friends of Lydiard Park

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