



Historic England

SOUTH WEST OFFICE

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Direct Dial: 0117 975 0667

Our ref: P00525790

14 October 2016

Dear Mr Pearson

**Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2015 & T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015**

**LAND SOUTH OF TEWKESBURY WAY SWINDON WILTSHIRE  
Application No 16/06978/FUL**

Thank you for your letter of 1 September 2016 notifying Historic England of the above application.

This application proposes a residential development of 48 dwellings, with public open space and associated infrastructure and landscaping on land to the South of Tewkesbury Way in Swindon. This site is located in close proximity to Lydiard Park, a Grade II Registered Park and Garden (RPG), Lydiard House (Grade I listed) and the Church of St Mary (Grade I) listed as well as a number of associated Grade II listed structures and monuments. It is understood that the site is not being considered as a Wiltshire Council Housing Allocation site.

**Historic England Advice  
Significance of the Heritage Assets**

Lydiard Park is a mid-18<sup>th</sup> century park and garden surrounding Lydiard park. Fragmentary remains of a 17th century formal park and garden also survive. The phased development of the site over time reflects changing fashions in landscape design and the social and economic status of the estate. The Grade I listed Lydiard House is situated in the eastern half of the site along with the Grade I listed Church of St Mary and a number of ancillary listed structures and monuments. This collection of heritage assets is an important group dating back to the medieval period.

The fabric and architectural form of the main house dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century but the south-west and south-east fronts are Palladian style, following their remodelling of 1742-3 by the second Viscount St John and attributed to the architect Roger Morris. To the north of the main house is the Grade I listed Church of St Mary. This parish church dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century with identifiable phases from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>



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centuries.

The primary significance of St Mary's Church lies in its architectural interest and fabric, however its association with the estate and communal value as a religious status symbol also contributes to its overall heritage significance. Its prominent location, on high ground within the estate and in close proximity to the mansion house is of aesthetic and historical value and the rural setting contributes to its tranquil experience. The immediate setting of the church is its churchyard which includes a number of listed monuments; however its wider tranquil, rural setting also contributes to its dominance as a religious entity within the parkland and beyond.

Lydiard RPG extends in all directions, with the primary formal 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century gardens being to the south and west. Land to the north was added to the designated area in 2013 when evidence came to light that it had been purchased for the estate and that by 1839, as indicated by the Tithe Map of that date, the land was in use as pasture. This land was imparked in 1885 and survives well intact. The land was never part of a formal landscape scheme for the earlier estate but its use as parkland grazing is a common approach for the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as it was believed to add to its ornamental quality.

Both the land inside the park and the 'borrowed' landscape to the north provides a wider rural setting to the RPG and the Church, creating a perception of extended estate ownership and adding to the overall sense of tranquillity.

### **Impact of the proposals on the Heritage Assets**

While it is acknowledged that the land to the north of the park is of less significance within the hierarchy of the whole RPG than the more formal earlier layout to the South, it still holds significance for the development, status and aspirations of the owners in this later period of the estates history. This view is acknowledged in paragraph 3.22 of the applicants Heritage Statement and development that will impact or erode its surviving character must be taken seriously.

Historic England strongly disagrees with the comment made in the Heritage Statement produced by Turley Heritage that '*where visible, the application proposals will be of an appearance akin to a residential enclave associated within a country estate and will appear complimentary to the heritage asset*' (Para. 5.11).

At present the combination of open fields, both in the near and far distance, together with the screening of the existing urban settlement, preserves a tranquil setting for the church and extends the perception of estate land ownership (borrowed landscape). In the existing views the settlements of Lydiard Millicent and Middleleaze are glimpsed at some distance, mainly as roof forms, when the boundary tree line is thinned but are lost in the overall perception of rural openness that dominates.



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The proximity and topography of the development site would increase the urban character of views in this direction and therefore have a significant impact on the way this setting is experienced. While screening is proposed this will, in our view, not be adequate to limit the proximity of urban encroachment and the increased boundary definition would in itself close down the openness of the site in this direction causing visual truncation of the rural setting.

The development would cause harm to the overall heritage significance of these assets by urbanising the rural context and open landscape that was chosen to identify these buildings as holding high status and important communal value. The development would further harm the historic association between the historic assets and land purchased in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which provided an opportunity for ornamental grazing and extending the perceived extent of estate ownership towards the horizon (Para. 134, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)).

**Relevant Planning Policy Requirements.**

Central to Historic England's advice is the requirements of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, section 66, which states that **special regard** should be given *'to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses'*.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) lays out heritage considerations in Chapter 12, in particular Paragraphs 128, 129 132 and 134. These relate to the Local Planning Authorities responsibility to ensure that the particular significance of any heritage asset is identified and assessed and steps are taken to avoid or minimise conflict. It states that significance *'can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting'* and that substantial harm to highly designated assets should be *'wholly exceptional'*. *'Where a development proposal will lead to 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.'* The NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance defines the setting of a heritage asset and this is expressed in more detail in the guidance note Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: Note 3 - The Setting of Heritage Assets (2015).

**Recommendation**

We conclude that the proposed development will have a significant and detrimental impact on the rural setting of the Grade I Church of St Mary and Grade II Lydiard Park (RPG). The existing impact of the urban expansion would be significantly increased by the development in question; being considerably closer and more visible. This advice reflects that previously outlined at pre-application stage by my colleague Stuart Mee in 2014.

It is our understanding that the site is not allocated or being considered for inclusion in



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the Wiltshire Council Housing Allocation sites draft DPD and it is difficult to envisage how a residential scheme on the site could be achieved without significant harm to the historic environment.

Historic England therefore objects to this application on heritage grounds, and if approval is to be considered this would need to be supported by public benefits that '**outweigh**' the harm identified (Para 134, NPPF).

Please contact me if we can be of further assistance. We would be grateful to receive a copy of the decision notice in due course. This will help us to monitor actions related to changes to historic places.

Yours sincerely

**Jacqueline Martinez**

Inspector of Historic Buildings & Areas

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