

Lydiard Park Heritage Trust

Mathew Pearson
Case Officer
Wiltshire Council
Monkton Park
Chippenham SN5 1ER

14 September 2016

Dear Mr Pearson

Letter Opposing Taylor Wimpey application at Lydiard Park Ref. 16/06978/FUL

The Lydiard Park Heritage Trust is community organisation bidding to take on the management lease of Lydiard Park and House on behalf of the people of Swindon. Our vision is *'to protect the people's park, house and heritage, for now and for the future'*.

We object to this planning application for the following reasons:

1. It will destroy the historic and rural setting of Lydiard Park

As you enter Lydiard Park from Hay Lane, with pastures to the right and hedgerows to the left, you are instantly transported into the tranquil rural landscape of a historic estate. To allow housing development in full view of this main drive into the park and highly visible from St Mary's Church and the pre-18th Century rear elevation of Lydiard House would ruin a century's old outlook forever.

The pasture in question is clearly shown on the 1766 Frances Howard Willington map of the estate, when it was known as the 'Great Ham' (aka the 'Hamme' in previous centuries). Furthermore, the field is within the 'Essential Setting' of Lydiard Park as set out in Swindon Borough Councils Lydiard Park Restoration and Development Plan 2002. To allow an application within that important boundary will be unprecedented and make all the open pasture land around Lydiard Park vulnerable to development. The Taylor Wimpey proposal will undoubtedly cause substantial harm to the historic Grade II Park, Grade I House, Grade I Church and Grade II Walled Garden.

2. Both Swindon's Local Plan and Wiltshire Core Strategy state no more development is required to the West of Swindon

Swindon's local plan paragraph 3.27 (4.34 in Wiltshire's Core Strategy) states *'.....there is no longer a need to provide growth on land to the west of Swindon within Wiltshire due to alternative proposals'*.

Registered Office: Wood Farm House, Swindon Road, Wroughton, Wiltshire SN5 9BZ

Registered Company No: 10192530

Patrons: Robert Buckland MP and Anthony St. John

Trustees: Gary Bond; Mike Bowden (Chair); Sarah Finch-Crisp; Kevin Fisher; Richard Howroyd;
Daniel Rose; Per-Axel Warensjo (Vice Chair)

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Wiltshire's Core Strategy recognises that the unplanned 700 homes at Ridgeway Farm, won by Taylor Wimpey on appeal, and the 200 unplanned homes at Moredon Bridge (also won on appeal) will be the final homes west of Swindon in Wiltshire; quote *'the council will clarify that its housing requirement will be met without relying upon the delivery of homes to the west of Swindon'*.

Residents of Swindon and its neighbours have already suffered from 900 unplanned homes to the West and Wiltshire Council have recognised this fact within their Core strategy - Wiltshire Council must not renege on this key point by allowing this application.

The Wiltshire Core strategy has many more references; for example, paragraph 5.102 states *'the long established policy of protecting the distinct character and identity of the villages and settlements remains a priority for local communities. This applies particularly to the parts of the Community Area which adjoin the administrative area of Swindon Borough Council where there may be unplanned development pressure. The open countryside should be maintained to protect the character and identity of the area in accordance with Core Policy 51'*.

Paragraph 5.107 goes on to state *'Furthermore, the emerging Swindon Core Strategy seeks to protect the countryside for its intrinsic character and beauty in accordance with Policy RA3. This approach is consistent with the Wiltshire Core Strategy (Core Policy 51)'*

3. The proposed site is unsuitable in sustainability terms

Wiltshire's Core Strategy states in paragraph 5.106 *'..... concludes that development to the west of Swindon, including within the Royal Wootton Bassett and Cricklade Community Area, is unnecessary and does not represent the most sustainable option for future growth in Swindon'*

4. Approval will mean Wiltshire's own Strategic Objective on affordable homes has failed

Wiltshire's Core Strategy, Strategic Objective 3 (*'providing everyone with access to a decent affordable home'*) has a success measure that states *'Development will have avoided encroachment on the Western Wiltshire Green Belt and the separate identity of the outlying villages to the west of Swindon protected'*

5. The application is in conflict with Wiltshire's Core Policy 58 (Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment)

As a heritage trust we are particularly appalled at the impact the proposed Taylor Wimpey housing estate would have on this significant heritage site.

Paragraph 6.135 aims to ensure that Wiltshire's important monuments, sites and landscapes and areas of historic and built heritage significance are protected and enhanced in order that they continue to make an important contribution to Wiltshire's environment and quality of life.

Paragraph 6.136 defines Heritage Assets as *'...listed buildings, conservation areas, registered parks and gardens...'* and paragraph 6.137 states *'Within the context of the specific characteristics of Wiltshire, development will be required to be sensitive to all heritage assets including: Ecclesiastical sites including churches, chapels and monuments' and 'Heritage assets associated with the military'*.

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The Lydiard heritage site is a unique survival of Grade 1 Church with Grade II monuments, Grade 1 House, Grade II Park and Walled Garden with a history stretching back to medieval times reflected in the field patterns on which Taylor Wimpey wish to build. It should also be noted that Lydiard Park Walled Garden is one of the country's 6 national Gardens of Remembrance opened by HRH Prince Harry in 2010. The proposed development would be in full view of the garden walls and at odds with the tranquil setting which determined its selection.

Core Policy 58 also states '*Development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic environment. Designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhance in a manner appropriate to their significance, including:*

iii. buildings and structures of special architectural or historic interest

iv. the special character or appearance of conservation areas

v. historic parks and gardens

The Taylor Wimpey proposal does not pretend to provide any enhancement of the historic site and in fact agrees that it will negatively impact on it.

6. The application is in conflict with Swindon's Policy EN5 (*Landscapes character and Historic Landscape*) and policy EN10 (*Historic Environment and Heritage Assets*)

Wiltshire's Core Strategy states that Wiltshire Council will work holistically with Swindon Borough Council on areas close to Swindon's border and we believe Lydiard Park is a prime example where this type of co-operation, to safeguard a nationally significant heritage site enjoyed by Wiltshire and Swindon residents alike, is essential. For this reason we feel it is appropriate to quote from Swindon's Local Plan:

Policy EN5 requires applicants to demonstrate how they have taken into account Landscape Character Assessments and assessed the potential impact of the proposal upon existing landscape form, features, topography and character. It talks about valuable historic and heritage areas and assets and states '*landscape character and the historic landscape form an integral part of the green infrastructure*'

Policy EN10 has many quotes that in themselves require this application to be rejected. For example

(a) 'Swindon Borough's historic environment shall be sustained and enhanced. This includes all heritage assets including historic buildings, conservation areas, historic parks and gardens, landscape and archaeology.

(b) *Proposals for development affecting heritage assets shall conserve and, where appropriate, enhance their significance and setting...*

(f) *Features which form an integral part of a Park or Garden's historic interest and significance will be conserved and development will not detract from the enjoyment, layout, design, character, appearance or setting of them, including key views into and out from, or prejudice future restoration.*

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(g) Any development proposal that would affect a locally important or no-designated heritage asset, including its setting, will be expected to conserve its significance, and any harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposals, including securing its optimum viable use.

Paragraph 4.377 states 'the NPFF attaches 'great weight' to the conservation of heritage assets and their significance. Through **Strategic Objective S010** the borough council will protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment. Opportunities to protect and better reveal the significance of those assets will be sought to ensure the historic environment plays an integral and positive role in place-making, to positively support and integrate the value of heritage, enhancing the cultural and economic environment'.

7. Taylor Wimpey's consultation feedback is inaccurate

Taylor Wimpey claim to have consulted the public and to have '*refined our proposals*' - they have published a document detailing how they have responded to concerns. However, nowhere in their consultation summaries have they outlined the number of people who responded with a '*don't build it*' answer - that is not the answer they wished to hear and so have ignored that feedback. For that reason, their claim to have consulted must be treated simply as a tick box exercise to ensure they met normal planning application practices and should not be seen as a positive factor in their application.

8. The Taylor Wimpey proposed 'gift' of land is disingenuous and simply transfers a liability

Taylor Wimpey has made a big deal about their 'gift' of land as if it constitutes some form of 'mitigation' for the harm they acknowledge their development will do. Their website states "*the main benefit of this scheme is the land we intend to gift to the community, which is approximately 89% of what we own*" '*we will not be seeking to preserve any of this land for future development and are prepared to commit to this in a legal agreement which will be discussed as part of the Section 106 agreement with Wiltshire Council*'

What Taylor Wimpey fails to point out is that, because all their land to the south of the application site is within the Historic England Listed boundary of Lydiard Park (a fact they do acknowledge), no-one would ever get planning permission for that land. Therefore, their comment about '*will not be seeking to preserve any of this land for future development*' is disingenuous. The reality is that said pastures are a liability and not an asset to anyone that is or becomes their caretaker.

Of the remaining land, much of it is designated as a flood plain, as designated by the environment agency, and the rest would be problematic to provide road access into. Furthermore, it could be argued that, since all the so called 'gifted' land is uphill from the proposed development site, any future caretaker could be taking on a liability for any potential flooding of new and existing homes.

If Taylor Wimpey were genuine about the so called 'gift' - why propose it as part of the S106 negotiations after they have won planning permission? Surely if they were genuine about the 'gift' they would have gifted the land, regardless of, and separate to, their planning application. There is only one conclusion that can be drawn from this - it is not a gift. Rather it is part of Taylor Wimpey's negotiation which appears to cloud their real intent.

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The Lydiard Park Heritage Trust asks you to protect this important heritage site and reject Taylor Wimpey's housing estate proposal.

Yours sincerely

14/9/2016

Per-Axel Warensjo - Lydiard Park Heritage Trust (Vice-Chair)

Highdown
Slate Meadow
Wanborough
Swindon
SN4 0BY

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