Heritage Advice

Furtho Pit, Old Stratford

Introduction

1. This advice note has been prepared by Heritage Collective for David Adams and Frank Cundell. The advice relates to 16ha employment site in South Northamptonshire, to the north of Old Stratford and south of Cosgrove (Figure 1). The note will explore the potential for commercial development on the site.

2. A site visit was carried out on 25 June 2018.

3. The site is located to the north of Old Stratford, on the opposite side of the A5 road to the village. It is in the vicinity of a number of heritage assets, including The Church of St Peter and St Paul, listed grade I 17 May 1960; Old Wolverton Mill, listed grade II 28 October 1976; the Cosgrove and Grand Union Canal Conservation Areas and the scheduled monument of the Roman Villa, South East of Cosgrove Hall.

4. South Northamptonshire Council is required by sections 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting. For these purposes “preserve” means to do no harm, as is established in case law. “Harm” is defined by Historic England as change which erodes the significance of a heritage asset. A broadly similar duty exists in respect of development within conservation areas under section 72(1) of the Act.
5. The local polices of South Northamptonshire Council have also been taken into account including The Conservation Strategy for South Northamptonshire (September 2011).

6. When discussing alterations to the setting of the listed buildings we must consider the impact any changes would have on the contribution the setting of the listed building has on its significance. The National Planning Policy Framework describes the setting of a listed building as the surroundings within which its significance is appreciated.

7. In the present case the size of the proposed development and its location near to two conservation areas and a number of listed buildings bring Historic England into the frame as a statutory consultee. It is understood that in November 2017 they commented on the general principal of the scheme. Historic England’s comments were: There is very strong concern regarding this site; Historic England are likely to object to this allocation if taken forward, due to potential harm to the significance of a high number of nearby heritage assets. We would draw your authority’s attention in particular, though not exclusively, to the Conservation
Areas of the Grand Union Canal, and Cosgrove and the scheduled monument of the Roman villa SE of Cosgrove Hall together with numerous listed buildings, including Old Wolverton Mill and the Grade I Listed Church of St Peter and St Paul.

Due to the proximity of the proposals to both Conservation Areas and other heritage assets there is potential for significant impacts through the intrusion of modern development and fundamental change to the character and appearance of the surrounding currently agricultural landscape which forms part of their settings. Detailed further assessment would be required with specific reference to layout, extent and height of potential development.

The criteria within the policy are not sufficiently detailed and in any case, Historic England may object to the inclusion of this site.

8. Historic England mention the possible impact on the grade I St Peter and St Paul Church and the other surrounding listed buildings. The church is medieval in origin and was restored in the late 19th century. It has a rural setting but is largely enclosed within its church yard by a large number of trees and vegetation. This appears to be the case with most, if not all, of the settings of listed buildings in this area.

9. On visiting the church and other listed buildings in the vicinity I think the likelihood that the proposed development would impact on the church, or any of the listed buildings, is low. As long as the proposed buildings are a sensible height, it is very unlikely due to the distance (approximately 550m from the sites most northern point and nearest listed building) and the heavy filtering of trees that the development would be able to be seen from any of the listed buildings and would not impact on any significant views. Figures 2 and 3 give an example of views from the church and the Cosgrove Hall Ice House (listed 18 May 1988).
Figure 2 – View from Churchyard looking towards proposed site (south-west)

Figure 3 – View of the Ice House towards the site location (south-west)
10. The same can be said of the effect of the proposed development on Old Wolverton Mill, a c1800 mill to the south-east (approximately 580m) of the proposed site. Again, the distance means that it is very unlikely that any of the modern elements of the development would be visible and the proposal to have a country park on the east side of the site would make this even more unlikely.

11. Cosgrove Conservation Area is to the north-east of the site, approximately 250 metres at its nearest point. A summary of the conservation area’s characteristics would be the use of limestone in the historic, vernacular buildings; stone boundary walls and open spaces enclosed by trees. The grade I St Paul and St Peter Church is within this conservation area.

12. There is a possibility that some of the proposed buildings in development Zone D may be visible from the conservation area, but the actual visual affect is unlikely to harm the character or appearance of this conservation area. The closest part of the conservation area is not an important part, being on the Stratford Road, and views from the rest of the conservation area are heavily filtered by trees.

Figure 4 – Location map. Arrows show important views. Red box shows location of photo in Figure 5 and blue box of photo in Figure 6.

13. The most challenging heritage issue will be the effect of the proposed development on the Grand Union Canal Conservation Area. The conservation area
stretches 26 miles, consisting of 8-character areas. The proposed site is south of Character Area 7 (Cosgrove to the River Great Ouse) and either side of Character Area 8 (Old Stratford Arm).

14. Character Area 8 has the potential to be most effected by the proposals. The key positive features of the area\(^1\) are:

- Secluded peaceful stretch of watered and dried-up Canal.
- The gently curving line of the old Canal, passing through wooded and more open countryside.
- Long views out over fields of corn and maize.

15. Figure 4 shows the significant views mentioned in Grand Union Canal Proposed Conservation Area Character Area Maps (April 2014). By introducing the country park these views will retain the rural feel, but there is potential for view 1 to be altered by development in Zone D. The heavy filtering of trees and vegetation should prevent this, even in winter, as long as height of the buildings do not go above the trees and become visible.

16. Development on Zones A and B should not greatly affect the Grand Union Canal Conservation Area, due to the distance from the canal (approximately 160m) and the heavy filtering of trees, but again the heights of the proposed buildings should be careful not to be too visible above the trees.

17. Development should also be possible in Zone C, but buildings should be less in number when compared with Zones A and B, and more care should be taken with the design. The modern structure at the start of this stretch of the canal has already somewhat removed the rural feel of this part of the canal, as has the A5. In addition, trees heavily filter the views of the field. However, the Conservation

\(^1\) As noted in Grand Union Canal Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, April 2014
18. Issues arise with Zone D. At this stretch of the canal the views open up as there is little vegetation to filter the views. There is the potential that any development in this Zone could be considered to cause less than substantial harm to the conservation area. However, a sensitive development may be possible. In this area I don’t think a proposal of planting of trees along the canal to filter the views will necessarily work, as the feel is more of an open rural space than an enclosed one. I think a buffer zone of at least 60 metres will be needed to keep the feeling of being alongside a rural field system, and then some planting to filter views at the start of the buffer zone. The design of the buildings will have to be of a high level, possibly incorporating aspects of the vernacular style of the area.
19. The introduction of a Country Park in the east of the site will allow the open, rural feel of this stretch of the canal to be retained and would not have a negative effect on the conservation area.

20. In summary, it is unlikely most of the heritage assets mentioned in the Historic England comments will be harmed by the proposed development. However, there is potential for harm to be caused to the appearance and character of the Grand Union Canal. Zones A and B are the least likely to cause heritage issues and this is where most of the development should be focused. Some heritage issues do arise from the development of Zone C, but it is in Zone D that has the biggest challenges. A sensitive development would be needed in this area, and even with this a Conservation Officer may still decide that the development causes less than substantial harm to the conservation area.