

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Section 78 Appeal

Statement on Heritage Matters

Produced by Ullin Jodah McStea on behalf of Gloucester City Council.

August 2022

Land to the south of Hempsted Lane, Gloucester
Outline application seeking approval for up to 215 No. residential units
(All other matters reserved)

Applicant: Gladman Developments Ltd

Application Site: Land at Hill Farm, south of Hempsted Lane, Hempsted, Gloucester

LPA Reference: 20/00315/OUT

PINS Reference: APP/U1620/W/22/3296510

Introduction and Authorship

My name is Ullin Jodah McStea and I am a Principal Conservation Officer employed by Gloucester City Council to provide expert advice on matters affecting the conservation and enhancement of the built environment.

I have an MSc in the Conservation of Historic Buildings from the University of Bath, and I am a full member of the IHBC.

I have worked as a local authority conservation officer since 2014, in both rural and urban settings.

I have been asked by Gloucester City Council to provide a Heritage Statement to aid the Inspector to lead a 'round table' discussion on matters related to this inquiry.

Proposal: Outline application for the erection of up to 215 dwellings with public open space, structural planting and landscaping, surface water flood mitigation and attenuation and vehicular access point from Hempsted Lane. All matters reserved except for means of vehicular access.

Legislation and Policy

1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990:

The 'Land at Hill Farm' Gloucester is located to the south of the Hempsted Conservation Area wherein the Local Planning Authority is statutorily obliged to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area. This duty is required in relation to Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):

Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework asks that Local Planning Authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining or enhancing the significance of heritage assets. Paragraph 197 states that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Paragraph 199 states that when considering the impact of the proposed works on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Paragraph 200, which notes that significance can be harmed through alteration or development within the setting of a heritage asset, states that any harm to or loss of the significance of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. Paragraph 201 states that where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm, applications should be refused unless it is demonstrated that that harm is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits, whilst Paragraph

202 states that where a development proposal will cause harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset that is less than substantial harm, that harm is weighed against the public benefits of those works.

The Joint Core Strategy:

The Joint Core Strategy produced in partnership between Gloucester City Council, Cheltenham Borough Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council, and setting out a planning framework for all three areas, was adopted in December 2018. Policy SD8 in the Joint Core Strategy concerns the historic environment; it states:

1. The built, natural and cultural heritage of Gloucester City, Cheltenham town, Tewkesbury town, smaller historic settlements and the wider countryside will continue to be valued and promoted for their important contribution to local identity, quality of life and the economy;
2. Development should make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness, having regard to valued and distinctive elements of the historic environment;
3. Designated and undesignated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved and enhanced as appropriate to their significance, and for their important contribution to local character, distinctiveness and sense of place. Consideration will also be given to the contribution made by heritage assets to supporting sustainable communities and the local economy. Development should aim to sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets and put them to viable uses consistent with their conservation whilst improving accessibility where appropriate;
4. Proposals that will secure the future conservation and maintenance of heritage assets and their settings that are at risk through neglect, decay or other threats will be encouraged Proposals that will bring vacant or derelict heritage assets back into appropriate use will also be encouraged;
5. Development proposals at Strategic Allocations must have regard to the findings and recommendations of the JCS Historic Environment Assessment (or any subsequent revision) demonstrating that the potential impacts on heritage assets and appropriate mitigation measures have been addressed.

The Gloucester City Plan:

Policy D1 in the emerging Gloucester City Plan (City Plan), focuses on the historic environment. It states that 'Development proposals must conserve the character, appearance and significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings' and at present can be afforded significant weight.

Supplementary Planning Guidance:**Hempsted Conservation Area's 'Appraisal and Management Proposals -**

Adopted in September 2007 as interim planning guidance.

Site Description:

The application site is located within the parish of Hempsted, immediately adjacent to the A430 (Secunda Way). Despite its proximity to a major road, the site itself is rural consisting of three agricultural fields of varying sizes. To the north of the site are modern residential dwellings which form part of the village fringe. The site is highly prominent with key views of the site from Secunda Way when approaching Hempsted and from the public right of way ZGL 71 that runs between Rea Lane and Secunda Way and up to Hempsted Lane .

Approximately 125 metres to the north of the application site is the Hempsted Conservation Area, which was designated in November 1990 as an 'area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. (Planning, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas, Act 1990)

Hempsted Conservation Area: Description and Special Interest.

The Hempsted Conservation Area focuses on the historic core of the village of Hempsted, a settlement which occupies the south end of the hill at the centre of the ancient parish which bears its name, and whose origins can be traced back to Anglo Saxon times or earlier. Meaning 'high homestead', the village of Hempsted has historically been a place of pasture farming; during the medieval period it became a part of the holdings of Llanthony Secunda Priory.

With the expansion of Gloucester in the 20th century, and the proximity of Hempsted to its centre, (it is less than two miles from the Gloucester Cross to St Swithun's Church)

the inclusion of the village within the city's boundaries in the late 1960s is perhaps unsurprising. However, the 20th century was not just a time of expansion for Gloucester, Hempsted's size also increased significantly, with development throughout this historic village, in particular in the 1960s when a number of large properties were lost, and their gardens built over. Despite these changes, elements of the historic village remain including historic farm buildings, mature trees and brick boundary walls. In addition, Hempsted has also retained its village feel, indeed the 2007 Hempsted Conservation Area Appraisal clearly identifies Hempsted's 'separate identity' and 'distinctive rural character'.

St Swithun's Road:

St Swithun's Road, in particular its western end, is where the 'classic English village' character of Hempsted's Conservation Area is most evident. It is the site of the grade II* listed St Swithun's Church, which dates back to the 14th century, a number of listed tombs, and the grade II listed war memorial, all of which are located in a well-tended church yard. The 'no-through' nature of St Swithun's Road, ensures a peacefulness and tranquillity in this part of Hempsted, qualities that are often associated with rural village life.

Close to the church is the 17th century former Rectory, now known as Hempsted House, as well as Church Farmhouse. The latter of these two historic buildings, both of which are grade II listed, is one of the village's former farms, and as such provides evidence of the village's agricultural history and the area's rural character. Opposite this is the former National School, a 19th century building which gives an indication of the once modest scale of the historic village. Also nearby is the grade II* listed (and scheduled) village cross. Complementing these historic structures, are a number of mature trees, as well as well-maintained grass verges and gardens; far reaching views over open fields from the west of the church, contribute to the rural quality of this part of the conservation area.

Hempsted Lane: (North)

The parts of Hempsted Lane which are in the Conservation Area are quite different to the western end of St Swithun's Road, though they too have elements that contribute

to Hempsted's historic agricultural character. The northern end of the Conservation Area is marked by two historic farms, Newark Farm to the west of Hempsted Lane, and Manor Farm to the east. However, whilst the farmhouses for these two historic farmsteads remain, in recent years both these farms have become sites for development, and, whilst any harm that these schemes may have caused may have been outweighed by their public benefit, they will have impacted on the character and the setting of this part of the Conservation Area. In the case of Newark Farm, whilst the green space adjacent to Hempsted Lane has been retained, it would appear that much of the 19th century farmstead, which had been identified as a group of positive buildings in the 2007 Appraisal has been lost, and fields just beyond the Conservation Area boundary replaced by housing, a change that will have impacted on views. Manor Farm, which in 2007 was identified as a site with unsympathetic modern farm structures and one which would benefit from redevelopment currently has works underway; the development site in this case extends from within the Conservation Area to beyond its boundary and will provide fifty new dwellings.

Despite these recent changes, other elements remain in the northern part of the Conservation Area, which make a positive contribution to its character. On the western side of Hempsted Lane is the Village Hall, constructed in 1928, and marking a phase of early 20th century development within Hempsted, whilst nearby a further green space contributes to the feeling of openness within the village. On the eastern side of Hempsted Lane, where it intersects with St Swithun's Road, turns east and then south, is the imposing 'Milocroft'. Constructed in 1892 by WB Wood for a local solicitor, this landmark building, is evidence of the evolution of this historic settlement.

Hempsted Lane: (South)

The final part of the Conservation Area follows Hempsted Lane east from its intersection with Hempsted Lane, and then south. One of the most prominent features of this part of the Conservation Area are the historic boundary walls, possibly all that remains above ground of Hempsted Court, the seat of the Atkins family, and which was constructed around 1700. At the most southerly point of the Conservation Area, and on the western side of Hempsted Lane, is Dudstone (also known as Fairmead House), another substantial late Victorian property situated on a generous verdant

plot, whilst on the eastern side are 146, 150 and 152 Hempsted Lane, which the 2007 Conservation Area Appraisal identifies as early 19th century farmworkers cottages, though they are now much altered.

Special Interest:

Hempsted's 2007 Conservation Area Appraisal states that the special interest and significance of the Conservation Area derives from a number of key characteristics, in particular its distinctive rural character and its separate identity. With its far-reaching views, surviving domestic buildings such as historic farm workers cottages and farmhouses, historic boundary treatments, its 'classic English village scene' around St Swithun's church and its sense of tranquillity, mature trees that create to a leafy ambience within the village and well maintained private and public spaces, Hempsted village is closer in its character and identity to the more rural settlements further to the south and west of Gloucester, than to the Gloucester suburbs which it is in closer proximity to.

Impact of the Proposals:

The proposal in this application is for construction of up to 215 dwellings on land at Hill Farm, a site approximately 125 metres to the south of the Hempsted Conservation Area, and one which historically has served as agricultural land.

The proposed development site is quite distinct from the Conservation Area and the current scheme will not have a direct physical impact on it. In addition, important views within the Conservation Area also appear unlikely to be affected; indeed, at present the development site, from the public domain of the Conservation Area, does not appear to be visible. However, concerns remain with this proposed scheme, in particular because of the harmful impact it will have on the setting and the character of the Conservation Area.

This reason for this is that whilst the 'Land at Hill Farm' may be beyond the boundaries of the Hempsted Conservation Area, because of its proximity and its undeveloped agricultural nature, it makes a positive contribution to its setting and character, in particular the Conservation Area's rural atmosphere and tranquillity. Developing this site, with the addition of more than 200 houses, would not only erode the Conservation

Area peaceful semi-rural context; it would reduce Hempsted's separate village identity, incorporating it into Gloucester's suburban sprawl.

Hempsted's 2007 Conservation Area Appraisal notes the importance of fields beyond the Conservation Area boundary, as well as the pressure of development. It states that 'To develop fields that are an integral part of the rural character of Hempsted would be to change the character of the conservation area, sever the link with the agricultural past, lead to a much denser village scene' and 'tip the balance in the village mix of modern and historic buildings in favour of the modern'. The current proposal for the development of the agricultural land at Hill Farm, would have the impacts described.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, it is considered that the development site, due to its rural character and undeveloped, open nature, currently makes a positive contribution to the wider setting and the significance of the Hempsted Conservation Area. The proposal seeks a development of 215 dwellings on this land, resulting in the loss of its current open and rural character, which would have a harmful impact upon the wider setting of the Conservation Area, and its significance. However, whilst the proposal would cause harm to the wider setting and the significance of the Conservation Area, this harm is limited, indeed, in my view the harm would be towards the lower end of less than substantial harm.

Paragraph 199 of the NPPF is clear that great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset; this is irrespective of the level of harm that may occur, whilst paragraph 202 further advises that where a proposal would 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. As the harm in this proposal is considered to be 'less than substantial', it will need to be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme.