Historic England

WEST MIDLANDS OFFICE

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Our ref: L00518703

28 July 2016

Dear Mr Swithenbank

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

HALES HALL, OAKAMOOR ROAD, CHEADLE, ST10 4QR
Application Nos SMD/2016/0360 & SMD/2016/0359

Thank you for your letter of 15 July 2016 notifying Historic England of the above applications.

Summary
Historic England has no objection in principle to a sensitively located biomass boiler.

However, we are of the view that the currently proposed location to the front of the grade II* Hales Hall would harm its setting. We therefore recommend that this application be refused.

Historic England Advice
Hales Hall is a well-proportioned, finely detailed small country house built in 1712, with some late 19th century additions. Regrettably it has been neglected and underutilised for some time by its previous owners, and as a result was last year placed on our Heritage at Risk Register. In addition its once substantial grounds have slowly been given over to other uses, such as the adjacent camp site.

Given the erosion of its historic setting it is therefore essential that any new structures, such as the proposed biomass boiler, are very carefully positioned.

With this in mind, we would draw your attention to the requirements of section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 regarding the need to pay special regard to the preservation of listed buildings and their settings. Section 12 of the NPPF also highlights the importance of fully understanding the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting, specifically stating that significance can be harmed or lost through development within a heritage asset's

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setting. In addition, as you will be aware, paragraph 128 requires an applicant to describe the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution made by its setting. In this instance the supporting information is extremely limited, and we are concerned that the impact of the proposals on the setting of the Hall has not been fully assessed

Given the prolonged lack of maintenance, and the resulting poor condition of Hales Hall we were encouraged by the sale of the property to a new owner. Furthermore, given the diminished curtilage its use as a facility to support the adjacent camp site would seem to be a sensible way forward. However, we are concerned that works appear to be taking place in an ad hoc, and at times ill-considered manner. Obviously we would not wish to discourage the new owner. However, in order to prevent harm to the heritage asset it is imperative that they work closely with your conservation specialist, in connection with both the conversion and repair of this important property, and the erection of any buildings or structures within its setting.

With regard to the current application, we would have no objection in principle to the erection of a biomass boiler. However, we are unable to support the currently proposed location to the front of the Hall. The Design and Access Statement refers to a garage previously being located in this position. However, we do not consider that this justifies the current proposal.

As you will be aware a variety of somewhat unsympathetic structures, such as the outdoor swimming pool, are already located to the rear of the site. The current application does not explain what is proposed for these areas, or what alternative locations were considered for the boiler. However, in our view they present an opportunity to rectify previous works, and accommodate new facilities such as the proposed biomass boiler. Locating ancillary structures to the front of the Hall should be avoided. This is especially the case given the utilitarian appearance of the proposed structure and the scale of the associated flue.

Recommendation
Historic England is of the view that the proposed biomass boiler, by reason of its location and design, would adversely affect the setting of this important grade II* listed building. We would therefore recommend that the current application be refused.

However, we would have no objection to such a structure in principle, if it can be discretely accommodated elsewhere on the site. We would therefore recommend that the applicant seeks the advice of your conservation specialist as to the most appropriate location.

In addition, we would recommend that the applicant considers the guidance contained within our Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets.

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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



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Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas
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cc Gillian Bayliss Conservation Adviser Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

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