

## STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

## RESPONSE TO DEVELOPMENT CONTROL CONSULTATION

## DEVELOPMENT AFFECTING A LISTED BUILDING

Application Ref: 2016/0413	Listing Grade: Setting Grade II LB, Additional Heritage Designations: Setting Leek CA, Setting Pickwood Recreation Ground
Site: Site off Milltown Way, Leek	
Proposal: Outline planning application for up to 40 dwellings, with associated open space and community park, ecological management area, woodland planting and landscaping with all matters reserved except vehicular and pedestrian access.	
<p>Application's Supporting Information. Is any adverse impact on a Listed Building/Setting raised (Section 66 Duty)? The applicant's Heritage Report states that there will be a very minor impact upon the significance of Pickwood Hall, through changes to setting.</p> <p>It would also result in a very minor impact to the significance of the Leek Conservation Area, through changes to setting.</p> <p>The Heritage Report concludes that these impacts comprise less than substantial harm. Under paragraph 134 of the NPPF, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposed scheme.</p> <p>A minor impact upon the significance of the non-designated Pickwood Recreation Ground is also anticipated. Under paragraph 135 of the NPPF, this should be considered as part of a balanced judgement, having regard to the scale of the harm (minor) and the significance of the asset (low).</p>	
<p>Comments:</p> <p>The Inspector's decision gives a clear steer on assessing the heritage and landscape impact of development on this site. Views towards the Leek Conservation Area are highly significant (including the wider townscape and landscape within which the Conservation Area is situated). Key views are from the recreation ground and perimeter footpath looking towards Leek. The open, rural foreground is significant. The Inspector concluded that there would be significant adverse harm to the setting of the Conservation Area.</p> <p>The Inspector also noted that the appeal site was within the setting of Pickwood Hall. The Hall is visible from many points within the appeal site – most notably the site's southernmost field with limited screening on the west boundary, and views that would be obtained from the Hall's northern wing which emphasises the site's rural setting. The Inspector was aware of bringing the urban edge closer to the park.</p> <p>The Inspector comments that views to the north and east are only available from a limited part of the Hall and in some of these views the housing on Milltown Way is already visible. Development would offer the potential to improve landscaping and planting to mitigate development, although at the expense of reducing the open character. For this reason he concluded that the development represented moderate harm to the significance of Pickwood Hall.</p> <p>The Inspector also concluded that there would be landscape and visual affects of major adverse significance.</p> <p>Looking at the revised scheme I note that the development has now been removed from the sloping ground between the recreation ground and Leek town centre. However, a nose of development will still project out beyond the recreation ground on a plateau of land at high level. The boundary to this would be completely arbitrary and would not relate to any existing landscape features. Development at the far end of the recreation ground would curtail the panoramic views of the Conservation Area and its rural landscape setting, and sever the visual link between Pickwood Hall and the recreation ground. If any development is to be acceptable in this area it must be pulled back to the central spine road (with the Y-shaped track and mature hedgerow). Pulling development back will also shield views of the new housing from the perimeter footpath.</p> <p>I note that the area of development to the south has been reduced to help protect the rural setting of Pickwood Hall and to provide planting to mask the new development. This is an improvement on the previous scheme. However, I note that the historic drive (shown on historic OS maps) is not referred to nor the TPO trees. This historic routeway to a designated heritage asset should be reflected in any future scheme.</p> <p>To the west of the application site a band of planting is shown to help mask the new development from Pickwood Hall. I am unsure about the effectiveness of this screen. Any planting must also provide a visual break with the historic avenue trees so that their impact is not lost.</p> <p>Pickwood Recreation Ground is now on the Local Heritage Register and the conservation of its essential historic character is a material consideration. The margin of the recreation ground would require a belt of planting, including specimen trees, to help filter views of new housing and back gardens. The pulling-back of development to the hedgerow would also allow the visual</p>	

connection between the recreation ground and Hall to be maintained and more panoramic views of the Conservation Area and its landscape setting.

**Conclusion**

The proposed development represents a further creep of the urban area towards the rural isolation of Pickwood Hall and the applicant's heritage statement does acknowledge that there will be a very minor impact upon the significance of Pickwood Hall, through changes to its setting.

The proposed development will intrude into significant views of the Leek Conservation Area and its rural landscape setting from the recreation ground and perimeter footpaths, primarily because of the northern extension of the proposed development beyond the Y-shaped track beyond the mature hedgerow. The applicant's heritage statement confirms that there will be a very minor impact to the significance of the Leek Conservation Area, through changes to setting. There will also be a minor impact on the significance of the Pickwood Recreation Ground.

The applicant's heritage report concludes that these impacts comprise less than substantial harm and the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposed scheme. My conclusion is that whilst this scheme is an improvement on the previous submission there is still recognised harm (less than substantial) to the designated heritage assets and the strong presumption in favour of the preservation of designated heritage assets must be applied even where the harm is slight (Barnwell Manor and Ecotricity). The particular concerns relate to the northern extension of the site beyond the hedgerow.

Conservation Liaison Panel Observations: Reported 6<sup>th</sup> September 2016

Recommendation: Further revisions sought

Conditions:

Signed:  
Mrs G. Bayliss  
Senior Conservation Officer

Date: 5/10/16