

Planning context – Little Tew

- The site is located on land outside of, but which sits in close proximity to, the village of Little Tew.
- A new dwelling in this location would not usually be permitted here due to its unsustainable location (local plan policies OS2 & H2)
- Therefore, compliance with paragraph 84 is key.
- In this case, we can accept that this is an example of exceptional design.
- Our key concerns relate to the location of the site (is it truly isolated given its proximity to the village? And the relationship of the site (and the development of it) with the setting of the village, the landscape and the Conservation Area.
- Little Tew is defined in the West Ox Landscape Assessment as being a 'closed village'. The Tews (Great Tew and Little Tew) are distinctive examples of 'closed' villages where they appear particularly unified and distinctive due to the historic and former ownership of the land by the Estate. Further, the existence of the main estate house and its formal parkland is key to the defining character of the area. In this case, the main estate house is Tew Park.
- One key concern is that the introduction of a new, significantly large country house set within parkland gardens in this location so close to the village of Little Tew would transform the historically important dynamic between the villages and the existing estate house.
- It would also erode the sense of 'enclosure' of the village.
- Less than substantial harm to the setting of the Conservation Area and the heritage significance of the estates etc.
- Paragraph 208 of the NPPF states that 'where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.'
- In this case, the benefit is a private one to the owner, but not convinced the public benefit of 'raising the standard and quality of design etc' would outweigh the harm to the setting of the village and the conservation area.
- We don't think that para 84 trumps all other key, relevant NPPF/local plan policies such as heritage – which is given significant weight. Para 84 might allow a house in an unsustainable location if it complies, but it doesn't mean that all other material planning considerations are rendered obsolete.
- So while we appreciate that this is an exceptional, incredibly well-designed and impressive example of architecture, our concerns about location and heritage/historic landscape impact remain.