

Erection of a country house and gardens, stables courtyard, new highway accesses, solar array, drainage works and landscape proposals, including a new lake.

Application Reference: 24/01861/FUL

Heritage Comment on WODC's Conservation officer's consultation response

Summary of relevant points raised by the officer

- Proposed development does not respect the character of houses in Little Tew;
- The site is within the setting of Little Tew, Great Tew and Heythrop and result in harm;
- The proposed development would be contrived and prominent;
- Ancillary buildings and structures and 'artificially planted' landscape would diminish the character of the area;
- The agricultural context of Little Tew will be lost and the village will be severed from its surroundings;
- The visual and functional interrelationship between the proposed house and its outbuildings is consistent with the country house tradition;
- The setting of Little Tew is tightly defined by its physical characteristics and topographic framework, defining its intimate , enclosed qualities;
- Intellectually and in a sensory way the proposed development may add a new chapter to one's experience of the area.

Comment

The introduction of 'Gummer's Law' (In 1997), now enshrined as a paragraph in the National Planning Policy Framework sought to reverse the decline and loss of the country house as a building type, considered to be one of Britain's most significant architectural traditions.

This is discussed in some detail in the Heritage Report accompanying the application (WA May 2024) concluding that:

- The use of classical architectural forms is appropriate;
- The scale of the house and its designed landscape is appropriate and fits historic precedents;

- The proposed location of a house of this size is consistent with historic precedents;
- Understanding and experience of the agricultural context of Little Tew (and Great Tew) will remain;
- The proposed development would not result in harm to the setting of Little Tew;
- The character and use of the site as farmland will change, but intellectually and in a sensory way this will add to people's experience.

Supplementary information provided to assist in understanding of the heritage impacts demonstrates that the proposed development:

- Would be consistent with and be sensitive to the 'house hierarchy' of Little and Great Tew;
- Would add to, not detract from the significance of the historical evolution of the surroundings villages and preserve the history of land ownership;
- By its nature of being isolated, the proposed development will result in a change to the character and appearance of the site but would retain the underlying historical structure, consistent with the policies and advice in the NPPF;
- Responds positively to the intent of the NPPF to sustain the Country House tradition in a manner that addresses contemporary needs;
- Is consistent with the history of the development of the smaller country house through the 19th and 20th centuries, (driven by the increased prosperity of the middle class in providing 'houses built on the sites of earlier farms by merchants, manufacturers, or lawyers, often with only a tiny estate attached, sometimes no more than a small park' (Brown and Williams)).