

PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

AT

**CLIFTON ROAD
DEDDINGTON**

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

3 December 2013

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CONTENTS

- 1 Introduction
- 2 The Deddington Conservation Area
- 3 The Deddington Castle Archaeological Site
- 4 The Setting of the List Building
- 5 Impact Assessment
- 6 Conclusions

Appendices

- A Deddington Conservation Area Designation Map

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Harrison Vallis Gilbert Ltd (HVG) have been instructed by Banner Homes to prepare a Statement of Significance for three forms of heritage asset and an Impact Assessment as to how their proposals would affect those assets.
- 1.2. The proposed application is for the construction of mixed-density housing along with car parking facilities for the adjacent sports pitch in the Castle grounds.
- 1.3. The three forms of heritage asset to be considered within this application are:
 - 1.3.1. the designated Deddington Conservation Area [**Appendix A**];
 - 1.3.2. the setting of the Deddington Castle archaeological site;
 - 1.3.3. the setting of the Castle End House/Applewood listed building.
- 1.4. The site is located on the south side of Clifton Road, the B4031, at the point where Castle Street emerges from the village centre and becomes Clifton Road and where Earl's Lane joins from the north. Clifton Road is the only road into Deddington from the east.
- 1.5. The site is roughly square in shape with its south boundary following a curved alignment. To the south of the site is one of the village's two sport and recreational facilities which makes use of the western half of the archaeological site of Deddington Castle, all remains of which are now underground.
- 1.6. There is development immediately to the west and east of the site in the form of dwellings and to the north of Clifton Road there is intermittent development set within fields and paddocks.
- 1.7. From north to south, there is a very shallow downward gradient across Clifton Road. The road in front of the site and on into the village centre is generally level. From the site leading outwards, there is a shallow dip in the road.

- 1.8. There is legislation, government policy and recognised guidance on the way in which the settings of heritage assets can be dealt with. The same three sources apply to the treatment of heritage assets themselves.
- 1.9. The legislation comes in the form of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act). Section 66 of this Act refers, *inter alia*, to the preservation of the settings of listed buildings.
- 1.10. Government policy on the consideration of proposals affecting listed buildings, conservation areas and archaeological sites, and the settings to all three types of heritage asset is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF) and The Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide (the Practice Guide).
- 1.11. English Heritage have produced recognised guidance in their two publications entitled “Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management” (Understanding Place) and “The Setting of Heritage Assets” (Heritage Settings).
- 1.12. The provisions of section 66 of the Act require LPAs and the Secretary of State to have “*special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting*”. At face value, this could be interpreted that the setting of a listed building should be protected from change. If that interpretation were to be applied to listed buildings then it could be similarly applied to other forms of heritage asset.
- 1.13. However, time has shown that that interpretation has not been applied and that instead the emphasis has been directed towards the management of change. This approach has been confirmed in “Understanding Place”, whose Foreword states that “*change is inevitable*”.
- 1.14. Further confirmation of managing change, rather than prevention of change, can be found in “Heritage Settings”. In this document, English Heritage refer to quasi-scientific methods of assessing the value of settings in order to judge the impact of change upon them.
- 1.15. The document goes on to say that those methods “*cannot provide a systematic answer*”. Instead, English Heritage recommend that the quality and significance of a setting should be presented by way of a “*clearly expressed and non-technical narrative argument that sets out ‘what matters and why’*”.

- 1.16. HVG have prepared this Statement along the lines of a non-technical narrative argument. The basis for this approach was that the application site is not the heritage asset. Therefore, the narrative argument is proportionate to the level of significance it contributes to the asset.
- 1.17. As a final introductory matter, this Statement has been prepared in the light of the definition of a setting being “*The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced*”. In order to appreciate the value and significance of the setting to a heritage asset, it is first of all essential to know what, and where, the heritage asset is. If the asset itself cannot be readily identified for its historic purpose or its location, then trying to identify its setting is destined to be an equally futile and even unnecessarily negative constraint to what might otherwise be regarded as an acceptable form of development.
- 1.18. The remainder of this document is organised into two parts dealing firstly with the significance value of the three asset types identified and followed by assessments of how the proposals might impact upon them.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

2. THE DEDDINGTON CONSERVATION AREA

- 2.1. The Local Planning Authority (LPA) designated conservation area status to parts of Deddington in 1988. In April 2012 it published the Deddington Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA). This document will be referred to from time to time throughout this Statement.
- 2.2. The conservation area covers the historic core of the settlement and areas of open space. The latter are concentrated towards the eastern side of the conservation area and include the application site and the archaeological site to its south.
- 2.3. These two sites mark the most easterly extent of the conservation area. Beyond them, to the east, south east and south of the archaeological site are open fields. To the east of the application site, the village continues for a short distance on both sides of Clifton Road before giving way to the encircling open fields.
- 2.4. Figure 14 of the CAA classifies the two sites as being of “*setting*” quality, even though they are both within the conservation area boundary. The text

of the CAA at its paragraph 8.3.8. says that sites within this category are “*areas of predominantly open space which are considered to contribute to the setting of the historic core of the village*”.

- 2.5. The same text goes on to say that sites in the “setting” classification are “*tranquil areas*” of “*rough grassland*”.
- 2.6. The north boundary of the application site is contiguous with the highway boundary along its full length. There is a deep grass verge populated with trees and mature bushes. There is also a narrow tarmac pavement adjoining the carriageway.



Fig 1. Verge along Clifton Road and view into site

- 2.7. The trees and bushes do not form an impenetrable visual barrier into the site as there are gaps where views into and across the application site are possible. The map at figure 15 of the CAA indicates the presence of an “*important vista*” into the site at the junction with Earl’s Lane. The same map also shows an “*important view*” across the site from the south boundary, which will be referred to again.
- 2.8. The east boundary of the site does not present an impenetrable barrier. There is a hedge, fencing and a number of mature trees, but these dividing elements are of no great height.

- 2.9. Beyond the east boundary is the curtilage of the first of several detached dwellings, each of which fronts Clifton Road as it heads away from the village. The relationship of development with open space at this point is that the application site is an infill site that has so far been overlooked.
- 2.10. On entering the village from the east along Clifton Road, the traveller is made aware of the oncoming village by the intermittent plots of development to be seen on both sides of the road. Upon reaching the 30mph speed restriction signs, it is difficult to understand why the conservation area boundary has been drawn so as to include the application site but not the open field on the opposite side of Clifton Road.
- 2.11. When viewing from this point, buildings on the village side of the application site are visible in close proximity with the junction of Earl's Lane. A better interpretation of the definition of a conservation area would have been to take the Area's boundary from Earl's Lane, then across Clifton Road and along the west boundary of the application site. In other words, to have omitted the latter from the Area.
- 2.12. HVG make this observation because the application site serves no purpose in adding any merit to the quality of the conservation area in terms of making a positive contribution to the "special architectural or historic interest" of the village. The rooftops of the buildings to the west which can be seen across the application site from this approach are also of no "special architectural interest". There would be no loss to the quality, character or appearance of the conservation area if development of the application site were to go ahead.

2.13. The west boundary of the application site is delineated by hedges and fencing which rise to approximately eaves level of the buildings beyond the site. As described in the previous paragraph, these adjacent buildings are of no special architectural interest.



Fig 2. *View from Clifton Road across the site towards its west and south boundaries showing buildings and tree barrier*

2.14. The south boundary of the application site is contiguous with the archaeological site, which will be examined later. Within the archaeological site there are opportunities to see into the application site from two levels and these will also be examined later.

2.15. When the site is viewed through the gaps in the landscaping along Clifton Road, the south boundary with its closely planted mature trees makes a dense, visually impenetrable barrier to the archaeological site beyond the boundary. This tree barrier is within the archaeological site and will therefore not be affected by development on the application site. The delineation along this boundary is formed by a natural stone wall.

2.16. Along the south boundary of the site there is one narrow gap in the tree barrier which allows a narrow vista into the archaeological site. Even so, there is nothing to be seen within this vista to indicate that that site has such value.

- 2.17. Within the boundaries just described, the application site has a very gentle north to south downward slope which steepens as the south boundary is approached. There are no buildings or structures on the site and no isolated earth mounds or ponds, streams or other water bodies. There are no groups or individual trees within the site and it is currently covered by rough grassland. It appears that there has been no agricultural or other activity on the site for many years.
- 2.18. Figure 15 of the CAA marks the application site as being “*an important green space*”. However, the text at paragraph 8.3.8 does not justify why this is the case. Without providing such a reason, the classification attributed should be viewed as being no more than subjective.
- 2.19. The majority of the conservation area covers the historic core of the village and, with its wealth of historic evolution and architectural diversity, there is every justification to say that it has special interest and that its significance value is high. The archaeological site is of special historic interest and therefore also warrants inclusion within the conservation area.
- 2.20. Figure 14 of the CAA identifies the application site and the archaeological site as being part of the “setting” character area within the conservation area. The text (paragraph 8.3.8) defines the “setting” character area as being areas which “... *contribute to the setting of the historic core of the village*”.
- 2.21. HVG find it difficult to understand how the application site can fulfil such a role. The topography of the village is such that there is no visual connection between the two and there is nothing within the CAA or on the ground to indicate any historical links between them.

The junction of Castle Street, Clifton Road and Earl's Lane and to the west thereof is where the special architectural and historic interest of the village begins. That special interest becomes more apparent and more valuable along Castle Street as one heads into the village.



Fig 3. *Looking west into Castle Street from Earl's Lane junction. It is only westward from here that the conservation area begins to take on any significance*

2.22. It is the opinion of HVG that Castle Street provides the setting for the core of the village and not the application site. Consequently, the latter has no significance value either to the core itself, or to the easterly extent of the conservation area as a whole.

3. THE DEDDINGTON CASTLE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

3.1. The purpose of this Statement is to assess the significance value of the settings of the various heritage assets in the vicinity of the application site. Banner Homes have commissioned a separate assessment for the archaeological site which was carried out by CgMs Consulting.

3.2. The applicant's Archaeological Assessment (AAA) is a desk-top study which concentrates on the spatial extent of the former motte and bailey of Deddington Castle and the potential for archaeological discoveries on the application site.

3.3. The AAA concludes that with the exception of the post-medieval period, there is no evidence to suggest that archaeology is likely to compromise

- the principle of development of the application site. The AAA comments that a geophysical survey may be helpful in revealing the presence, or otherwise, of any post-medieval survivals on the site.
- 3.4. Irrespective of the findings of the AAA, the application site forms part of the setting of the archaeological site. To assess the significance of the application site as part of the setting, a description of the physical dimensions and relationship between the two sites is beneficial.
 - 3.5. The application site is situated to the north of the archaeological site. Their boundaries are contiguous, but the former only constitutes a relatively short length of the latter's north boundary.
 - 3.6. The westerly half of the archaeological site is distinct in two ways. Firstly, it is enclosed on its north, south and west sides by embankments of varying heights which have been planted with a continuous belt of native deciduous trees. Secondly, the ground level within the enclosing embankments is considerably higher than the ground levels that surround the site. This is especially so between the two sites.
 - 3.7. The land within this westerly half is level in all directions, whereas in the easterly half it undulates very noticeably. The two halves are partially separated by a crescent of loosely spaced trees. There is a gated vehicular access into the westerly half in the north west corner from Castle Street. There are no structures within any part of the motte and bailey extent of the archaeological site.
 - 3.8. The archaeological site is owned by the Parish Council and free access is available. On entering the site from the Castle Street entrance, there is a sign which indicates the presence of a number of pedestrian walkways around the perimeter of the site.

There is an Outer Walk around the foot of the embankment with outward views; an Upper Walk at high level along the top of the embankment from where there are inward and outward views and an Inner Walk around the foot of the inside of the embankment from where it is not possible to achieve outward views.



Fig 4. *View of embankment from sports pitch towards application site*

- 3.9. In terms of assessing the significance value of a setting, HVG hold the view that there are two aspects of the setting which need to be positively fulfilled. The first of these is that the setting should have a visual connection with the heritage asset and secondly, that there should be a recognisable use or functional relationship between the two. This two pronged approach to assessing significance value reflects the elements of character and appearance referred to in the definition of a conservation area.
- 3.10. With regard to the visual connection between the two sites, the substantial embankment topped and covered by the established tree belt already prevents views into the archaeological site from Clifton Road. HVG consider that because of the presence of this visually impenetrable barrier, the development of the application site will not worsen the present situation.
- 3.11. The setting of a heritage asset can also include the outward views. In this case there are views from the foot and top of the north embankment. The existing residential development, adjacent the north west and north east corners of the archaeological site, which is also within the setting of the

Castle, demonstrates that buildings in close proximity need not cause harm to the nature or the integrity of the asset.



Fig 5. *View outwards across application site from the Upper Walk around the top of the embankment*

- 3.12. There will, of course, be a change to the outward views from the embankment across the application site. Change often creates negative responses, however, as already pointed out, English Heritage acknowledge in their document “Understanding Places”, that change is inevitable.
- 3.13. HVG also point out that not all change is harmful or detrimental. The success of any change will depend upon the care and quality of that change and to the physical stature of the affected heritage asset.
- 3.14. In these respects, the portfolio of Banner Homes is testament to their ability to produce site layouts and architectural treatments that are sensitive and of high quality. In addition, the embankment along the north side of the Castle has a substantial presence, especially with its tree covered slopes and summit.
- 3.15. In views across the application site from Clifton Road, or conversely from the Castle embankment, there will be a significant change in the content of those views, but that change will be attractively presented and the stature of the Castle will be capable of absorbing the change without any diminution or deterioration to its own integrity.

3.16. In terms of the use or functional associations, it is important to refer to the AAA. The expert analysis by its author, Dr Michael Dawson, has indicated that historic associations between the Castle and the historic core of the village have all occurred to the west of the archaeological site. At this stage he has not totally dismissed the possibility of there being surviving artefacts on the application site from the post-medieval period. However, he has drawn on his expertise and experience to suggest that any such finds are unlikely. He further suggests that any further investigations could be carried out under the provisions of a condition attached to the grant of a permission, rather than as a pre-cursor to the submission of an application. This is a clear indication of his confidence that development on the site can be progressed without any fear of causing harm or damage to as yet undiscovered material.

3.17. Any use and/or functional associations between the two sites have not been identified or recorded.

3.18. Neither of the two aspects of setting advocated by HVG has been fulfilled. The overall conclusion drawn by HVG is that the application site holds no significance value to make it an untouchable component of the setting of the archaeological site.

4. THE SETTING OF THE LISTED BUILDING

4.1. To the west of the application site is a Grade II* listed building. It was built as a single farmhouse but has been sub-divided, along with its curtilage, into two dwellings known as Castle End House and Applewood.

4.2. There are further buildings on a site which lies between the Grade II* building and the application site. These intervening buildings prevent any visual connection between the two and while there is a possibility that the Grade II* former farmhouse may have had control over the application site, HVG cannot confirm or deny this. On that basis, HVG consider that the application site does not form part of the setting of the listed building and therefore holds no significance value in that respect.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5. ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. The submitted Banner Homes layout is formed by a circular inner site road with a single vehicular access off Clifton Road into the north east corner of the site. The inner site road will create an 'island' across the central area of the site.
- 5.2. For the most part, the new dwellings will extend around the site road on both sides. There is, however, a notable exception to this layout.
- 5.3. There is an open margin along the northerly perimeter (Clifton Road), the easterly boundary (adjacent existing dwellings along Clifton Road), and in the south east corner of the site, where a parking area is proposed for the benefit of users of the sports and recreation area within the Castle grounds.
- 5.4. The open margin along the north boundary will preserve the existing trees on that frontage. Not only will this give an attractive location for the new dwellings, but it will also preserve the character and appearance of the existing roadside frontages as Clifton Road enters the village from the east.
- 5.5. These proposals will, of course, change what can be seen on the site through the occasional gaps in the landscaping along the roadside. However, the predominant land use in Castle Street, Earl's Lane and Clifton Road is residential. The dwellings which create this distinctive character and appearance manifest themselves in a variety of ages, heights, sizes, styles, proportions, materials, orientation and relationship to the road alignments.
- 5.6. The proposals will simply reflect this established character of land use and in doing so will not cause harm to the character of the conservation area.
- 5.7. The dwellings sited on the island within the inner site road have a staggered relationship to follow the circular route, thus avoiding a regimented building line while at the same time making the most efficient use of the land. Around the outside of the inner site road the dwellings are, on the whole, of a slightly larger footprint and are more randomly spaced and orientated.

- 5.8. When viewed from Clifton Road, the site and in particular the dwellings which back onto the archaeological site, will appear to have a higher backdrop of trees on rising ground.
- 5.9. As has been previously stated, for those who have no knowledge of Deddington village, they would be totally unaware of the presence of the archaeological site were they to enter the village from Clifton Road.
- 5.10. In drawing up their proposals for the site, Banner Homes have taken account of the examples of historic incremental development in the immediate vicinity. Whilst designing for modern housing standards, the proposed dwellings have variety in the aspects of design which are to be found in this part of the conservation area (see paragraph 5.5). Their appearance has been influenced and informed by those aspects.
- 5.11. By following this historical lead, these new proposals will respect the traditional origins of the village especially in terms of scale, proportions and materials.
- 5.12. As a result, this new pocket of development will not cause harm to the character or appearance of the conservation area.
- 5.13. The setting of the Grade II* former farmhouse, Castle End House/Applewood, has already been disregarded as having any association with the application site. On that assessment, development on the site will have no adverse or historic impact on them.
- 5.14. The application site is within the designated conservation area and according to the LPA it forms part of the setting of the historic core of the village. HVG are of the opinion that if any of the 'character areas' within the village provide a setting for the historic core, it is the Castle Street area. The application site, being outside the Castle Street area, does not therefore have any influence on the setting of the historic core. Development of the application site will have no adverse visual or historic impact on the core of the village.
- 5.15. The application site is located at the very easterly end of the conservation area, where development along Clifton Road begins to become intermittent. Developing the site will in principle represent a conforming use and the dwellings proposed to be built on it have been influenced by the evolution of surrounding phases of expansion of the village. Because

of this, the proposed development will have no adverse impact upon the conservation area.

- 5.16. With regard to the setting of the archaeological site, the desk-top study carried out by CgMs has concluded that there is unlikely to be any as yet undiscovered artefacts that might compromise the principle of development of the application site. To date, the site has not revealed anything that could associate it with the Castle. In this respect, development of the application site will not have any adverse impact on the heritage asset.
- 5.17. Views towards the archaeological site from Clifton Road across the application site will change. But change from one use to another even within the settings of heritage assets, is not automatically of an adverse outcome. Urban development against heritage assets over time is commonplace and the two are usually able to survive and continue to portray their own historic accounts.
- 5.18. This form of mutual survival will occur here with the implementation of the proposed development. The Castle will retain all of its archaeological features and proportions without suffering any adverse impacts whilst the village can undergo another phase of expansion in a location where it is ideally situated.
- 5.19. Views out from the archaeological site, from the foot of the embankment and from its summit, will register the change to residential development. The same conclusions for these outward views can be presented using the same reasoning as presented for inward views in paragraph 5.17. The presence of development against the archaeological asset will not have an adverse impact upon it or its setting.

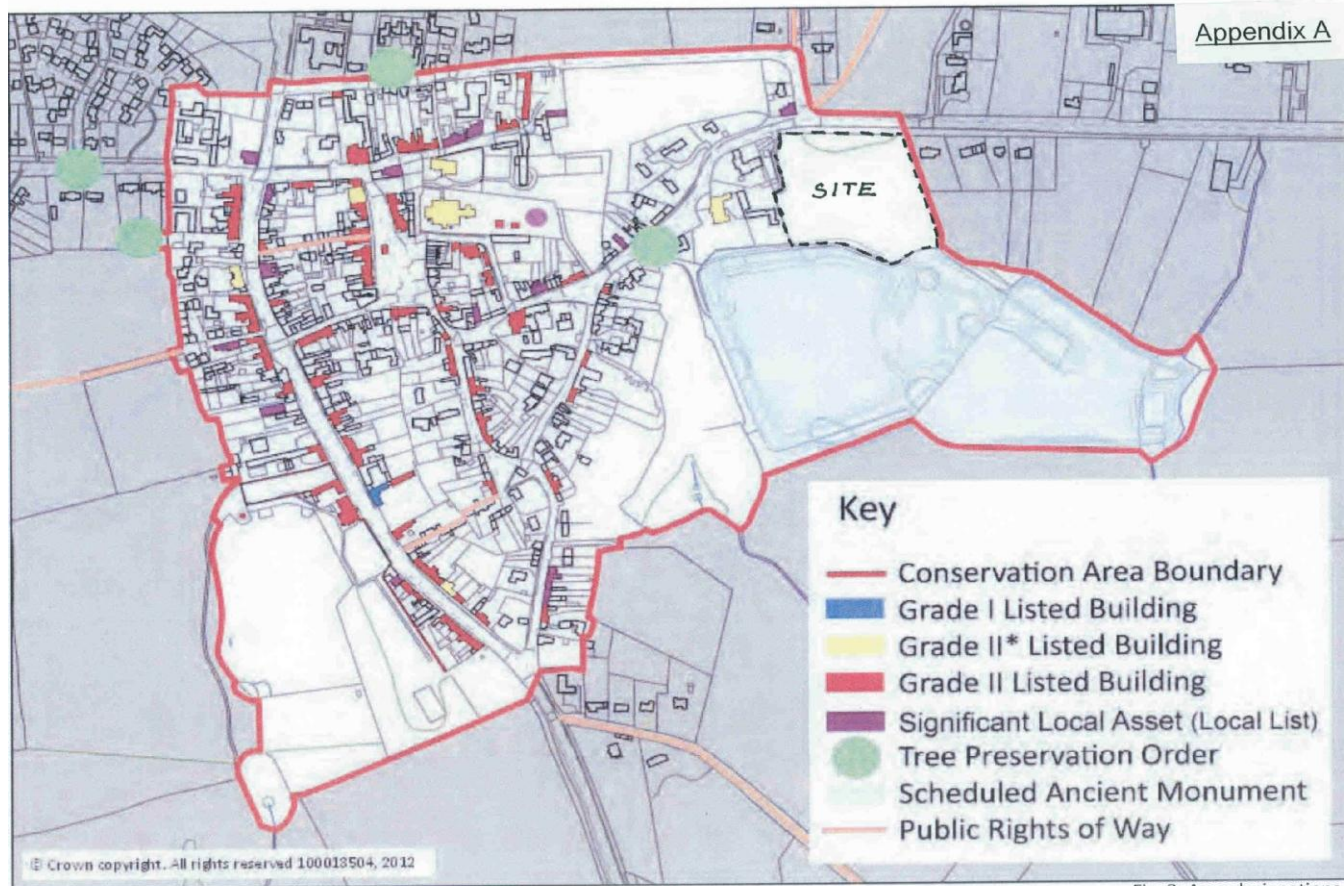
6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1. These proposals offer an opportunity for the village to accommodate new residential development in affordable and open market guises to assist in the provision of houses to meet unprecedented demand.
- 6.2. Even though there are heritage assets which will be affected, HVG is convinced that they and their settings will remain unharmed should the proposals be implemented.

- 6.3. In all of the relevant national policies and especially the recognised guidance documents on the treatment of heritage settings, there is nothing to prevent change to those settings.
- 6.4. These proposals can be safely approved and implemented without adverse impact or harm being caused to any of the identified heritage assets or their settings.

Appendix A

Deddington Conservation Area Designation



5

Fig. 3: Area designations