



Niko Grigoropoulos,
Case Officer
West Berkshire Council
By email from BGT

22 July 2020

Dear Sir/Madam,

20/01238/OUTMAJ Sandleford Park, Newtown Road, Newtown, Newbury

Outline planning permission for up to 1,000 new homes; an 80 extra care housing units (Use Class C3) as part of the affordable housing provision; a new 2 form entry primary school (D1); expansion land for Park House Academy School; a local centre to comprise flexible commercial floorspace (A1-A5 up to 2,150 sq m, B1a up to 200 sq m) and D1 use (up to 500sq m); the formation of new means of access onto Monks Lane; and new open space including the laying out of a new country park.

Comments from Berkshire Gardens Trust

Thank you for consulting The Gardens Trust (GT) in its role as Statutory Consultee with regard to proposed Council strategies affecting sites listed by Historic England (HE) on their Register of Parks and Gardens. The Berkshire Gardens Trust (BGT) is a member organisation of the GT and works in partnership with it in respect of the protection and conservation of historic sites, and is authorised by the GT to respond on GT's behalf in respect of such consultations within Berkshire.¹

One of the key activities of the Berkshire Gardens Trust (BGT) is therefore to help conserve, protect and enhance designed landscapes within West Berkshire. We are therefore grateful for the opportunity to comment on the most recent planning application for Sandleford Park.

With the high volume of documents, and numerous changes to these over the years, we have tried to identify the changes arising, following on from your refusal of the application in 2018. However it may be that we have missed information which would have helped us to understand how this scheme varies from the former, and whether our queries and objections have been addressed.

¹ The Gardens Trust, a national body recently published a guidance leaflet to explain the place of historic designed landscapes in the planning system, the importance of assessing significance, the statutory consultation obligations, and the role of County Gardens Trusts, in raising awareness of historic designed landscapes as heritage assets. 'The Planning System in England and the Protection of Historic Parks and Gardens' can be downloaded at www.thegardenstrust.org. BGT's own website: www.berkshiregardenstrust.org

I am aware that we are a bit late in sending in our response and hope that that it can still be considered. For ease of reference I have summarised our latest position below.

1. We are pleased to see the omission of the tennis courts and screen planting to the immediate west of the kitchen garden, forming part of the Sandleford Priory Registered Park and Garden, and the new proposals for grass and tree planting as shown on the masterplan;
2. We are also pleased to see that there have been no changes to the housing layout or adjacent the NEAP within the sightline of Sandleford Priory. These proposals were the result of earlier detailed discussions to ensure that the impact on the views from Sandleford Priory were minimised; and only very temporary whilst the proposed tree cover established to the south of the housing and NEAP. We were happy that the photomontages show that this could be achieved. We are pleased to see that the design of the NEAP with natural materials will ensure that there will be no adverse visual impact on views from the Priory;
3. We have raised considerable concerns about the impact on the trees along the path leading off Warren Road. We note that some buildings and playing fields are now shown south of the tree avenue but it is not clear whether these important trees are all to be retained (I could not find a plan illustrating the trees to be retained/felled). It is also important that the alignment of the historic path still runs between these trees to avoid damaging the historic context of this route. The masterplan does not make this clear but it does show a path north of the playing fields with no trees along its southern edge. The position here needs to be clarified and the avenue and historic alignment retained;
4. Finally, and most importantly, we have consistently raised concerns about the design of the valley crossing. The landscape and historic documents still maintain that this is a reserved matter. However, Appendix F of the Transport Assessment includes an indicative but clear idea of what is intended. This shows a wide highway of 2 x 3m carriageways; 2 x 2m footways; 2 x 3m cycle ways; a central reservation up to 4m wide and land taken to provide the side slopes of 1.33m each side – a total of 15.66 to 19.66m wide. Most of the crossing would now be on an embankment with a a short bridge section. This would result in a wholly inappropriate structure of no aesthetic merit, effectively blocking this valley. It would be out of keeping with the historic landscape character of the valley and the detract from the objectives of the Country Park in landscape and heritage terms. We appreciate that a crossing may be needed to serve the western part of the development but a well designed elegant bridge would result in far less harm.

Conclusion

BGT therefore objects to the current proposals as they stand and requests that the valley crossing indicative proposals are substantially revised to ensure that the historic landscape character of the valley is protected. We also request that further information on the impact(s) on the path access and trees off Warren Road is provided and reassurance given that the path and tree line will be retained.

Yours sincerely,

Bettina Kirkham

Bettina Kirkham DipTP BLD CMLI
BGT Chair.

cc: The Gardens Trust