



Mr James U'Dell
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Direct Dial: 0117 975 0725

Our ref: P01156890

31 January 2020

Dear Mr U'Dell

**T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990**

**FORTESCUE FIELDS, PHASE II, NORTON ST PHILIP, FROME, SOMERSET
Application No. 2019/2976/FUL**

Thank you for your letter of 9 January 2020 regarding the above application for planning permission. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

Historic England Advice

The application site is on land adjacent at Fortescue Fields, which is located within the heart of the Norton St Philips Conservation Area. The site itself sits adjacent to the boundary of the conservation area in green open fields. It forms phase 2 of a larger development to the north-east of the site providing 38 residential units split between three parcels of land to the east, west and south, along with a community building as well as associated infrastructure and a large area of landscaping in the south parcel. Located within the vicinity of Fortescue Fields are a number of listed buildings including the Grade II* listed George Inn, located in an elevated position to the east and to the west the grade I listed Church of St Philip and St James.

Significance

Norton St Philip has its roots in a medieval settlement that most likely originally grew up around the Church but which quickly developed as two separate settlements with distinct characters. One associated closely with the location of the church, while the other being dominated by the market place and George Inn. The spaces are now linked by Bell Hill, which appears to have formed the historic route between the two settlements and is characterised by historic incremental development to the north of the road. The village has a rural setting and is surrounded on all sides by farmland. While modern developments have had a marked impact on the layout of the village and its Conservation Area, its heritage significance lies in the legibility of its medieval form and development and the survival of two distinct character areas that stand out in a prominent position within the wider landscape.



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Background

The same site, then considered under two applications, was the subject of an appeal for a more intensive development. Both applications were dismissed in 2013. Impact on the conservation area was part of the reason for the dismissal in respect of both cases. In terms of the impact of the development on the significance of the asset derived through its setting, under the appeal, the inspector concluded that there was limited impact and consequently, was not a key consideration.

Impact

The current application has reduced the number of units proposed on the site from a combined total of up to 69 units for both sites to 38.

In terms of the west parcel of the development, the number of units has been reduced but the development continues to run in a linear form along the boundary of Fortescue Field and consequently, due to the position of the proposed site the development will have a significant impact on the village of Norton St Philip. In our view, the impact would be detrimental to the understanding and legibility of the historic development of the village, negatively intruding on the rural setting and 'in-filling' between the two identified character areas. Although modern development has had some impact, the two distinct medieval settlements are still legible today as identified within the Conservation Area Appraisal. This was also identified as a key element within the appeal, where the inspector clearly identifies that *the open undeveloped nature of the appeal site has a positive role in the significance of the Conservation Area, allowing for an appreciation and understanding of the historic evolution of Norton St Philip.*

Whilst the number of units has been reduced the overall impact has not been avoided. Consequently the scheme would have a harmful impact on the appreciation of the historic development of the conservation area and therefore its special interest.

The east parcel of land is partially within the conservation area. It is located on the Frome Road, on the approach to the village from the south-east. It currently assists in contributing to the transition from the rural countryside to the core of the village which has been intensified with the development of phase 1.

Policy and Position

The application has taken steps to reduce the impact of the proposals through the reduction in the number of units across the entire site. The development within the west parcel would continue to erode the understanding and historical values associated with the development of the village of Norton St Philip and its designated Conservation area. It would intrude into the rural setting of the conservation area, which has been consistent through its history, acting as a clear green buffer between the two historic groups allowing for the two centres to retain the sense of separation once more formally linked via the historic incremental development on Bell Hill. The



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rural setting within this section the conservation area is of fundamental importance as it reinforces the green buffer between the two historic centres and consequently, the conservation area's significance. In our view, the scheme fails to preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) (Para 200, NPPF).

In respect of the east and south parcel of development, the council need to be confident that any proposals will preserve or better reveal the significance of the affected heritage asset (Para 200).

Recommendation

Historic England has concerns regarding the application on heritage grounds.

We have identified that the proposed west parcel of land would result in harm to the legibility of the two historic cores of Norton St Philips Conservation Area and consequently fails to preserve or better reveal the significance of the affected heritage asset (Para 200). Where harm is identified, this should be clear and convincingly justification as required under para 194, NPPF. The Council as the decision maker should integrate the justification presented within the application for the proposed harm that would result in the erosion of the legibility of the two centres and be confident that the same perceived public benefits could not be achieved through alternative less harmful solutions (Para 190, NPPF). The council should not proceed to the planning balance (Para 195/196) until the identified harm has been justified and be confident that any justified harm is outweighed by the benefits offered by the proposal.

In determining this application you should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Your authority should take these representations into account and seek amendments, safeguards or further information as set out in our advice. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us.

Yours sincerely

Rhiannon Rhys

Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas

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cc:

Jayne Boldy, MDC



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