

HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION ADVICE

Dear Sir / Madam,

RE: Land To North Of Little Green Lane Croxley Green WD3 3SP

Outline Application: Development of up to 600 residential dwellings (Use Class C3(a)), construction of a 5-bedroom property for children's social care and supported living (Use Class C3(b)). Two vehicular access points from Little Green Lane and further pedestrian / cycleway accesses. A one form entry primary school (Use Class F1(a)) (plus expansion land for a two-form entry primary school). A mixed-use local centre including provision for NHS health and social care services (Use Class E(e)), community building (Use Class F2), retail and cafe provision (Use Class E(a-c)), car parking and associated infrastructure. A country park, areas for play and recreation, allotments, community orchard and landscaping with associated infrastructure including sustainable urban drainage systems. (Layout, scale, appearance and landscape as reserved matters).

The application site comprises a parcel of agricultural land c. 40ha and includes an area of ancient woodland. A public right of way crosses the site (east-west) to the north of Dell Wood. The site is surrounded by hedged boundaries. The scheme would be a mixed-use development and include a country park along the northern and eastern fringes, a green corridor through the Site running north-south and other landscaped areas.

A nearby major housing development at Killingdown Farm c. 150m west of the site, was initially refused planning permission but allowed on appeal under PINS reference (APP/P1940/W/21/3280443).

This application follows EIA Screening Request (Ref:24/1220/EIA). The screening decision issued by the Council found that the EIA would not be required.

The current application has been accompanied by a Heritage Assessment (HA). This identified Durrants House (Listed Building Grade II, NHLE 1403581) and Cassiobury Park (Registered Park Grade II, NHLE 1000219) as heritage assets which could be affected by the proposals through change within their settings. This approach is considered appropriate by the Conservation Officer

The stepped approach described in the Historic England Guidance document, *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (GPA3, 2017), has informed the accompanying Heritage Statement and the below advice. The four relevant steps are as follows:

1. Identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected.
2. Assess the degree to which these settings and views make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s) or allow significance to be appreciated.
3. Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on the significance or on the ability to appreciate it. This may include effects which may not solely be visual.
4. Explore ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm.

Durrants House is directly opposite the Site boundary on Little Green Lane. It is a Tudor/ Jacobean revival-style country house built in 1866-7, with an asymmetrical plan consisting of a rectangular, south-facing range; a north-east wing consisting of the ballroom, clock tower, and a rear service courtyard. It contains architectural interest including its exterior use of the Tudor/ Jacobean revival style to create varied elevational interest. It also contains historical interest due to its association with Thomas Hoade Woods, a local businessman.

The house was formerly set within 91 Ha of parkland all to the south but is now surrounded by modern development to the south and was itself subdivided into nineteen dwellings under planning reference 12/0221/RSP.

There is no known association between Durrants House and the Site either at the present time or historically. However, the Site has formed an agrarian backdrop to the house since its construction. There is strong intervisibility between the prominent northern elevation of Durrants and the Site when moving along Little Green Lane, particularly on the footway elevated above road level just to the west of Durrants House. There are also longer views south from Public Right of Way Sarratt 017, which runs east-west across the north of the Site.

Therefore, the Site forms an important part of the setting of Durrants House as a surviving remnant of its historic landscape context.

The introduction of a major housing scheme in this location would harmfully impact the appreciation of Durrants House within its historic agricultural setting. The submission recognises that there would be a harmful impact and has provided mitigation of a green corridor called 'Durrants View' on the master plan to retain views from the rear of Durrants house towards Whippendell Wood in the north.

This is shown to be approximately 50m in width at its southern end nearer Durrants House, then narrowing in the centre before widening out again. Although primarily a green pedestrian area, it would include two Primary Streets crossing from east-west, including one to towards the south of the Site and a LEAP and hard landscaped areas at the southern end. In addition, the Design Code document indicates that the green corridor would be fronted by higher density outward facing gateway/ perimeter blocks, up to a height of up to 4 storeys, designed to create a sense of enclosure.

The green corridor would provide some degree of mitigation of harm to the setting of Durrants House. However, while this is the rear of Durrants House, the Site forms its main surviving open setting and provides an appreciation of the building's historic landscape setting and its significance as a once isolated, rural dwelling. The view out from Durrants House looking north would be harmfully impacted by the built development and the complete change in the character of the landscape and the land

use. Views from PRow 017 looking south towards Durrants House would also be harmed. This would be exacerbated by the scale of development along the edge of the green corridor and the built form within the green corridor.

This would result in less than substantial harm to the setting of Durrants House. The degree of less than substantial harm would be at a low-mid level. The degree of harm could be mitigated to some extent by increasing the width of the green corridor, reducing the height of development along the corridor and moving formal elements including hard landscaping, LEAP and main road to more distant areas. However, due to the scale of the proposal and the fundamental change in land use and character, the harm would not be removed.

Cassiobury Park is a Grade II listed Registered Park and Garden, which includes elements dating from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. It now contains a public park and a golf course to the western side, which is separated from the Site by a thick tree belt which ends at Rousebarn Lane.

There is no historic link between the RPG and the Site, but the Site does form part of the agricultural setting that contributes to the significance of the RPG. There is a thick tree buffer on the western edge of the RPG meaning there would be no views into the development from the RPG, although there is a degree of intervisibility between the two along Rousebarn Lane. In addition, the existing Ancient Woodland within the Site would be retained, and a wetland area and country park would sit on the eastern boundary of the Site adjacent to the RPG, providing a clear green buffer. **This would mitigate the harm to the setting of the RPG to the extent that it would result in less than substantial harm at the lowest end of this spectrum.**

It is considered that the proposal would cause harm to the setting of the designated heritage assets, particularly Durrants House, contrary to Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 212 requires great weight to be given to the asset's conservation. In NPPF terms the degree of harm would be less than substantial and as per paragraph 215 this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Yours sincerely,

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Historic Environment Team
Place Services