

The Hadleigh Society

Caring about Hadleigh - yesterday, today and tomorrow

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Dear Sir or Madam

**Response from the Environmental & Planning Group
on behalf of the Hadleigh Society concerning:-
AMENDED APPLICATION**

DC/17/04239 - Full Planning Application.

**Erection of detached, two-and-a-half storey dwelling with detached cart lodge and storage building, construction of access and parking area and associated landscaping.
Land Adjoining Hadleigh Hall, Pound Lane, Hadleigh.**

These comments are submitted on behalf of the Hadleigh Society, one of whose aims is:- *“to protect and enhance Hadleigh’s heritage and environment by supporting and promoting high standards in planning, conservation, regeneration and development of features deemed to be of historical or environmental significance in the town.”*

The Amendments

The principal amendment to the original submission appears to be the re-siting of the dwelling two metres further northward on the site.

The only other significant addition appears to be a Shade Analysis compiled by the applicant’s arboricultural consultant. This Analysis concludes no areas of the proposed dwelling, where measured, will achieve the overall recommendation of receiving the national annual minimum of 25% of probable sunlight into the dwelling’s habitable rooms; although this 25% level may be just exceeded in a few summer months.

These latest submissions are considered to give justification to the Society’s previous objections to the proposal, and the minor amendments do not alter the Society’s assessment of the proposal’s severe failings.

The Setting

To paraphrase the applicant Agent’s own submissions, the application site is an important green feature within the designated Hadleigh Conservation Area and a significant feature which contributes to the setting of adjoining and nearby listed buildings. The site’s importance derives from its situation at the northern end of the St. Mary’s churchyard, a major open space which is visually dominated by the church at its centre and by the Deanery Tower, the Deanery and the Guildhall. Such buildings must be regarded as being highly sensitive to any change.

Additionally, the application site has **never been developed with buildings**, having only ever been used as open garden grounds, so the site does **not** fall into the definition of previously developed land or a “Brownfield” site.

The Heritage Impact Assessment

The applicant’s Heritage Appraisal (which is not undertaken by any Historic Specialist) places great emphasis upon use of a subjective **Heritage Impact Assessment**, as espoused by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in relation to World Heritage Sites.

This form of Assessment is considered an erroneous use of this methodology as this area is not a World Heritage Site, and Historic England has found that such heritage statements, which

merge the assessment of significance with an impact assessment are rarely of much use in the decision-making process, as the exposition of the significance can become skewed in anticipation of justifying the proposed changes.

It is considered that the submitted Heritage Impact Assessment has fallen into such a **compromised state** by using predominately transient treed features to suggest that the development will have a negligible effect upon the special historic and visual character of the site's setting both in the short and long term. It is concluded that considerable caution must be had in regard to the Assessment's conclusions.

The Heritage Specialist Opinions

Independently from the Society, National and Local Heritage specialists have recognised that, with the site lying at the core of this historic town and bordered by its most significant and impressive historic buildings, the erosion of this area, by giving prominence to a large house of inappropriate vernacular design, would cause a **high level of harm** to this area due to the great significance of the heritage assets affected.

The Society therefore continues to object to the proposal on grounds that the development:-

1. Causes loss of an historic undeveloped green open space
2. Damages the site's fine treed setting
3. Prejudices the long term retention of trees to be left on the site
4. Has an adverse impact upon the setting of Hadleigh Hall
5. Would create a dwelling of inordinate size out of keeping with this setting
6. Introduces an irrelevant architectural style again out of context with the historic setting
7. Would introduce domestic paraphernalia into an otherwise ecclesiastical and public open space.

These objections are set out in greater detail below.

1 - Loss of Historic Green Open Space

Historically the application site has always been undeveloped and was last originally formal garden grounds to Hadleigh Hall. The undeveloped and green character of the site has therefore been an important and constant feature for several hundred years in the historic character of Hadleigh and the setting of St. Mary's Church, Hadleigh Hall, The Deanery Tower and several other Listed Buildings. Additionally the site does not fall within the definition of an infill site and thus the site's development is not in accord with policy HS28. The undeveloped and green character of the site contributes to creating a clear contrast to the densely built High Street and provides an important backcloth to the distinctive dignity and architectural quality of the buildings and churchyard space.

(Contrary to intent of Policy CN03-loss of important open space and CN08 adverse effect upon Conservation Areas)

2 - Damage to Treed Setting

The site is well treed and the proposal requires the removal of six trees of which the applicant's tree specialist indicates four are of Moderate to High Visual Amenity (para.4.11.1 of Tree Survey & Arboricultural Impact Assessment). In addition roots to nine trees are potentially adversely affected by ground works and five will require pruning and lopping. The Holm Oak which is the largest and most prestigious tree on the site and which the applicant seeks to keep and promotes as an important screening to the proposed building is in poor condition and will need further remedial works including significant crown lifting. Other trees to be retained will also require future remedial action. All these works diminish significantly the effectiveness of the screening which the applicant relies upon to mitigate the impact of an inordinately large building.

(Contrary to intent of Policy CN08 adverse effect upon Conservation Areas and CN01 retention and integration of trees in Conservation Areas)

3 - Prejudice to long term Retention of Trees

Apart from the felling, lopping and ground disturbance to numerous trees on site during construction there will be the added presence of residents in the new dwelling where it is known there will be conflict with the trees due to shade, damp, leaf fall and nuisance which will require

further lopping, topping and felling, diminishing further the green background to the churchyard and resulting in greater prominence of the new dwelling. Of particular concern is the retention of the large Holm Oak, which is evergreen, and set within 3 metres (10 ft) to the south of the windows to the kitchen, lounge and three bedrooms of the dwelling. The Holm Oak is a large evergreen tree some 17 metres high (55 ft).

There is bound to be conflict between the residents and the tree's retention due to loss of light etc from such a mature tree close to the dwelling. The Society's original concern regarding day and sun lighting levels within the proposed dwelling main habitable rooms has been proved correct and even with the proposed dwellings set back a further two metres north of the spread of the tree, the applicant's Shade Analysis shows there is still failure to achieve recommended environmentally acceptable day and sunlight to the building.

This continued deficit in sun / day light levels will place pressure on further reduction in the size of the tree and whose loss or significant reduction will result in the dwelling clearly impinging upon the current treed character of the area with the Churchyard.

(Contrary to intent of Policy CN08 adverse effect upon Conservation Areas and CN01 retention and integration of trees in Conservation Areas)

4 - Adverse impact upon Hadleigh Hall

The new dwelling and garage are close to the boundary with Hadleigh Hall and only about 15m. (45ft) from the Hall itself. The rather indifferent designed garden store, garage and the end elevation of the proposed dwelling are considered to distract and detract from the view of the main elevation to Hadleigh Hall. The visual separation between the new structures and the Hall is unhindered apart from a laurel hedge along the boundary which is not in the control of the site and thus not able to be secured in any planning permission, and so the visual impact and intrusion upon the setting and character of Hadleigh Hall cannot be said to be negligible or un-harmful to the setting of that Grade II Listed Building.

It ought also be noted that the hedge is only given a ten to twenty year good life expectancy by the applicant's Arboricultural Consultant.

(Contrary to policy CH06 safeguarding setting of listed buildings)

5 - Inappropriate size, layout and siting of dwelling

The building is inordinately large. Its floor space is 3x the national average size of a four bedroom house for six people. It is designed with a long rectangular footprint which restricts its positioning on the site and dictates the subsequent location of access, parking and service buildings resulting in the dwelling's poor relationship with Hadleigh Hall and continued extreme closeness to the large Holm Oak on the site.

The building would be seen to spread across 63% of the width of the site, as viewed from the church yard; it has a width and breadth equivalent to almost the length of two London double decker buses and at one and a half times their height. A clearer understanding of the size of the building is that it may be seen as equivalent to the large three storey terrace (to eaves level) of numbers 6, 8 and 10 Queen Street, just off Hadleigh High Street.

The applicant's agents appear to be in denial regarding the scale and size of the building by citing that the footprint of the building is only 8% of the site area and will thus have minimal impact. This is a totally misplaced way of determining the visual impact of a building which must be viewed from ground level, not from a passing flying plane as the applicant's agent seems to suggest. The applicant agent's submission is as misplaced as pointing out that the St Mary's Church is not large, nor prominent, as it only occupies 15% of the churchyard grounds.

The applicant's Planning and Heritage Statements seeks to justify the imposition of this imported design by a pretence that it will have a limited impact upon the setting, whilst clearly, by its size, siting and tree clearance, it will dominate the site. The arguments for minimal harm are based solely upon reliance of successful retention of the few mature trees to be left on the site. The retention of the trees is not guaranteed; by their nature trees are prone to disease and storm damage, and of course die over time thus requiring removal as they become weakened and / or dangerous.

It is, therefore, contended that the scale of the proposed house would seriously impinge upon the green character of the northern churchyard and give an undue prominence to the building thus conflicting with the relatively un-spoilt historic core of the town.

6 - An Irrelevant Architectural style in its Historic Setting

The design of the dwelling is a facsimile of 48 Storey's Way, a dwelling built in Cambridge in 1913 to the designs of M. H. Baillie Scott, a famous Arts and Crafts architect of that time. The original dwelling was sited within a conventional Avenue location which allowed a wide footprint and traditional front and rear garden areas. No rationale is given in the Access and Design statement as to why this particular design was chosen or copied, nor how its design, siting and mass were evolved to fit sympathetically within the environmental constraints of the Hadleigh Hall site.

Instead the proposal represents the cramping on to the site of a large, Neo - Arts and Craft styled building which is out of scale, and whose style and design has neither architectural nor historic associations or connections with the town nor, more importantly, the very distinctive listed buildings it is intended to set against.

(Contrary to intent of Policy CN08 adverse effect upon Conservation Areas and CN01 regarding appropriate scale, form and design)

7 - Introduction of domestic paraphernalia

The change of use of the land to a residential dwelling brings with it a right and expectation to install on the land a multitude of small and not so small garden and domestic structures together with other domestic paraphernalia which individually and collectively would radically alter the calm and serene green treed character to the Churchyard and the setting of the nearby listed buildings.

Such structures and related uses and activity would seriously erode the special character of the area and where the Planning Authority has limited powers to control. It is considered that this unfortunate impact is made worse by the proposed dwelling's principal 'sit out and play' areas being set between the house and the churchyard and thus open to extensive public view.

The belief by the applicant's agent that this may be reasonably and simply controlled by removal of permitted development rights or specially crafted s106 terms (still to be revealed) is misplaced and erroneous as any such terms must meet legal test of necessity and reasonableness. It is contended to remove an inalienable right to enjoy the garden of one's property is unreasonable.

As the adverse impact of such structures and use is recognised by the applicant's agent, the obvious course is not to permit such potential harm to this special setting

Conclusion

Historically and visually the site ought remain a green, undeveloped area un-spoilt by buildings, particularly those in a residential use.

Arguments based upon granting permission because the dwelling might be occupied by the applicant (who does not own the site), the development may allow removal of some alleged anti-social activities (which may be dealt with by other means) and is the only way to retain the trees (whilst felling several and prejudicing the remainder) are unsound reasons in planning law, particularly as the same development will be interpreted by many as vandalizing the very precious and delicate historic core of the town.

Development of the site is only one of several options. Within the community there are capable and dedicated individuals and organisations with the ability and means to secure the site and safeguard its long term green undeveloped character on behalf of the town. Granting development status on the site will frustrate and lose such opportunity.

Yours faithfully,

M. Woods
Chair, The Hadleigh Society