

17/01220/FUL Cotswold View.

14th November 2017

Dear Councillor,

Taking advice from my local representative, I raised two Public Questions concerning this application, but after consulting their solicitor, the Planning Department informs me these cannot be asked at committee. I therefore raise them here (Judith Baker is copied in as I believe she will kindly upload this representation to Planning Portal with the other documents).

I ask the questions to address the important conservation and heritage issues relating to this property.

I live a few doors down from Cotswold View, I pass it every day, have visited it and I am very familiar with the property. With the help of others, I have researched its rich history. I have also viewed old maps, spoken with the previous owner and consulted Historic England. Having done so, **I believe there are some significant issues with the conservation report submitted last week** and I believe the situation is not as clear-cut as you are being led to believe.

A third of the report - detailing the history of the building - is directly lifted, copy and paste, from my initial email to the Conservation Officer back in August. I feel it important to highlight this, as it looks as if the officer has done due diligence in researching the building. I do not believe this to be the case. The other two thirds of the report appear to be **conjecture and speculation** - conclusions reached, apparently, without even visiting the property.

The report suggests all original fabric has been lost from Cotswold View, but I understand from the previous owner that there are original features within the premises, notably in the outbuilding, dating back to when it was a blacksmiths, which the Conservation Officer has no knowledge of (assuming they have not been removed ahead of the application).

Here are some of the criteria for Listing, from Historic England, which may be of interest:

12. Age and rarity. *The older a building is, and the fewer the surviving examples of its kind, the more likely it is to have special interest. The general principles used is that:*

- *from 1700 to 1840, most buildings are listed; (NB Cotswold View is circa 1800)*

13. Aesthetic merits. *The appearance of a building – its intrinsic architectural merit – is a key consideration in judging listing proposals, but the special interest of a building will not always be reflected in obvious external visual quality. Buildings that are important for reasons of technological innovation, or as illustrating particular aspects of social or economic history, may have little external visual quality.*

14. Selectivity. *Where a building qualifies for listing primarily on the strength of its special architectural interest, the fact that there are other buildings of similar quality elsewhere is not likely to be a major consideration. However, a building may be listed primarily because it*

represents a particular historical type in order to ensure that examples of such a type are preserved. Listing in these circumstances is largely a comparative exercise and needs to be selective where a substantial number of buildings of a similar type and quality survive.

I believe therefore that Cotswold View qualifies for Listed Building Status because of its **age** (most buildings built before 1840 are Listed, Cotswold View is circa 1800), the fact that it represents a particular aspect of British **social/economic history** (market garden cottage, first post office in the area, blacksmiths) and that it is a **rare surviving example** of a particular type of cottage, with few other examples remaining. It also contributes to the '**sense of place**' - another important factor for Historic England..

In light of this, I'd like to raise the following questions, for your consideration:

1. To date, it seems the Planning Department has yet to provide a truly compelling reason for refusing to raise a Building Preservation Notice, which would trigger a comprehensive, independent assessment of the Cotswold View by Historic England. My understanding from the Conservation Officer is that he has only conducted a brief assessment of the property - mostly discussion with colleagues and reviewing old estate agent particulars online. He also had an unofficial conversation with Historic England where he shared his limited findings. From this, he speculated that it was unsuitable for Listing. It should be noted again that this is his opinion and not the official view of Historic England. At the time of sharing these conclusions, the **Conservation Officer had not visited the property**. The head of Planning has indicated that the Conservation Officer did not have time to do any detailed assessment of Cotswold View, because of workload, and therefore all of these conclusions are based on very limited investigation. Additionally, from the Conservation Report, it's clear that **no further assessment has been carried out since the deferment** at the previous Committee Meeting. I appreciate public resources are stretched, but *is such scant evaluation really appropriate for a landmark period property in danger of demolition and why has a more rigorous approach not been adopted here, and a more in-depth study carried out, as indeed some members of the planning committee suggested would be desirable, at the last hearing?*

2. In relation to Cotswold View, the Conservation officer believes the chances of Listing are slim. Even if he is correct, there is enough of an argument to warrant greater investigation to settle the matter conclusively (see Historic England's criteria for Listing, sections 12 through to 14). Indeed, when I rang Historic England for advice, and shared my understanding of the building, including the fact that some of the historic fabric had been lost, new windows were fitted and the property has been extended, they told me that such alterations may not necessarily be an obstacle to Listing, as **historical considerations can still make a building significant**. They suggested it would be appropriate for me to petition the Local Council to raise a BPN so **Historic England could then assess Cotswold View properly**. To date, all requests to do this have been refused. *Should this building be demolished without allowing Historic England, the specialists in these matters, time to conduct an appropriate, transparent and thorough assessment, via a BPN?*

If the Council officers will not launch the necessary investigation into the property's history, I humbly suggest **this application be rejected to allow local residents the chance to apply for Listing directly**. An appeal would no doubt be forthcoming but the delay would provide a chance to have the building properly assessed, settling the matter for good.

The joy of a functional democracy is that we can hold public officers to account. I raise these questions not to criticise the Planning Department or to embarrass the Conservation Officer, I ask them because this is too important to let slide. I ask them because I believe this application is an assault on us all. Cotswold View has stood for 200 years, long before any of us were born, and without this threat, it will be here long after we are gone. It has been a home. It's where people have taken their first breath and breathed their last. It's where people have worked, loved, played and cried. It is steeped in history and part of our local heritage and street scene. On Thursday night you hold all this in your hands.

The planning report gives many good reasons, from a tick-box perspective, why this application should be passed. I believe there are many reasons why it should not. Others will argue these on the night, but I believe most significant of all is what Cheltenham stands to lose if this is granted. Mr LeGrand will undoubtedly be richer, but our town and our community will be so very much poorer...

Warm regards,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the resident.

Resident.