

16<sup>th</sup> September 2024

**To all Members of Cheltenham Borough Council Planning Committee**  
**By email**

Dear Councillor

**Glenfall House, Charlton Kings**  
**Applications 23/01424/FUL & 23/01424/LBC**

Prior to your site visit on Tuesday and in advance of the committee meeting on Thursday, we wish to cover some key points which would be impossible to share during the 5-minute slot for speaking.

The recommendation offers three reasons for refusal. The last two are technical matters which we expect to resolve before Committee.

On that basis, the main point to consider is heritage, and specifically, whether the impact of the proposed changes by the applicants will positively enhance the setting or not.

We have set out the key facts below:

#### **THE HOUSE**

- The applicants are removing harmful later extensions, fire escapes, tank room, double yellow lines and pub bar, and reinstating garden features, gates, chimneys, fireplaces etc all to restore the main house and its setting to its former glory and original intended use
- The design aims to re-establish a hierarchy of spaces around the main house. A more rational "front" and "back" to the house will be created by the larger courtyard with the outbuildings set back to significantly enhance the setting of the listed building
- Conservation Officers (CO's) 1 and 2 not only recognise the public benefits provided by the applicants' scheme but go further and agree that *'it is recognised that these (the removal of many poor elements, reinstating historic features, returning the house back to its original use, restoring the listed garden, enhancing the setting, and securing a viable long-term future use) are **notable** public benefits that need to be given **significant weight.**'*

#### **THE OUTBUILDINGS**

- When on site, please take some time to look at the degree to which the existing outbuildings have been poorly altered and subdivided, and the condition of things like the brickwork. The extent of significance of these elements is negligible at best

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- The existing outbuildings include 2 imposing full 2 storey buildings. The first, which you will see on arrival, the COs agree *'is considered to create an awkwardly unified frontage that **underwhelms and detracts from the listed building**, the curtilage listed buildings and their setting, which includes the registered park and garden.'* (See photos 'frontage 1' and 'frontage 2' for comparison). The second you will see cuts into the root protection area of a veteran oak tree (see photos 'oak 1', 'oak 2', and 'oak 3', again to compare the size and design of the existing and proposed buildings and their different distances to the oak)
- COs 1 and 2 agree that the existing outbuildings not only have *'a low level of significance'*, but they also actually ***'now adversely affect the setting of the listed building'***
- The proposed outbuildings are 1.5 storeys, with dormer windows and the first floor set in the roof
- The proposed outbuildings are subservient, far more so than the existing. The footprint and internal areas are also both less than the existing outbuildings and main house, contrary to the assertions in the report. The reduction is about 7%, and we are happy for these to be verified.
- The final scheme includes a range of outbuildings in the style specifically directed by CO no.2. The courtyard was supported by the CO and we were willing to alter the design to incorporate this concept, noting there are many country house precedents for similar layouts
- The impact of the new buildings can best be appreciated in 3D, taking into account the existing mature hedge and tree screening, and the steep level changes. Please note this when on site. (See photos 'aerial 1' and 'aerial 2')

## THE PROCESS

- The conservation officer (CO) at CBC has changed 3 times during the application process; each with differing views
- COs 1 and 2 visited site and had significant engagement with the applicant, their heritage advisor and architect
- At every stage the applicants have tried really hard to work with officers through a very disjointed process. With the changes of COs and their respective opinions, we have revised the scheme several times to reflect officers' feedback and requests

Alongside the great benefits of restoring the house, its curtilage and gardens, there are other matters we wish to highlight:

- Much more than 10% BNG mentioned in the officer's report is achieved, with **over 20% gain in habitats and more than 250% in hedgerows**. This is a significant benefit considering there is no requirement to achieve any gain (due to the date the application was submitted). Species surveys have been undertaken such that the council's ecologist is happy, subject to conditions.
- Protected trees and their setting on site will be enhanced, with a management scheme securing their well-being in the long term. Details of any works near trees can be secured by condition as necessary.

- The Gardens Trust go as far as to say that this scheme '**should be welcomed**', and say that '*this proposal which recasts the house and reinterprets the currently outworn associated buildings should maintain the character, quality and presence of this heritage asset into the future*'.
- The Cotswold Conservation Board had no objection to the development itself, but previously raised concerns about lighting. Details of the existing extensive lighting to be removed was provided and the Board then withdrew any objection, considering the development would lead to an improvement in local dark sky quality.
- A detailed and extensive scheme for renewable energy solutions and a huge reduction in carbon use. **This will put the house on a sustainable footing for the future.**
- The EHO and highways have no objection subject to conditions.
- Historic England and the Parish Council also have no objection.
- There are 9 public comments in support, just 3 against; and with some of the objections not planning related.
- Benefits to tourism generally and for the rural and wider economy.
- The 'cabin' in the garden referred to in the report as a new build was approved and built in 1995. Old photos of its construction can be provided.

We are grateful to you for taking the time to read this letter and hope it assists you in your considerations.

Yours faithfully

Simon Firkins  
**SF Planning Limited**



























