

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (as amended)
Town and Country Planning (Inquiry Procedure) (England) Rules
2000

PROOF OF EVIDENCE OF
CHRISTIAN BRADY
GREATER CAMBRIDGE SHARED PLANNING
HERITAGE MATTERS
APPEAL BY BROOKGATE
LAND NORTH OF CAMBRIDGE NORTH STATION

April 2023

PLANNING INSPECTORATE REFERENCE:
APP/W0530/W/23/3315611
LPA REFERENCE: 22/02771/OUT

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1. Qualifications and Experience

- 1.1 I am Christian Brady, Historic Environment Team Leader for Greater Cambridge Shared Planning. I hold an undergraduate Bachelor of Arts degree in Social Studies from the University of East Anglia, a postgraduate diploma in Town & Regional Planning from the University of Sheffield, and certificate in Historic Conservation from the University of Oxford. I have been a full member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) since its inception in 1997 and am a chartered member of the Royal Town Planning Institute. Greater Cambridge Shared Planning is the joint Planning service of Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils.
- 1.2 I have over 25 years' experience in many aspects of historic building and area conservation, in the public and "third" sectors as a conservation officer and heritage consultant. Before joining Cambridge City Council in 2013 I worked for BEAMS/Herts Building Preservation Trust for eight years – latterly as the Director of their heritage consultancy to Local Authorities and historic building owners. From 1988 until 2004 I was employed at Three Rivers District Council being appointed Principal Planning & Conservation Officer in 1998 following some years as Senior Planning & Conservation Officer and previously as a Planning Officer.
- 1.3 I have extensive experience of heritage issues arising from development in both urban and rural contexts and have dealt with development proposals affecting heritage assets of the highest significance including, timber-framed tithe barns, country houses, city centre blocks and Cambridge Colleges. I have also worked on strategic historic impact assessments.
- 1.4 I understand the duty to the Inquiry, to give objective evidence on matters within my expertise, based on my professional opinion.
- 1.5 I have adhered to the standards and duties of the professional bodies above that I am a member of.

2. Appeal Scheme

2.1. The application, under planning reference 22/02771/OUT which is now the subject of appeal, was for:

a) An outline application (all matters reserved apart from access and landscaping) for the construction of: three new residential blocks providing for up to 425 residential units and providing flexible Class E and Class F uses on the ground floor (excluding Class E (g) (iii)); and two commercial buildings for Use Classes E(g) i (offices), ii (research and development) providing flexible Class E and Class F uses on the ground floor (excluding Class E (g) (iii)), together with the construction of basements for parking and building services, car and cycle parking and infrastructure works.

b) A full application for the construction of three commercial buildings for Use Classes E(g) i (offices) ii (research and development), providing flexible Class E and Class F uses on the ground floor (excluding Class E (g) (iii)) with associated car and cycle parking, the construction of a multi storey car and cycle park building, together with the construction of

basements for parking and building services, car and cycle parking and associated landscaping, infrastructure works and demolition of existing structures.

3. Involvement and Scope of Evidence

- 3.1. A pre-application process (PPA) was set up with the LPA in late 2020. In 2021 I was asked to provide heritage input. This included the LVIA/Heritage views workshop. The pre-application process led to the LPA's 11th Feb 2022 response letter which concluded that progress towards an acceptable development was not being made. My assessment specifically considers the heritage assets and harm to them caused by the proposal. Whilst I give a view as to the heritage harm which would be caused by the proposal, the weighing of that harm in the planning balance (and particularly under the NPPF) is considered elsewhere in the planning evidence submitted by the LPA.
- 3.2. Of the reasons for refusal set out in the LPA's Decision Notice, this proof focuses on Reason for Refusal 2 – Impact on heritage assets:

“Policy HQ/1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan provides that all new development must conserve or enhance historic assets and their settings.

Policy NH/14 provides that development proposals will be supported when they sustain and enhance the special character and distinctiveness of the district's historic environment including its countryside and create new high quality environments with a strong sense of place by responding to local heritage character. It continues that development proposals will be supported when they sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets, including their settings, as appropriate to their significance and in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework. The proposed development fails to accord with these objectives.

It is considered the proposed buildings, due to their height and massing, together with their siting in a row along the eastern edge with minimal gaps between the buildings, would constitute a permanent change to the visual quality of the Fen Ditton and Riverside & Stourbridge Common Conservation Areas and would have a negative effect on the way in which they are experienced and appreciated. The proposals would generate increased visibility and presence of urbanising elements of development within the conservation areas and would affect the experience of their rural character. The intensification of development would affect the riverside setting which is a fundamental characteristic of the conservation areas and is sensitive to change. The development proposals would result in a less than substantial harm to the significance of these heritage assets at a moderate level. The public benefits of the proposal do not outweigh this harm.

In addition, there is insufficient information to demonstrate that the proposals do not harm the setting of Anglesey Abbey registered park and garden. Accordingly, the proposals are

contrary to South Cambridgeshire Local Plan policies NH/14 and HQ/1 of the local plan and is not in accordance with the NPPF.”

3.3. In my view, RfR 2 properly refers to Policies HQ/1 and NH/14 of the Local Plan and to not being in accordance with the NPPF.

3.4. RfR 2 also refers to insufficient information to demonstrate that the proposals do not harm the setting of Anglesey Abbey, however following additional information from the Appellant in April 2023, this matter has been agreed within the Heritage Statement of Common Ground (dated April 2023). Accordingly, no further information is required regarding Anglesey Abbey.

4. Heritage assets

4.1. RfR 2 addresses the harm to designated heritage assets, specifically the Fen Ditton and the Riverside & Stourbridge Common Conservation Areas. Parts of the boundaries of these conservation areas lie approximately 500m from the Site (see main SoCG, §8.36).

4.2. The Grade II* Anglesey Abbey Registered Park and Garden lies approximately 5 kilometres north-east of the site close to the village of Lode.

4.3. The abovementioned conservation areas, together with Baits Bite Lock Conservation Area, form a continuous chain from just south of Milton to the City centre. The river, public footpaths, towpaths and fields are very well used by runners, rowers, cyclists and walkers alike and the designation is recognition that the riverside meadowland spaces are an important component of the historic character of the city and its environs.

4.4. The site itself does not contain any heritage assets. The conservation areas contain various Listed Buildings as set out in the conservation area assessments and the submitted Environmental Statement.

5. Structure of Evidence

5.1. The rest of my evidence is structured as follows:

- Section 6 identifies the relevant legislation, heritage policy and guidance in the context of which a decision on this appeal must be made.
- Section 7 assesses the significance of the Heritage Assets
- Section 8 considers the impact of the proposed development on the significance of the Heritage Assets.
- Section 9 considers the proposed mitigation of impact.
- Section 10 provides my Conclusions

6. Relevant Legislation, Heritage Policy, and Guidance

6.1. Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas Act 1990. Unlike the setting of a listed building (under s.66) there is no statutory duty applicable to protect the setting of a conservation

area, although it is protected as a material consideration by the NPPF. Section 72 applies “with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area.”

6.2. However, the NPPF goes further than the legislation and makes the setting of a conservation area part of what may make it significant. As Sir Duncan Ouseley explained in *Safe Rottingdean Ltd v Brighton and Hove City Council* [2019] EWHC 2632 (Admin) at [88]:

“...This makes it significant to planning decisions. It appears to make harm to the setting of a conservation area of equivalent importance, in terms of the justification required, to the setting of a listed building; see [194-5]. But it does so as a matter of policy rather than of statutory duty...”

6.3. Chapter 16 of the NPPF concerns the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. Paragraph 189 of the NPPF states that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

6.4. Paragraph 194 provides that in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

6.5. Paragraph 195 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

6.6. Paragraph 197 of the NPPF states that in determining applications, LPAs should take account of (amongst other things) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

6.7. Paragraph 199 states that: “When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be) This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.”

6.8. Paragraph 200 states “any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification”.

6.9. Paragraph 202 states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

6.10. Annex 2 to the NPPF defines terms including “Heritage asset”, “Setting of a heritage asset” and “Significance (for heritage policy)”:

“Heritage asset: A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

Setting of a heritage asset: The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

Significance (for heritage policy): The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting. For World Heritage Sites, the cultural value described within each site’s Statement of Outstanding Universal Value forms part of its significance.”

6.11. National Planning Practice Guidance supports the NPPF. It provides further guidance on the meaning of “archaeological interest, architectural and artistic interest and historic interest at paragraph 006¹. It further explains that ‘significance’ is important in decision making because heritage assets may be affected by direct physical change or by change in their setting. Being able to properly assess the nature, extent and importance of the significance of a heritage asset, and the contribution of its setting, is very important to understanding the potential impact and acceptability of development proposals.²

6.12. It also explains at paragraph 013 that the extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to the visual relationship between the asset and the proposed development and associated visual/physical considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part in the assessment of impacts on setting, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust, smell and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places.

¹ Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 18a-006-20190723.

² Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 18a-007-20190723.

- 6.13. In terms of assessing the extent of harm to a heritage asset the PPG explains at 018 that what matters is the impact on the significance of the heritage asset. Where potential harm to designated heritage assets is identified, it needs to be categorised as either less than substantial harm or substantial harm (which includes total loss) in order to identify which policies in the NPPF (paragraphs 194 to 196) apply. Within each category of harm (which category applies should be explicitly identified), the extent of the harm may vary and should be clearly articulated.
- 6.14. The National Design Guide addresses well designed places, by outlining and illustrating the Government's priorities for well-designed places in the form of ten characteristics. C2 is to Value heritage, local history and culture.
- 6.15. Policy HQ/1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 provides that all new development must conserve or enhance historic assets and their settings
- 6.16. Policy NH/14 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan states that development proposals will be supported when they sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets, including their settings, as appropriate to their significance and in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 6.17. GPA3 The Setting of Heritage Assets 2nd edition (published by Historic England, December 2017) (CD5.24) sets out guidance on managing change within the settings of heritage assets.
- 6.18. In GPA 3, a stepped approach is recommended, of which Step 1 is to identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected. Step 2 is to 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. Step 3 is to assess the effect of the proposed development on the significance of the asset(s). Step 4 is to explore ways to maximise enhancement and minimise harm. Step 5 is to make and document the decision and monitor outcomes. This approach is reflected in the structure of this evidence which considers the assets concerned, the contribution of setting and views, and comments on mitigating harm.

7. Assessment of Significance of the heritage assets.

- 7.1. In the wider context, these conservation areas form a continuous chain, their western boundaries running along the river Cam from just south of Horningsea towards the City Centre. The river, towpaths and meadows are an important component of the historic and landscape character of the city and its environs. This boundary also represents the western edge of the landscape to the east.
- 7.2. There is an important relationship between the river corridor, open space and views of meadows and fenland and views across these as components of the significance of the conservation areas and their settings in the landscape. The conservation areas are also a

transition between countryside and the city. The journey from say, Baits Bite Lock to Stourbridge Common is to move from fields into small scale city surroundings almost imperceptibly.

- 7.3. There are adopted conservation area appraisals for Riverside & Stourbridge Common Conservation Area, Fen Ditton Conservation Area, and for Baits Bite Lock Conservation Area. In my submitted response to the application (appendix A), I have commented on the importance to their character of the riverside setting. The river, its landscape setting and its use, are central to the significance of these conservation areas.
- 7.4. The river valley environment largely un-intruded on by development of scale contributes to the enclosure and boundaries of the conservation areas and to their history and degree of change over time. It engenders tranquillity, remoteness, 'wildness' and a sense of seclusion. It also carries value through cultural association and tradition (eg boat races such as "The Bumps") see under "Experience of the asset" checklist page 11 GPA3 (CD 5.24)
- 7.5. The setting of the conservation areas includes farm land to the north and east; the built-up edges of the city around Stourbridge Common and Ditton Meadows to the south; and the hedge and treescape to the west of the River Cam at Fen Ditton and where this can be seen through, land beyond. For the reasons set out above, this setting makes a very important contribution to the significance of these assets.
- 7.6. The appeal site has to date, a neutral effect on the setting of the conservation areas as a result of its low-lying nature and ability to keep intact the surrounding views of fenland and flat open landscape. However, development of the scale proposed on the appeal site would impact the asset's setting and affect the contribution made by setting to the significance of the heritage assets.

Riverside & Stourbridge Common Conservation Area

- 7.7. The river, its landscape setting and its use, are central to the significance of this conservation area. A backcloth of trees surrounds the open commons, softening and at times hiding the built-up areas beyond. Towards the City end of the conservation area, it includes some streets of terraced housing. The landscape becomes rural as Fen Ditton is approached and it is this end sensitive to development on the appeal site.
- 7.8. To verify the significance of the river corridor and backdrop, I have compiled extracts (as Appendix B to this proof) from the Riverside & Stourbridge Common Conservation Area Appraisal (CD 5.08) that describe this relationship.

Fen Ditton Conservation Area

- 7.9. One of the two distinct character areas - Green End, the site of the original settlement, stretches along the river between The Biggin and the church. The close relationship of the village to the river landscape is represented in many parts of the appraisal. The maps on its pages 26 and 27 include black arrows representing views to the west. This setting is very significant to the conservation area.
- 7.10. To verify the significance of the river corridor and backdrop, I have compiled extracts (as Appendix C to this proof) from the Fen Ditton Conservation Area Appraisal (CD 5.07) that describe this relationship.

8. Impact

- 8.1. The NEC Historic Impact Assessment by Chris Blandford Associates, 2021 (CD5.59) concluded the NEC AAP townscape strategy “would result in harm at the lowest end of the scale of less than substantial harm” (HIA 10.2.2). However, it qualifies this by “as long as a sensitive application of materials and palette, as well as suitable heights are managed, in accordance with the [Townscape] Strategy.” (“Findings” pages 2-3).
- 8.2. It is noted at 1.1.6 of the Blandford HIA that “Whilst the Townscape Strategy provides a framework for development proposals coming forward, it is not of sufficient detail to enable a detailed heritage impact assessment suitable to support a planning application.”
- 8.3. The HIA had to consider all the NEC AAP area – indeed its Vu-city modelling only included two views relevant to assessing the current appeal site from the east: Figure J: Viewpoint J - High Street, Fen Ditton; and more notably, Figure C: Viewpoint C - Ditton Meadows (both marked on HIA Figure 15: “Vu City viewpoint locations”). Figure C clearly indicates the profile of development on which the assessments were made.
- 8.4. The HIA (Blandford) conclusion then is specific to the NEC strategy and does not apply to the appeal scheme.
- 8.5. The appellant’s Environmental Statement main report vol 1 (CD1.17), states that, “8.203 *The Proposed Development will result in no significant residual effects on the historic environment in the surrounding study area of the Site.*” (page 164).. The appellant’s assessment of the impact of development is summarised in table 8.6, pages 165-166 in their Environmental Statement. This table indicates the impact of the “Urbanising effect of completed development” on both conservation areas to be “slight”. For the reasons I set out, I disagree that there would be no significant residual effects and that the impact is slight. I consider that the proposals will cause a ‘moderate’ level of harm within the ‘less than substantial harm’ scale whereas the Appellant considers the harm to be at the ‘very lowest end’ of the scale.
- 8.6. This section considers the Eastern side of the site which will be more openly apparent from distances and “natural” landscapes. Though there is intervening land between the river

and the appeal site, it comprises flat fields, caravan sites and a small industrial estate with maximum two storey height, low-pitch roof, buildings. Other than vegetation, there is little to interrupt views to the site from the east.

8.7. The existing hotel and the newly built office building already demonstrate how such buildings intrude on the settings of the heritage assets - the Novotel, with a maximum height of 25.7m, and the office development at One Cambridge Square, reaching a maximum height of some 30m. However, the proposed development due to its scale, layout and massing, would form a further urbanising element expanding and intensifying the urban backdrop. The photograph below taken in a riverside pub garden within Fen Ditton conservation area, shows the hotel and behind it, the office building under construction - a significant incident in the backdrop. Clearly, additional development extending and intensifying the “building-scape” here will further impact the natural backdrop – the degree of impact being dependant on the building’s scale.



View of Novotel over the River Cam from The Plough PH, Fen Ditton.

8.8. Though the proposed car park S5 at 15 metres, provides lower height punctuation between the existing buildings beside the station and the two proposed laboratory blocks S6 and S7, the latter both extend a line of tall built development along the eastern site boundary. They do so at a consistently tall scale (21 to 22m) and will be seen against the taller laboratory and office buildings behind them (S8 rising to 24m and S9 to 26m). Behind these S20/S21 is indicated as rising yet taller to 30m. The car park would also have the 30m tall 1, Milton Avenue behind it (S4). The effect would be a concentration of built form

at scale making a much greater intrusion into the skyline and existing tree and hedge backdrops to the conservation areas.

8.9. Several of the viewpoints in the Vu-City Technical Visualisations (ES Appendix 12) are classified as “TVIA & Heritage Viewpoints”. Of these, the following in particular, demonstrate the negative presence the proposed development would have:

6 Green End in Fen Ditton Conservation Area

8 Footpath 85/6 Fen Ditton CA

15 Ditton Meadows in Stourbridge Common CA

8.10. Although the impacts affect a limited number of views or vistas from or around these assets, the components affected are of fundamental importance to their character. For this reason, the degree of change involved, even if limited, has the potential to be of significant impact on the perception of these heritage assets as sitting within a non-urban landscape.

8.11. Taller buildings or buildings more consistently rising to maxima (such as those the subject of the current application) are intended to be exceptions - not all the buildings can be landmarks. Where building height is exacerbated by the massing of numbers of buildings of height together, impacts will be greater.

8.12. Views are “a purely visual impression of an asset or place which can be static or dynamic, long, short or of lateral spread, and include a variety of views of, from, across, or including that asset.” (Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (GPA 3 CD 5.24) para 10). Static point views, whilst being an indicator of impact, are by no means fully representative of impacts on the experience of the setting of a conservation area. The setting of a heritage asset is the surroundings within which a heritage asset is experienced. In reality, the conservation areas are experienced in a dynamic way by moving through them as their linear nature (the river valley) enables and encourages. The LVIA process does not cover sequential views, people turning their heads and getting panoramic impressions etc.

8.13. The photograph below featuring One Cambridge Square still under construction, was taken along the footpath north of Green End, Fen Ditton. It runs between Baits Bite Lock and Fen Ditton from where the river can of course, also be followed to/ from the city. The experience of such routes is a sequential and dynamic one.



View to the appeal site from public footpath north of Green End within Fen Ditton Conservation Area.

- 8.14. Changes to skyline, silhouette via scale and massing alters the relationship to relevant topography and the river due to intrusion into views from and across the area. Lighting effects and 'light spill' are likely to emphasise presence.
- 8.15. As a further indicator of whether the scheme is appropriate, it may be considered against the provisions of the draft NEC AAP Policy 9: Density, Heights, Scale and Massing (Appendix D). This states for instance that, "Taller buildings, and those in prominent locations, should respond appropriately and sensitively to the local setting, add to the attractiveness and interest of the skyline and landscape, and be responsive to the historic wider setting of the City and related heritage assets." The way the scheme presents to the East cannot be said to achieve this.

- 8.16. The proposals would constitute a permanent change (not reversible) to the visual quality of the heritage assets setting and would have a negative effect on the way in which they are experienced and appreciated.
- 8.17. National Design Guide (CD 5.17) at C2 para 48 states that, “Well-designed places and buildings are influenced positively by, ■ the history and heritage of the site, its surroundings and the wider area, including cultural influences; ■ the significance and setting of heritage assets and any other specific features that merit conserving and enhancing; ■ the local vernacular, including historical building typologies such as the terrace, town house, mews, villa or mansion block, the treatment of façades, characteristic materials and details..”. The scale of the appeal scheme and its impact on the heritage assets mean that the scheme is not well-designed” in these terms.
- 8.18. The level of this less than substantial harm is associated with whether the significance of the heritage assets has been given sufficient recognition and in my view it has not – the conservation areas should be recognised not just as individual assets but also as linked with the city in physical, historical and cultural ways.
- 8.19. The appeal scheme falls into the negative segments of the spectrum ranging from benefit to harm (see “Harmometer” Appendix E) that a development has the potential to contribute to the environment. The significance of the assets is such that the level of harm should be assessed as greater than a low level of harm. I consider the extent of the harm to be ‘moderate’ within the less than substantial harm scale.

9. Mitigation

- 9.1. The proposals seek to mitigate the impact of the buildings along the eastern edge of the site through vertical and horizontal articulation, however, this is not successful due to the limited articulation (the vertical articulation on buildings S6 and S7 is minimal (1 metre)) and the proposed buildings to the rear, where heights of 30m are proposed, standing behind buildings S6 and S7 so that at distance, the horizontal articulation and limited space between S6 and S7 will be lost in the massing and scale of the overall development.
- 9.2. The scale of buildings involved negates any significant contribution from maturing planting. The mitigation proposed through landscaping on the buildings themselves and planting to the east of the buildings would not be effective in longer views from the conservation areas as it is the upper storeys of the buildings that intrude above the natural backdrop. For instance, the visualisation from viewpoint 06 (ES appendix 12.4 part 2 CD 1.43b) has a 15 year overlay which illustrates the very limited effect of planting even once the proposed development is established.

9.3. Historic England guidance (GPA3, CD 5.24) includes the imperative to explore ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm. The opportunity to mitigate impacts on heritage assets to the east at an early design stage is lost in a site layout that proposes the three large eastern blocks and the proposed scale of others. This immediately creates an impediment and the necessities having to start finding ways to mitigate the long massing and the scale entailed. Though the applicants consider they have achieved this, the need would in part be avoided by an eastern edge that was more fundamentally broken-up and varied as a result of a different site layout. Reduction of the massing and proposed scale would be an appropriate response to mitigating harm.

10. Conclusions

10.1. In my assessment of impact, the appeal scheme does not satisfy the NPPF Paragraph 189 imperative that (as heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource) they should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Their significance not having been given sufficient recognition.

10.2. South Cambridgeshire Local Plan policy HQ/1: Design Principles requires that, proposals must a) Preserve or enhance the character of the local urban and rural area and respond to its context in the wider landscape; b) Conserve or enhance important natural and historic assets and their setting. The appeal scheme fails to conserve or enhance the conservation areas.

10.3. Section 2 of Policy NH/14 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018) states that development proposals will be supported when they sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets, including their settings, as appropriate to their significance and in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework. I consider that the proposals do not “sustain and enhance” nor “respond to local heritage character” as required by this policy.

10.4. Paragraph 202 of the NPPF is engaged, therefore the less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage assets must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Any additional negative impact on the heritage assets ought to be assigned considerable weight (as will be reflected in the LPA’s Planning evidence). As Historic England point out (GPA3 page 4) regarding cumulative harm:

“Where the significance of a heritage asset has been compromised in the past by unsympathetic development affecting its setting, to accord with NPPF policies consideration still needs to be given to whether additional change will further detract from, or can enhance, the significance of the asset.” There is no basis in local or national policy for accepting harmful impacts on heritage assets because a degree of harm has already been done.

Thus, regardless of the scale of existing development adjacent to the appeal site, the appeal proposals are capable of further detracting from the conservation areas.

- 10.5. The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear (paragraph 200) that any harm to a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting) requires clear and convincing justification.
- 10.6. I assess the harm to the heritage assets to be at the moderate level of “less than substantial harm” and the appeal scheme to be contrary to South Cambridgeshire Local Plan policies NH/14 and HQ/1, the NPPF and principle C2 ‘Value heritage, local history and culture’ of the National Design Guide.
- 10.7. The LPA’s planning evidence undertakes the balancing exercise required by paragraph 202 of the NPPF.

