

Mr Andrew Evans
Halton Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
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Direct Dial: 01612421417

Our ref: L01558469

6 July 2023

Dear Mr Evans

Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2021

FORMER TRICORN HOTEL, STONE BARN LANE, RUNCORN, CHESHIRE, WA7 2PQ

Application No. 23/00129/LBC

Thank you for your letter of 6 July 2023 regarding further information on the above application for listed building consent. On the basis of this information, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

Summary

Hallwood House is a Grade II* late 17th - early 18th century manor house which has undergone a series of alterations and renovations over its lifetime. The site is now an island in amongst intense residential development where once it benefitted from a rural setting. Most recently used as a public house, the building has stood empty for several years and its condition is now such that it is included on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register.

We have provided comment at pre-application stage and on the initial submission which raised some concerns over the proposals and the lack of supporting information. Through discussions this has been worked through, but many aspects remain in outline and subject to further survey and analysis work.

Despite the outline nature of the proposals as they now stand, we are supportive in principle and of the positive context in which this scheme has come forward. In that it aims to secure on-going maintenance and conservation of the main Hallwood House but also the separately designated Grade II Stables and provide them with a new use.

Historic England Advice

Significance



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A small late 17th or early 18th century mansion house built for Thomas Chesshyre, the Bailiff of the Lordship of Houlton and Whitley. The earliest form of the building, replacing an earlier keeper's cottage associated with the medieval Halton Deer Park, was likely a simple building which has been adapted, extended, and even reduced several times over its lifetime. Historic mapping confirms this and highlights that it was once attached to the adjacent stable block (separately Grade II listed) by further buildings, now lost.

Constructed of a brown brick under a slate roof and standing two storeys tall with further space, likely to have been used by servants, within the attics. It is likely that a significant amount of renovation and extension work was undertaken by John Chesshyre, the son of Thomas, who gained fortune, favour, and a knighthood from Queen Anne during the 18th century.

Hallwood remained a rural residence, changing hands and being adapted several times, including suffering the loss of one of its ranges to an aerial attack during the second world war. However, the 1970's expansion of Halton and the construction of the Palacefields Estate changed its setting completely, eventually encompassing the historic building. Hallwood was eventually converted to a public house and renamed The Tricorn in the 1990's.

The building has now been vacant for several years and is in a dilapidated condition for which it is included on the Historic England Heritage at Risk register. The Stables are Grade II listed and as such fall outside of our remit for comment and are for the Local Authority to consider. Our comments are therefore limited only to the Grade II* listed Hallwood House.

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Impact

Since the initial submission, amendments have been made to address many of our previous concerns. In summary, the scheme has been revised to retain, repair and re-use as much of the historic interior and features as possible, subject to detailed assessment which is to be secured by condition. This analysis is not possible prior to determination due to the unsafe condition of the building.

Due to the unsafe condition of the building meaning further assessment is not possible until the applicant takes ownership of the building, which itself is dependent on securing permission for the development, the following conditions have been



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suggested for any eventual decision notice:

- Updated Condition Survey;
- Detailed Structural Survey;
- Building Record (Level 3);
- Detailed Technical Drawings;
- Schedule of existing and replacement features including windows and doors;
- Schedule of existing and replacement materials and finishes;
- Detailed Schedule of works;
- Any necessary structural designs and reports for interventions such as retaining steelwork or portal frames;
- Method Statements for all works.

It has been discussed at length the impact that the new development could have on the contribution setting makes to the significance of Hallwood House. Whilst it is noted that the original setting of a rural environment has been lost, the ability to still appreciate Hallwood House as once being a rural building of stature is still possible in part. This is primarily due to the open aspect to the buildings southwest, which although is a surface car park remains an open space. Proposals look to develop the car park and provide new housing.

We raised concerns regarding the proposed closeness of the dwellings to Hallwood House and the effect they will have in reducing the ability to appreciate and understand the buildings once open setting through hemming it in and closing off views. We commend the applicant in their willingness to work collaboratively with ourselves and the Local Authority to try and find ways to overcome this issue.

Proposals have been presented which remove the closest unit to Hallwood House completely. From a heritage perspective, this is the preferred option as it will allow better appreciation and understanding of the building. However, the applicant has explained that due to funding pressures the removal of a complete unit may threaten the ability to include Hallwood in the overall development. This option also poses security issues. Instead, the applicant's proposal is to reduce this unit to a single storey dwelling to address funding requirements whilst reducing the impact outlined above as far as possible within the constraints of the project. This will still impact on the building's significance; however, we consider that this will amount to a level of less than substantial harm.

Policy

National policy relating to the conservation and enhancement of the historic



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environment is articulated in section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). These policies state that assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance (NPPF, 189) and that when considering the impact of a proposed development, great weight should be given to an asset's conservation (NPPF, 199).

Where it is identified that harm will be caused, the decision maker should be satisfied that this is supported by a clear and convincing justification (NPPF, 200) and that the public benefits that it would bring about would outweigh the harm (NPPF, 202).

Position

To reiterate our continuing position, we are supportive in principle of the scheme which seeks to retain and repair the designated heritage assets, particularly as the scheme aims to secure long-term use and on-going maintenance to these two assets which are currently in a poor condition and on the Heritage at Risk Register, as well as delivering significant regeneration of the surrounding area.

We welcome the positive changes been made to the scheme following our discussions. These changes which now propose to retain far more of the historic fabric, character and therefore significance of these nationally significant designated heritage assets. We thank the applicant and their team for working constructively with us and the Local Authority to overcome the previous issues raised.

We maintain that the new development to the southwest of Hallwood House will impact on the contribution setting makes to its significance. However, we appreciate the pressures that face the applicant in terms of funding and ownership. We consider that the whilst the applicants preferred solution will harm significance, it will fall into the category of less than substantial harm. As such this harm should be weighed by the decision maker against the public benefits that may come from the overall scheme. We do not object to the scheme on heritage grounds.

Recommendation

Should the Local Authority be minded to approve the application they must satisfy themselves that the proposal accords with national and local planning policies; that sufficient clear and convincing justification has been provided; and that the public benefits are enough to outweigh the identified harm..

Yours sincerely



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