

Deputation by Cllr Dianne Lloyd against APP/20/00757 at a meeting of the Development Management Committee on 10th December 2020

H23 (part of KP5)

I recall visiting this site – H23 in the Local Plan 2036 - in relation to the earlier application, 17/00863. The wonder of the site, apart from the amazing craftsmanship of the build of the house, was the mature trees in the grounds of the buildings. The ones planted when the house was built in the mid-19th century, are certainly of an age, size, and species worthy of an arboretum, and they create the appropriate setting for this grade II listed property.

Historic England not only protects the historic environment of England by preserving and listing historic buildings, but it also designates and registers historic Parks and Gardens. The setting of the house at site H23, I believe is on Hampshire's register of historic Parks and Gardens, which proves that the setting – the grounds and the trees – are of significant historic interest and should be protected at all cost.

The value of just being able to see these mature trees cannot be dismissed. Studies have shown that exposure to all trees, but especially majestic trees such as these, is healing for both physical and mental health. And surely members, over the last 9 months, we have all learnt how important nature, and especially trees are to us humans.

Trees absorb CO₂, removing and storing carbon, while at the same time they release oxygen back into the air. Mature specimens with complex and deep root systems are the very **best** trees we could possibly have in the borough because they clean the air for us all. The amenity these trees are giving and will continue to give to the 2,100 families who come to live on the new estates in KP5 of the Local Plan, is invaluable.

Trees reduce the amount of runoff, and water is released more slowly into water bodies. These trees have been doing a fantastic job in this regard and should be retained at all cost so they can continue to perform as the asset they are to the house, and the adjacent area which is fast turning from water absorbing agricultural land to a hard surfaced housing estate.

Ironically, while this application seeks to fell mature trees, the government launched a £50 million scheme on 4th November 2020, to help boost tree-planting rates, in the fight against climate change. Felling mature, specimen trees at this time flies in the face of that initiative, and also in that of the Plant Britain campaign launched just over a week ago, which aims to get 750,000 new trees planted over the next two years, to inspire the nation to help protect the planet and fight against climate change.

In the Local Plan 2036, Policy E18 deals with trees. It states this policy is needed because:

(5.245) Trees are a valuable resource in terms of biodiversity, amenity and for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

(5.246) The Borough is home to a wide variety of trees both in terms of scale and species diversity. It is important that the benefits of protecting trees are considered in relation to the need for development, and where appropriate, are safeguarded.

E18 goes on to say that development affecting trees will only be permitted where it:

c. Will **not** result in the loss or deterioration of ancient or veteran trees.

E18 continues: The Council will **refuse** planning permission for proposals that threaten the retention of important trees unless the need for, and benefits of development in that location, clearly outweigh the impact of the proposal.

It is my view that the benefits of the development of up to 70 dwellings in the grounds of Southleigh House, do **not** outweigh the impact of the loss of these specimen trees.

I appreciate that in order to preserve this house and its associated period buildings, any developer wishing to convert it to homes may have to add more units in the grounds of the house to make the work on the listed building viable. But this must **not** be at the sacrifice of these majestic life enhancing trees.

So, that leads me to question if turning the house into dwellings is the correct course of action at all. Perhaps the listed building could become a unique hotel in its amazing setting, close to the attractive town centre of Emsworth, the coast and even closer to the private hospital, all that attract many visitors. Perhaps our Regeneration Team could take charge of this listed building and work to find a different solution for the good of the building, residents, and commerce in the area.

And members, please don't be bullied about the loss of some 14 affordable houses this development would bring. We all know that no **Havant** resident who is currently on the Hampshire Homes Choice list, will be able to actually *afford* any home on this site, because of the nature of the development it would warrant, that a developer such as Bargate could deliver.

And let's not forget site KP5, the area situated to the south and west, where 2,100 new homes will be built, adjacent to this relatively small but unique and significant site. Surely the amenity of the trees on this site should be retained.

We've all learnt to appreciate the need for trees as part of the combat against climate change, as homes and food for wildlife and for the physical and mental health of humans. And now we know the importance of these specific trees to the setting of the listed building as well.

What a tragedy it would be if you gave permission to fell these trees, and then the plans – once drawn up – were considered unviable anyway. I know I couldn't have that decision on my conscience.

I urge you all to think very carefully about one developer's profit versus these significant trees, what they give us, and what they add by way of setting to a grade II listed building, and vote against the application.

Thank you.