Mr Ged King Direct Dial: 0117 9750686

Ged King Plans

 Our ref: PA00872246

 21 November 2018

Dear Mr King

**Pre-application Advice**

**COURT BARTON FARM, AVETON GIFFORD, KINGSBRIDGE, TQ7 2LE**

I apologise for the lengthy delay in providing written confirmation of advice provided at our site visit in September; however, I have noted the subsequent correspondence you have been having with Richard Gage regarding different options for the development, and will refer to that in my advice.

The site is currently a vacant area of land associated with Court Barton farmhouse, which is of a slightly nondescript character, being neither garden nor agricultural land, although it is mainly laid to grass. Its character was explained by looking at old photographs of the farm, which show the site being occupied by farm buildings in association with the main farmyard to the north, whilst still being separated from it by the access drive to the farmhouse.

That drive also forms a historic pedestrian access to the parish church, which is set on a much more elevated site than Court Barton, and is a grade II\* listed building of medieval origins, that has had a substantial amount of later rebuilding. When standing at the church, or in its immediate environs, it is difficult to see the proposed development site due to the steep topography and intervening mature vegetation. Equally, when standing in the site it is difficult to obtain more than snatched glimpses of the church tower, so my impression was that there will be limited intervisibility between the development and the church.

At the time of our visit, however, the trees were in full leaf and providing extensive screening, so that conclusion should also be tested when the vegetation is at its least effective in that respect - which could be done between now and spring of next year. Any viewpoints providing such intervisibility should the be noted and taken account of in the design and layout of the development, in order to minimise the potential impact on the setting of the church.

I would agree with Richard Gage that the most visually sensitive part of the site in relation to heritage impact is likely to be its northern end, since that is the more elevated area, which is nearer to the historic farmstead and also directly borders the path to the church, with intervisibility to the lych-gate. Here, a more traditional design approach to housing could potentially provide some enhancement to the site's setting, by reinforcing the sense of a historic route approaching the church.

The scale, form and configuration of those houses will be very important, though, to how they contribute to, rather than detract from, the setting of Court Barton and the church. The objective should be one of reinforcing a hierarchy of buildings that culminates in the greater architectural status of the church. A row of modest cottages, such as you have shown on your outline plans, would appear to be a suitable way of maintaining that hierarchy. In the southern part of the site, however, which is further away from the historic part of the village, more freedom could be adopted to the design and layout of new dwellings and the building density could be lower as this is effectively an edge of countryside location.

I note the discussions that have been taking place regarding the site access, and would echo Richard's concerns that this does not become a feature which disrupts the continuity of the row of cottages or dominates the approach to Court Barton and the lych-gate. Of the options you have provided in a subsequent e-mail, my preference would be for site plan 2 since it seems logical to provide an access at a roughly central part of the site where it is best placed to access all the dwellings. This would also allow the creation of a continuous frontage of cottages to the road, which would create a more traditional character.

I note, though, your comments regarding the feasibility of providing an access over a 3rd party-owned road. If that proves to be an impossibility, then could you consider reducing the number of cottages to 3 and moving the site access to the western end of those cottages, at the entrance to Pullen Close rather than locating it at the north-eastern extremity of the site (which you have shown in site plan 4)? Site plan 3 appears to be the most undesirable access option, since it interrupts the cottages and undermines the sense of continuity of house frontages which I believe should be an important characteristic for the houses located alongside the access drive to Court Barton.

In terms of house design and materials, I believe that Richard Gage is best placed to provide detailed advice, but I would ask you to bear in mind that this site is a transitional one between the village and open countryside, adjacent to a former farmstead. Whilst I certainly wouldn't suggest that you design houses to look like converted farm buildings, I believe that the use of vernacular materials will work most harmoniously in this location. This needn't necessarily mean that the cottages should be constructed entirely of stone, and render could prove an acceptable material for walling. However, incorporating some natural stone elements such as chimneys or porches, could help the buildings to blend more readily in this semi-agricultural setting.

For a similar reason, I would advise against the use of Upvc windows or doors in the cottages, although this might not apply if you are taking a more overtly contemporary approach to the larger dwellings in the southern end of the site which will not be seen directly in the context of historic buildings. Treatment of boundaries, kerbs and the road access will also need careful thought about, if this development is to be successfully integrated into the village. I am reassured to see that you are already considering non-standard options for some of those elements of the scheme.

**Next Steps**

I hope that this guidance provides some useful pointers for you and your clients in developing this scheme. I think that, with sensitive treatment, it has the potential to make a positive contribution to this edge of the village and to enhance the setting of Court Barton, without having adverse impacts on the grade II\* listed church. I would urge you to work constructively with Richard Gage in developing your design to achieve those objectives.

If you wish Historic England to comment further on the scheme before you submit a formal application, you can request formal pre-application advice from us, in which we provide a one-off letter advising on what our position would be when consulted on that application. If, however, there is any clarification that you need on the contents of this letter before developing your plans further, please do contact me.

Yours sincerely



Jenny Chesher

Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas

E-mail: jenny.chesher@HistoricEngland.org.uk

cc: Richard Gage, South Hams District Council

**COURT BARTON FARM, AVETON GIFFORD, KINGSBRIDGE, TQ7 2LE**

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