

**Appeal by: Bloor Homes and Sandleford Farm Partnership**

**Site Address: Sandleford Park, Newtown Road, Newbury**

**APP/W0340/W/20/3265460**

**Address by Bettina Kirkham, Chair, Berkshire Gardens Trust 7 May 2021**

The Berkshire Gardens Trust represents the views of the Gardens Trust, a statutory consultee on historic landscape matters. As you will have already seen I have had a professional interest in the site for a long time.

The site forms an important setting to the Registered Park and listed Sandleford Priory and the historic value of the setting has long been recognised by the appellant's landscape experts in the appeal documents. Therefore, I am asking that weight should be given to the historic landscape value of the park in considering the balance. The landscape sensitivity of the area, rightly protected by the proposed Country Park, is due in a large part to its historic role as a setting to heritage assets and in its own right.

The wider parkland was particularly important to both the Montagues who had an interest in the park in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century but in particular to Capability Brown whom they employed to look at improving the estate. Mr Cooper suggests that the parkland was indeed surveyed by Brown's surveyor Speer and clearly all the maps in Figures 1 to 3 of Mr Cooper's evidence show the land to the west of Newtown Road as very much a key part of the estate, the majority of the parkland was in many ways much as it is now. Mr Cooper recognises the expertise of Jon Phibbs on Capability Brown. Jon Phibbs in his lectures makes the point that the wider estate was an important part of Brown's vision for a client, even if no major works were proposed, as here. Arable land as well as woodland and pasture made up the value of the wider estate. The composition formed the setting of Sandleford Priory as can be seen in the painting of the view from the house.

Our outstanding concern is not with the principle of development, nor the proposed housing areas as they now stand, but with the highway proposals for Warren Road, the valley crossing and the pedestrian/cycle/emergency access across the Country Park.

This concern is brushed aside by the appellant's team as something to be considered at the detailed stage. However the appellant has already spent a good deal of time on these details and come up with unacceptable solutions. It is important that the eventual approved outline approval goes beyond just demonstrating that some sort of solution can be found, but should go towards demonstrating that a much more sympathetic design which is in keeping with the character and appearance and history of the parkland estate can be achieved, avoiding an adverse impact on the historic value of the parkland.

In detail:

1. **Warren Road:** We ask that the appellant agrees to the scheme proposed by Donnington New Homes for Warren Road and confirms that this would meet the development needs.
2. **Cycle route/pedestrian/emergency routeway:** We ask that the design of the cycle route/pedestrian/emergency routeway across the Country Park be reviewed to much reduce

the width of the route and minimise the amount of hard surfacing to lead to a much softer solution

3. **Valley Bridge:** Thirdly we ask that the detailed siting, alignment, construction method and appearance of the valley bridge are not left to reserved matters but should be included as part of the outline application. This is a major structure providing access from one residential to another with a major impact on a wider area of the valley. The appellant is still offering options, all of which are a poor response to the sensitivity of the historic landscape. The provision of a valley bridge is agreed in principle through the SPD already, it is the detail that is at issue.

In conclusion, the historic sensitivity of the parkland is a key issue and although much has been done to limit the impact from the built form, not enough has been done to recognise this in the highway designs which affect the Country Park and the historic routeway from Andover Road to Sandlesford Priory. These highway proposals are contrary to national and local policy and to the objectives of the SDP Vision and Objectives to conserve and enhance the heritage of the site.