



Buckinghamshire Council

North Buckinghamshire Area Planning Committee

Agenda

Date: Wednesday 29 September 2021

Time: 2.30 pm

Venue: The Oculus, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, HP19 8FF

Membership: P Fealey (Chairman), A Bond, P Cooper, C Cornell, P Gomm, F Mahon, H Mordue (Buckinghamshire Council), S Morgan, A Osibogun, B Stanier Bt (Buckinghamshire Council), R Stuchbury and D Town

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1 APOLOGIES		
2 APPOINT OF VICE CHAIRMAN		
3 MINUTES		3 - 6
To approve as correct records the minutes of the meetings held 7 April 2021 and 26 May 2021.		
4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST		
APPLICATIONS		
5 20/03822/APP - STOWE SCHOOL, STOWE PARK, STOWE		7 - 88
6 AVAILABILITY OF MEMBERS ATTENDING SITE VISITS (IF REQUIRED)		

To confirm Members' availability to undertake site visits on [insert date] if required.

7 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the North Buckinghamshire Area Planning Committee is at 2.30 pm on Wednesday 27 October 2021

If you would like to attend a meeting, but need extra help to do so, for example because of a disability, please contact us as early as possible, so that we can try to put the right support in place.

For further information please contact: Harry Thomas on 01296 585234, email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.



North Buckinghamshire Area Planning Committee minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the North Buckinghamshire Area Planning Committee held on Wednesday 26 May 2021 in Main Sports Hall, Stoke Mandeville Stadium, Guttmann Road, Aylesbury HP21 9PP.

Members present

A Bond, P Cooper, C Cornell, P Fealey, P Gomm, F Mahon, H Mordue, S Morgan, B Stanier Bt, R Stuchbury, D Town and Z Mohammed

Agenda Item

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Osibogun.

2 Election of Chairman

RESOLVED –

That Councillor Fealey be elected Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing year.

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North Buckinghamshire Area Planning Committee minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the North Buckinghamshire Area Planning Committee held on Wednesday 7 April 2021 via virtual conference, commencing at 2.30 pm and concluding at 4.00 pm.

Members present

P Fealey (chairman), T Mills (vice-chairman), A Bond, N Glover, L Monger, H Mordue, S Morgan, M Rand, S Renshell, R Stuchbury and A Wight.

Apologies

C Clare.

Agenda Item

1 **Temporary Changes to Membership**

None.

2 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2021 were agreed as correct record.

3 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor T Mills declared a personal interest in the application as he was previously a regular diner at the site. It was noted that he rarely met with the applicant.

Councillor L Monger declared a personal interest in the application as he was a Local Member, lived in the local area, and had previously dined at the site.

Councillors P Fealey, A Wight and S Renshell also declared personal interests in the application having previously dined at the site.

4 **20/01972/APP - 3 Market Square, Winslow**

Proposal: change of use of part of the building from hotel accommodation to form 4no. apartments and 3no. ground floor hotel bedrooms, removal of modern stud partitioning, blocking up of a number of doors, the creation of new door openings and the construction of two new staircases.

Speaking as objectors, Jeff Crisp and Mark Beckett. Mark Beckett had submitted a

written statement which was read aloud by Legal Officer, Laura Lee Briggs.

It was proposed by Councillor H Mordue, seconded by Councillor S Renshell and **resolved:**

that the application be **deferred** and **delegated** for approval subject to the satisfactory completion of a legal agreement to secure a financial contribution towards sport and leisure facilities and subject to the appropriate conditions.

5 Site Visit Arrangements

Not applicable.

6 Human Rights Act

For information.



Report to Buckinghamshire Council – (North Area) Planning Committee

Application Number: 20/03822/APP

Proposal: Design Technology & Engineering Building for Stowe School.
Accommodation to include workshops, teaching rooms and staff facilities, with associated landscape works to immediate surroundings.

Site location: Stowe School, Stowe Park, Stowe MK18 5EH

Applicant: Mr Mark Kerrigan, Stowe School

Case Officer: Mrs Diana Locking

Ward affected: Buckingham East

Parish-Town Council: Stowe

Valid date: 06.11.2020

Determination date: 01ST January 2021

Recommendation: REFUSAL

1.0 Summary & Recommendation/ Reason for Planning Committee Consideration

- 1.1 The application by Stowe School is for a new Design, Technology and Engineering building to replace an existing facility at the School. The intention is not to replace the building on the existing site but to utilise and an undeveloped area of woodland, albeit that a path runs through the woodland. The site is an area of historic woodland within the Grade 1 Registered Park and Garden in close proximity to other school building in the grounds of Stowe School.
- 1.2 It is considered that the development of the historic woodland would result in loss of significance to the Registered Park and Garden, the setting of the listed buildings and Stowe Conservation area. In accordance with adopted policy and advice in the NPPF it would cause less than substantial harm to the designated heritage assets. This reflects the applicants' own heritage assessment. However, it is considered that the historic value of this woodland has been underplayed in the applicant's heritage assessment. It is the view of officers that the level of harm would be at the higher end of that scale, although not amounting to substantial harm. This reflects the role that the woodland plays within the historic designed landscape which was to provide a wooded spine and backdrop between the Home Park and Nelson's Walk. The development of this site will result in the loss of some historic trees and also will have implications for the long-term sustainability of other trees.

- 1.3 While information has been submitted to support the application it is considered that insufficient justification has been provided for the development of this sensitive site, as well as insufficient evidence to show that the building could not be placed in a less sensitive location within the School grounds. This is information that was requested from the applicants at the pre-application stage and was a concern raised with the first application that was withdrawn.
- 1.4 Paragraph 202 the NPPF and Policy BE1 of the recently adopted VALP state that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of a proposal including, where appropriate securing its optimal viable use.
- 1.5 The scheme includes a number of benefits, the most notable of which are landscaping proposals for a planting scheme which has been developed in association with the National Trust. Whilst weight can be attributed to these benefits, it is not considered that they carry sufficient weight to overcome the harm to the Grade I historic landscape, the settings of listed buildings and the Stowe Conservation Area that would occur through the development of the site and with the development of a building of the scale being proposed.
- 1.6 The proposal would also cause harm to Stowe AAL of which the Stowe Historic Park and Garden is a constituent part.
- 1.7 The relevant policies applicable to this application are within an up to date development plan (the recently adopted VALP) and in line with the advice contained in paragraph 11c of the NPPF should be determined in accordance with these policies. The adverse impacts of the harm to the Grade I Historic Park and Garden, the settings of listed buildings and the Stowe Conservation Area would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the development plan policies BE1. The proposal is also considered to conflict with other relevant policies within the development plan.
- 1.8 Councillor Warren Whyte has requested that the application is referred to Committee: 'Having only been able to visit the site to view the context this week, I understand that this is a sensitive site and numerous issues to be considered, but if the officer's report recommends refusal, I would request that this is called-in'.
- 1.9 This request was received outside of the relevant call-in period in place at that time. However, given the importance of the site in heritage, education and economic terms and the significant issues that need to be considered in respect of the harm to the historic landscape officers have referred the application to the Planning Committee with the agreement of the Chairman.

2.0 Description of Proposed Development

- 2.1 Stowe school is within the Stowe Historic Park and Garden (Grade 1), Stowe Conservation Area and Area of Attractive Landscape (AAL). There are many listed buildings in the landscaped gardens and the main Mansion is Grade 1 listed. The area of woodland proposed for development is within the Stowe Western Gardens.

- 2.2 Stowe's landscape was principally developed in the C18th by Charles Bridgeman with changes subsequently made. The Western Gardens from 1715 was the heart of the innovation in garden design and much of the original landscape remains. Stowe School have occupied the buildings and school since 1923.
- 2.3 The application site within the Western Gardens is known as Rooks Spinney or Pyramid Wood and separates Home Park from the approach/ the Course-Nelson's Walk-the tree lined walk on top of the ha ha. The site slopes from north-west to east. It contains a large number of trees some of which are noteworthy and mature. Understorey planting is sparse but the trees partially screen the existing buildings and Home Park to the south-east of the site. A tarmac path connects the main access route (the course to the west of the site) with the lower area where Lyttelton boarding house and Park Field House are located. The West 5 boarding House lies to the south-east in close proximity to the application site and the Music School lies adjacent to the north-east of the site.
- 2.4 The Public Right of way Nelson's Walk is located to the north-west of the site and runs parallel to it separated by the ha ha. To the south is Home Park, currently part of the golf course.
- 2.5 The Design and Access statement outlines the scope of the proposed development which includes:
- Construction of a new two storey Design Technology & Engineering building to replace existing DT facility
 - New external enclosure, integrated with the new building, to accommodate potential new air source heat pump to provide low energy heating & hot water.
 - Removal of existing diagonal path between Nelson's Walk and the existing access-way to the south east of the new building – to accommodate new facility.
 - Local re-modelling of the route of the existing access-way at the southern corner of the development in order to improve access.
 - New hard and soft landscaping to include hard landscape entrance-way to the newbuilding and services access to north-east elevation adjacent to the Music School.
- 2.6 The proposed DTE building is sited parallel to Nelson's Walk. It would take the form of a two-storey building with a projecting element on the south-east. The main rectangular portion of the proposed building would be approximately 42m x and 13.2m in plan and 8.38 metres in height.
- 2.7 The dimensions of the building at its largest extent including the heat pump enclosure and external stairway are approximately 47m x 18m including the single storey section of the building with external terrace/gallery.
- 2.8 A horizontal split between materials used in the elevation is proposed with the upper level being a 'bronze coloured material' and the lower being brick.

- 2.9 The application is accompanied by existing and proposed drawings.
- 2.10 Supporting documents include:
- a) Planning Statement- Stantec Peter Stewart Design Appraisal Nov 2020
 - b) Design Appraisal Peter Stewart Consultancy
 - c) Design and Access Statement
 - d) Preliminary Ecological Appraisal 31.01.20. Bernwood ECS Ltd
 - e) Heritage Impact Assessment DE Landscape and Heritage
 - f) Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
 - g) Tree Survey and Method Statement
 - h) Civil Engineering Planning Report March 2020
 - i) Photomontage Technical Methodology
 - j) Programme and sequence of works
 - k) Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (QD 761-Doc)
 - l) Wider Restoration Plans (QD 761-Doc)
 - m) Wider Restoration and Public Benefit (QD761-Doc)
 - n) Soft Landscape proposals (QD 761-202 Rev A)
- 2.11 In addition to the initial supporting documents the applicant submitted the following additional Appendices to the Council on 18. 05.2021 to serve as a rebuttal to the concerns raised by the Council's consultees :
- Appendix A1 Peter Stewart Consultancy response;
 - Appendix A2 Proposed safeguarded land;
 - Appendix A3 Stowe Public benefits outreach
 - Appendix A4 Gardens trust response;
 - Appendix A5 Stowe School Future Alternatives;
 - Appendix A6 Extracts of Planning Statements;
 - Appendix A7 Verified Viewpoints;
 - Appendix A8 Landscape Officer Response;
 - Appendix A9 Tree Officer Response

3.0 Relevant Planning History

- 3.1 Stowe School site has a very extensive planning history with redevelopment and restoration taking place within the site. However, the planning history identified is only that relevant to the Application site:

The proposal was the subject of pre-application advice in 2019.

Reference: 20/00476/APP

Development: New Design Technology & Engineering Building for Stowe School.

Accommodation to include workshops, teaching rooms and staff facilities, with associated landscape works to immediate surroundings

Decision: WITHDRAWN (Following the receipt of consultee responses, the applicant withdrew the application to enable the points raised in these responses to be addressed prior to resubmission.)

3.2 Other relevant applications on neighbouring site (Music School):

Reference: 11/02547/APP

Development: Removal of existing garage and erection of new music building with Alteration to existing driveway, new paved areas, external walling and associated landscaping

Conditional permission

Reference: 12/02724/APP

Development: Erection of music school (amendment to 11/02547/APP)

Conditional permission

4.0 Representations

- 4.1 Statutory site publicity has been given to the application including the additional appendices received whilst the application has been under consideration. All representations received have been summarised in Appendix A.

5.0 Policy Considerations and Evaluation

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires that in exercising a function affecting land in an AONB, the Council shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB.
- 5.2 The development plan for this area comprises of:
- Buckinghamshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2019 (BMWLP)
 - Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (15th September 2021)
- 5.3 In addition, the following documents are relevant for the determination of the application:
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
 - National Planning Policy for Waste (NPPW)
 - National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

- The Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 (CMP)
- 5.4 The issues and policy considerations are the principle of development, economic considerations, transport matters and parking; historic environment in terms of impact on the Historic Park and Garden and the setting of listed buildings with specific consideration on the impact on the landscape character and impact on trees, archaeology, raising the quality of place making and design, ecology, and flooding and drainage.

5.5 Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (15th September 2021)

The following are policies relevant to the application:

- BE1 (Heritage assets);
- BE2 (Design and new development);
- BE3 (Protection of the amenity of residents);
- NE1 (Biodiversity and geodiversity);
- NE4 (Landscape character and locally important landscape);
- NE8 (Trees, Hedgerows and woodlands);
- T5 (Delivering transport in new development);
- I4 (Flooding)

Principle and Location of Development

- 5.6 The proposed development is located within the grounds of Stowe School on an area of woodland. As previously mentioned, the site is within the grounds of Stowe School which is within the Stowe Historic Park and Garden (Grade 1), Stowe Conservation Area and Area of Attractive Landscape (AAL). The school seeks to replace their outdated building with a new modern building with up to date facilities. However, they have chosen not to replace the building on the same site but to develop the area of land known as Pyramid Wood.
- 5.7 Stowe School is a well-established business in a rural location which makes effective use of heritage assets helping to secure the optimum viable use of these assets. The NPPF is supportive of a prosperous rural economy. However, the site is significantly constrained in terms of heritage assets and development policy requires that all development should seek to conserve the heritage assets in a manner appropriate to its significance, including their setting, and seek enhancement wherever possible.
- 5.8 Pyramid Wood is an area of undeveloped woodland. The School has a long history of improving the facilities on their site. This site is adjacent to the music school which was a new building approved in 2012. The refurbishment or redevelopment of facilities for the school is acceptable in principle subject to the suitability of the site and the impact on acknowledged heritage assets.
- 5.9 In this instance the development of Pyramid Wood represents the development of previously undeveloped part of the site. The redevelopment of this woodland and the resultant loss of trees needs to be considered in the context of the impact upon the

historic park and garden, the setting of the nearby listed building and the impact upon the conservation area. A detailed assessment of the impact upon the heritage assets is considered in detail in Historic Environment section of this report.

- 5.10 Compliance with other relevant development plan policies is also necessary.

Economic Issues

S3 Settlement hierarchy and cohesive development. NPPF – Building a strong, competitive economy paragraphs 81 and 84.

- 5.11 Policy S3 provides a settlement hierarchy. Stowe is defined as a smaller village which are recognised as less sustainable villages which have relatively poor access to services and facilities.
- 5.12 Stowe School has a long history on the site dating back to May 1923 when the school opened. Stowe House and landscape gardens were bought in 1922 and the establishment of the school saved Stowe House and landscape gardens from demolition. The school has flourished on the site and has expanded since its inception.
- 5.13 In 1989 the School gave the world-famous garden and its many important buildings to the National Trust. The adjacent site, Stowe Landscape Gardens, is run by the National Trust, although the sites are closely linked. There is no public access to the School site from the National Trust land.
- 5.14 The last decade has seen a wider building programme to enhance the academic life of the School and support increased numbers. It is part of this growth programme that the proposal has come forward.
- 5.15 Para 81 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should help to create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities. In particular, given its location in a rural setting paragraph 84 of the NPPF requires planning decisions to enable:
- “the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings...” (para 81 of the NPPF).*
- 5.16 It is recognised that Stowe School is an important business in the locality and is a prestigious business within Buckinghamshire. As such the economic benefits of the school should be afforded weight.

Transport Matters and Parking

VALP policy T5 (Delivering transport in new development).

- 5.17 The Highway Engineer has been consulted on the application. He notes that the application for a new teaching building at Stowe School, takes access off Dadford Road via a private

drive approximately one km in length. The proposed building would provide 987m² of D1 non-residential institution floor-space, however the new building would replace an existing building which is no longer fit for purpose, and it is intended to increase the educational offering to existing pupils, rather than specifically increasing pupil and staff numbers.

- 5.18 The existing access arrangements serving the school are adequate, and the proposals include the provision of a service bay adjacent to the building, which would enable deliveries / servicing to be undertaken well away from the highway. Also, provision for disabled drop-off is proposed to the front of the building. The Highway Engineer is therefore satisfied that the proposal would not have a material impact on the safety and operation of the highway.
- 5.19 This absence of harm should be afforded neutral weight in the planning balance

Historic environment (or Conservation Area or Listed Building Issues)

Heritage policies: BE1 (Heritage Assets) and NPPF paras 194 and 195, 199, 200 - 202

- 5.20 The heritage assessment is the impact on the significance of the Grade 1 Registered Park and Garden, the setting of the listed buildings and the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 5.21 In determining this application the Council should have regard to the statutory duty of section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess and section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.
- 5.22 Policy BE1 – Heritage Assets. This policy provides the framework for assessing the impact of a planning application on the significance of a designated or non-designated heritage asset. The policy seeks to ensure that development is managed in a way that sustains or enhances the significance and setting of heritage assets. The policy reflects the guidance in the NPPF.
- 5.23 The NPPF states (paragraph 194) 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.*'
- 5.24 Paragraph 195 states that LPAs should take the significance of the asset into account and seek to '*avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal*'.
- 5.25 Paragraph 199 the NPPF also states that '*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*'.

- 5.26 This application has been the subject of extensive consultation both internally and externally. Consultees include:
- Council's Landscape Architect and Design Officer
 - Council's Heritage Officer
 - Council's Arboricultural Officer
 - Historic England
 - Gardens Trust
- 5.27 Given the importance of the development to the School and the potential impact upon an internationally important historic park and garden the Council commissioned an independent assessment by an expert historic landscape advisor (Cookson & Tickner – Landscape Architecture).

The Proposed Development Site

- 5.28 The role of the development site in the historic designed landscape
- 5.29 According to the Stowe Conservation Plans: The Western Part of Stowe Gardens and the Course (Rutherford, December 2012) the proposed development site lies in the Stowe Garden Western Area within sub-character area 4B Pyramid Wood. The role of this area within the historic designed landscape was to provide a wooded spine and backdrop between the Home Park and Nelson's Walk. This band of woodland would have acted as a planted backdrop and skyline in views from the Home Park and from the Oxford Approach including the Course, whilst also serving to emphasise views out of the parkland from Nelson's Walk.
- 5.30 The Stowe Conservations Plans: The Western Part of Stowe Gardens and the Course (Rutherford, December 2012) suggests that Pyramid Wood divides the landscape of the Home Park and western part of Stowe Gardens from the quite separate iconography of Nelson's Walk, Nelson's Seat, King George I, and the Roman (Boycott) Pavilion. The Plan notes that
- "its main path followed the woodland edge, giving views through open grown trees down over the Home Farm, and leading to the site of Vanbrugh's Pyramid at its south western extremity"*
- 5.31 The 2012 Conservation Plan suggests that Pyramid Wood is largely intact "*although it was largely replanted with native trees in the mid-20th century....*"
- 5.32 Since the Conservation Plan was written in 2012 other buildings have been added to this part of the designed landscape, namely the West 5 Boarding House (south east of and close to the application site) and the Music School (to the north east of and directly adjacent to the application site).
- 5.33 The report by Matthew Tickner (informed by a site visit in June 2021) considers that the woodland continues to perform its historic design intention and a number of historic trees were noted. These would appear to pre-date the mid 20th century dates of planting

suggested by the Conservation Plan and include limes planted c1875, a sycamore of c 1900, three limes of c 1910 an oak c 1911. It is likely the older trees relate to the third Duke of Buckingham's (d 1889) replanting and restoration efforts, whilst the later specimens might date to the Duke's daughter, Lady Kinross' tenure, before Stowe was sold in 1921.

- 5.34 Much of the woodland is more recent in age, being thought to date to 1960's replanting, with some trees in poor condition and with a fair proportion of ash trees. A hard-surfaced path cuts through the area.

Heritage Designations

- 5.35 The proposed development lies within a Grade I Registered Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest in England meaning that the designed landscape is '*of exceptional interest*' according to Rural Landscapes: Register of Parks and Gardens Selection Guide (Historic England, 2018).
- 5.36 Registered historic parks and gardens are sites which have been assessed to be of particular significance, in terms of the special historic interest. They are nationally designated heritage assets.
- 5.37 Historic parks and gardens are graded in a similar manner to listed buildings. The inclusion of a historic park or garden in the national register requires the LPA to consult with Historic England and the Gardens Society on all applications for development likely to affect the area of special interest.
- 5.38 The Heritage Impact Assessment (DE Landscape & Heritage, November 2020) submitted in support of the application identifies 47 listed buildings within the c. 500 hectare Registered Park and Garden, of which 28 are grade I listed '*of exceptional interest*', four grade II* listed '*of more than special interest*' and 15 grade II listed '*of special interest*'.
- 5.39 The NPPF considers grade I and II* listed buildings and grade I and II* registered parks and gardens as heritage assets of the highest significance (NPPF para 200).
- 5.40 The whole of the Registered Park and Garden (RPG) is designated as a Conservation Area. Stowe Conservation Area was designated in 1990. The boundary of the Conservation Area is contiguous with that of the RPG boundary to the west and south (including the Oxford and Buckingham avenues) but generally confined to the ha ha to the east and Oxford Avenue to the north; the RPG extends further in both directions.

Significance

- 5.41 Historic England's summary listing for Stowe landscape gardens states:

Extensive and complex pleasure grounds and park around a country mansion. Main phases C18 and early C19, utilising late C17 base, with early C18 work by Charles Bridgeman, Sir John Vanbrugh, James Gibbs and William Kent, and mid C18 work by Lancelot Brown.

- 5.42 Stowe was supremely influential on the English landscape garden during the C18 and all relevant studies and plans concur that Stowe is of international importance.

Stowe Framework Conservation Management Plan

- 5.43 The Stowe Framework Conservation Management Plan: The School Estate (Rutherford, December 2012) notes that:

'Stowe is a special place of international significance worthy of the greatest care in its conservation and ongoing development'.

- 5.44 The Plan also suggests that the Stowe Garden western area, where the DTE building is proposed, is of Grade A (national or international significance).

- 5.45 Sub-character area 4B Pyramid Wood is also classified as grade A significance (national or international significance) and the key elements of landscape significance are defined as:

- The sylvan backdrop to the Home Park and the screen from Nelson's Walk.
- Part of the sylvan backdrop, above the ha-ha, to the approach from the Oxford Gates and Bridge, The Course and main drive to the mansion.
- Formerly a key section of the circuit walk around the Home Park c.1725.
- Nelson's Walk formed a green walk from which to observe the park and The Course beyond the ha -ha

Stowe Parkland Plan

- 5.46 Stowe Parkland Plan (LUC 2012) notes that "*Stowe Park is of outstanding international significance as an exemplary historic designated landscape...*"

- 5.47 The Parkland Plan emphasises the important relationship between the park and garden:

"The intervisibility between house, garden, park and the wider landscape is of great importance to the composition at Stowe, and neither the park nor the garden can ever be fully considered in isolation. The significance of Stowe Park thus relates to its role in the setting to the garden as well as to it being a designed landscape in its own right. The intervisibility is reinforced by a series of building and structures – these are often of individual outstanding architectural merit, although it is the combined effects of architecture and landscape that underpin their importance within the Park."

- 5.48 The application must be assessed in the context of the relevant adopted development plan policies. However, it is also useful to understand the application within the context of the Stowe Framework Conservation Management Plan written in 2012. The relevant general conservation policies are:

- 2.2.6.3 Respect and enhance the school layout of the 1920s and 1930s focussed on Chapel Court which established the framework for a high quality school campus set sensitively within the existing layout.
- 2.2.6.4 Ensure that modern school buildings and their environs fit easily together in the character of a united school campus and do not intrude or attempt to compete with the C18/C19 landscape views or character
- 5.49 The key issues identified in the Stowe Framework Conservation Management Plan: The School Estate are:
- The wood forms the backdrop to the Home Park and the division against Nelson's Walk.
 - The reinstatement of the circuit walk around the Home Park.
 - The importance of the site of the Pyramid, as a viewing mount, and its clearing and conservation.
 - The effect of intrusive buildings should be mitigated by planting and defining and managing as a discrete enclave within the designed landscape.
- 5.50 The policy for the area is:
- Maintain as a ‘pretty shallow thicket’ (Latapie, 1771), as established by 1779 as a wooded flowering shrubbery backdrop to the Home Park and the division against Nelson’s Walk, and conversely as the backdrop to The Course above Nelson’s Walk, screening views of modern buildings from the Course.*
- 5.51 The recommendations from the Plan for this area are:
1. Maintain the woodland, thin where necessary, and underplant as a ‘pretty shallow thicket’ with flowering shrubs against the Walk
 2. Reinstate as part of the sequence of wildernesses and of the circuit walk around the Home Park
- 5.52 The application has been supported by:
- Heritage Impact Assessment by DE Heritage
 - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
 - Landscape proposals which include mitigation namely:
 - planting as part of the Home Park restoration
 - mitigation planting as part of the West House development and Home Park restoration
 - a path linking Home Park with the position of the Pyramid and onto Nelson’s Walk
 - additional woodland understorey planting in the remaining sections of Pyramid Wood

- replacement specimen trees along Nelson's Walk

Assessment

- 5.53 All expert consultees namely Historic England, The Council's Heritage Officer, the Gardens Trust and the Council's Landscape Architecture and Design Officer have all raised objections to the principle of the development on this site. They consider that the Grade A significance of the area of Pyramid Wood within the proposed development site should be recognised, and agree that it continues to perform its historic design intention-separating Nelson's Walk and the Course from Home Park.
- 5.54 The consultees agree that compared to its historic conception, there have been changes to the park and garden, with various school buildings being erected. Two buildings are in close proximity to the woodland area.
- 5.55 The Landscape Architecture and Design Officer considers that development in this area has the potential to reduce and degrade the woodland belt and escalate the damaged views which have already been identified as an issue in the Conservation Management Plan (2012) for this area.
- 5.56 Historic England note that the proposal would cause harm to the significance of Stowe through the permanent development of a garden feature.
- 5.57 The Council's Heritage Officer (along with other consultee) note that the current application refers at Appendix A of the Planning Statement to this area as the 'development strip'. However, this is not an official designation, i.e. as part of an agreed masterplan, and therefore this reference term should not be perceived as such. This term was referred to in consultation comments for the former Music School application however it should be understood that this term was used as a reference for the general area of the site. It therefore has no official status.
- 5.58 The Heritage Officer considers that the proposal would have a harmful effect on the significance of Pyramid Wood area of the park and garden. In particular the loss of trees, and the addition of built form, especially noting the scale of the building and the design approach, for example the glazing, would impact upon the existing sylvan backdrop, screening and green walk identified as of significance to the Registered Park and Garden. The Officer expresses concerns that whilst the proposal seeks to hide the building with planting, the reality is that it will never be truly hidden.
- 5.59 The Council's Heritage Officer adds that given the significance of the landscape to the conservation area and the listed buildings where there would be harm to the landscape, there would also be harm to the significance of the heritage assets.
- 5.60 The Council's Heritage Officer considers in accordance with the policy BE1 and the tests in the NPPF the proposal would cause less than substantial harm.
- 5.61 Historic England's (HE) assessment is that the proposal would materially harm the significance of the landscape and Conservation Area, and the significance of the Grade I listed building through change within its setting . Despite reassurances in the

- application, Historic England are of the opinion that the building will be seen as a developed area from Nelson's Walk despite the proposed planting scheme. The character of this area will change from a woodland feature to a developed area with some mature trees and shrubs which will harm its significance. It would no longer read as a woodland area, but as part of the School estate.
- 5.62 Historic England also considers that the proposal would result in less than substantial harm but consider that the level of harm is 'high.'
- 5.63 The applicant's in their own heritage assessment identify the level of harm to be less than substantial harm.
- 5.64 The Gardens Trust have raised a more fundamental objection to the principle of the development of the site. Their assessment is based on an understanding of the development area informed by the 2012 document 'Stowe Conservation Plans; The Western Part of Stowe Gardens and The Course' commissioned by the National Trust, Stowe House Preservation Trust and Stowe School Governors from Dr Sarah Rutherford. This ornamental woodland is key to the Course, Nelson's Walk and the approach to the Mansion along Oxford Drive. The proposed development would irreversibly develop part of the early eighteenth century landscape of Stowe which is of international significance. They consider that the significance of Stowe has been downplayed by the applicant and that the development site has been regarded as a small section of an already compromised landscape which can be lost without substantial harm to the historic design.
- 5.65 The Gardens Trust consider that the proposal contributes to the highly damaging but insidious creep through an area of the highest landscape significance in an internationally significant landscape. It is the first encroachment in the shrubbery woodland dividing the eighteenth century landscape from the twentieth century school enclave in Home Park. They further consider that it continues the precedent for incremental development along this ornamental woodland towards the Boycott Pavilion. In their opinion, the woodland of Rook Spinney should be considered sacrosanct and, as set out as part of the vision in the Conservation Plan, as a candidate for restoration to the eighteenth century woodland character rather than a creeping destruction. They consider that the proposal departs from the Conservation Plan by permanent development within the area. The Gardens Trust consider that the development can be regarded as nothing but substantial harm to the significance of the Grade I Historic Park and Garden at Stowe.
- 5.66 The NPPF test states that if substantial harm is identified then the local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm.
- 5.67 Para 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 when assessing 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.

- 5.68 Whilst the Gardens Trust consider that the proposal would cause substantial harm, this is not the view of the Heritage Officer and Historic England who consider that the proposal would cause less than substantial harm to the heritage assets. Substantial harm or loss of the Grade I historic landscape must be wholly exceptional and is therefore a higher level test in NPPF terms.
- 5.69 Furthermore, although the Council's specialist officers have concluded less than substantial harm they consider the site should not be developed given its historic significance, this is in contrast to the applicant's argument that the development would result in less than substantial harm but the development of the site is nevertheless acceptable given the public benefits identified.
- 5.70 As detailed earlier in this report, given the difference of opinion in relation to harm between the consultees the Council commissioned an independent assessment in respect of the harm to the heritage assets and the level of harm which should be attributed. The report is attached as an Appendix to this report. The conclusions following a review of the application are as follows:
- *The proposed development site lies within a heritage asset of the highest significance which has been described by multiple experts as of international importance*
 - *The proposed development site (Pyramid Wood) has been described in the Stowe Framework Conservation Management Plan: The School Estate (Rutherford, December 2012) as being of grade A significance (national or international significance)*
 - *The applicants HIA and LVIAs downplay the significance of Stowe and the proposed development site and underestimate the impacts of the proposed development*
 - *The proposed development is not consistent or compatible with the existing local policy framework*
 - *The level of harm to the designated and undesignated heritage assets is considered to be less than substantial, but the level of harm would be high and at the upper level of that scale as the proposed development will result in the following impacts:*
 - *The felling of four 19th and early 20th century trees and impacts on the root protection zones of three other trees that are likely to date to the third Duke of Buckingham's replanting and restoration and his daughter, Lady Kinloss' tenure that are classified as grade A (high quality) and B (moderate quality) in the tree survey. As stated in the applicant's own tree survey report, trees of such quality would be expected to be retained on a development site.*

This rule should be applied with additional weight, given the significance of the development site and its specific role in the designed landscape as a sylvan backdrop. The tree removal will remove physical evidence of the evolution of the historic designed landscape and render remaining historic trees highly vulnerable as construction will take place within their root protection zones.

- *The removal of the historic trees and the later 20th century specimens will result in the loss of an important band of woodland that has served to provide a wooded backdrop to the Home Park and the Oxford Approach and The Course for over 280 years, resulting on a negative impact on the setting of multiple listed buildings and loss of a key element of the 18th century landscape design*
- *The replacement of the woodland with a large scale, rectangular building will fundamentally change the historic and current landscape character of the site that prevents the perpetuation of the wooded backdrop and skyline in the way it was historically intended. Aside from the loss of woodland with its associated canopy, shrub layer and ground flora, the underlying landform will be fundamentally altered by foundations and retaining walls*
- *The presence of a large-scale rectangular building will result in significant visual impacts for those walking to Lee's Bastion and along Nelson's Walk where the building would become a defining feature. In turn this would result in a negative impact on the setting of the Grade I Boycott Lodge.*
- *A new large-scale building south of the new Music School, in an area that contains no buildings and is predominantly woodland, will result in a continuation of built form and extension of urban character, rendering the heritage assets ever more vulnerable to adverse visual impacts, particularly in winter and in the event of tree loss through disease, pests, climate change, lack of management or storms.*
- *The full extent of heritage and landscape and visual impacts is not yet fully understood*
- *The cumulative impact of piecemeal development in the area surrounding Pyramid Wood and including the proposed development has not been considered*
- *There is a clear need for an options appraisal and masterplan for the whole of the Stowe School Estate that is integrated with the National Trust Estate*

- 5.71 The conclusion of this report is that the application site is a highly significant and sensitive location for the proposed development. Development of this area would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area and would not preserve the special qualities of the settings of the listed buildings or the Registered Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest and Conservation Area.
- 5.72 The report identifies less than substantial harm, but the harm is identified as being at the high end of that spectrum. The report is well reasoned, and the conclusions are accepted by the Council's officers.
- 5.73 Special attention has been paid to the statutory test of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area under Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and to the statutory test of preserving the significance of the listed buildings under Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which it is accepted is a higher duty. It has been accepted is a higher duty. It has been concluded that the development would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of the listed buildings, contrary to Sections 66 and 72 of the Act.

Justification for the proposed development and choice of site

- 5.74 The NPPF states at Para 200 that:
- 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”.*
- 5.75 Given the high level of less than substantial harm identified, it is important to consider whether adequate clear and convincing- justification has been provided for the proposed development. As explained earlier in the report, the need for the new DTE building in order for Stowe to continue as a viable school is clearly documented by the applicants in the supporting documents and is accepted by all parties. However given the heritage harm that would be caused by the development of this site, the question remains as to whether the harm has been minimised, through a full evaluation of alternative sites, and whether this is the least harmful site for the development. The need for an assessment showing this has been requested by the Council's officers and by Historic England. The question of redeveloping the existing site of the DTE building needs to be addressed. In the view of all consultees this would be the least harmful site and could be readily supported subject to compliance with other development plan policies.

The Applicant's justification

- 5.76 The Planning Statement explains that in selecting this site (Pyramid Wood) as the best location, a number of alternative sites were considered in the context of Stowe School's Framework for Future Development (Table 2.1 of the Planning Statement).

The Framework is described as an ongoing long term analysis of facilities requirements and provides a framework for future development. The Framework identifies 7 sites for development and is referred to an informed vision of the School's Development over the next 10 -15 years.

- 5.77 It is stated that being able to provide temporary decants predicated and underpins the Framework, because in order to facilitate the redevelopment of each site there will be a need for successive decants of each site's/buildings existing uses into other accommodation on a temporary basis for the duration of any works.
- 5.78 The applicant has considered the existing opportunities for decant accommodation, but there are currently no available classrooms or vacant facilities. It would be impossible to decant the use of one site to enable its redevelopment without either developing an unoccupied site or erecting temporary buildings for the length of the construction period.
- 5.79 Temporary buildings for each of the potential schemes over the next 10 -15 years would create a succession of sub-optimal facilities and the School would be unable to provide its full curriculum due to the limitations of temporary buildings.
- 5.80 In the Planning Statement the applicant states that temporary buildings would be inappropriate due to the specialist, and in some cases industrial nature of the equipment to be used. There is also a need for the highest standards of health and safety to be provided for the pupils and staff which temporary buildings would not be able to guarantee. Whilst the application has been in progress an additional Appendix (Appendix A1) has been submitted by the applicants which explains the scale and nature of the buildings that would be required to accommodate any decant, their specification and appearance, the challenge in respect of accommodating the machinery and equipment required in temporary buildings and the cost implications.
- 5.81 The applicant has concluded that the most appropriate solution is to provide permanent accommodation on a previously unoccupied site. This would allow the existing DTE building to form the function of a decant site for successive redevelopments envisaged by the school in their Framework, this strategy has the significant benefit of enabling students to consistently access optimal facilities for their education without the need for temporary buildings.
- 5.82 Further information has been provided by the applicant in response to the concerns of the Council's consultees. The justification for developing the Pyramid Wood site is that the DTE site would become surplus to requirements and available for re-use. In the view of the applicant this approach avoids heritage harm for the following reasons:
1. There is a need for an overall increase in teaching accommodation not just a replacement of existing accommodation. This includes new exam rooms, new staff room, new classrooms, storage and offices.

2. If DTE does not move to the proposed location, then the existing site cannot be used for some or all of these other uses which remain priorities for the school but have yet to receive funding. Given the limitations of the site availability at Stowe (as shown in Table 2.3 of the Planning Statement), this would necessitate returning to the current application site as the next least harmful available option. In the view of the applicant this raises two heritage issues. The Pyramid Wood site would not prove a suitable site for a recessive traditional format building. The development (albeit) temporary would result in a potential increased scale of development. This option, whether temporary in the short or longer term, would result in an unnecessary decant facility to house the DTE.
- 5.83 The applicant's conclusion is the nature of a temporary decant facility on the current application site (which was a suggestion put forward by consultees) would be more harmful in heritage terms for the period that the site is occupied by such a building. Secondly, even when the temporary use has ceased, there would be pressure to seek planning permission to locate a less recessive classroom based building on the current application site (Pyramid Wood) due to a clear lack of alternatives (as stated in Table 2 of the Planning Statement).
- 5.84 It is clear from the applicant's response that the re-use of the current DTE site as a decant facility has enormous operational advantage to the school for the future. While they recognise that the development of Pyramid Wood would lead to less than substantial harm they argue that there are several public benefits arising both to education and the National Trust visitor experience to Stowe which should be afforded great weight as conservation benefits.
- Response of Historic England and Council's Heritage Officer to the applicant's justification
- 5.85 In response to this Historic England comment that it is not clear how the Framework referred to in the Design and Access Statement has been developed. The discussion and explanation of how the School's needs could be achieved propose a preference for a permanent decant area over a temporary one. The applicant's case that this is the best site for the DTE block rests largely on the contention that it is not possible to develop the current site, due to the difficulty of temporary decanting activities taking place here. However Historic England are not yet convinced that this case has been made, and consider that it would be far preferable for any harm to be temporary (such as for decanting facilities) even over a prolonged period, so that the decanting area can be restored thereafter. In this instance having temporary accommodation where the DT block is proposed is far preferable to the permanent change proposed because the restoration of the landscape could follow the temporary use of the land.
- 5.86 Historic England consider that the need to leave potential decant sites open for future projects is not a good reason for not decanting as, in the absence of a masterplan, it is not known what these projects are, or whether they are likely to achieve planning permission or funding.

- 5.87 It is however understood, by Historic England, that decent would be costly and DTE block would require heavy machinery together with sophisticated services. It is also understood that moving it twice may make it too expensive. However, they point out that this is not a planning issue.
- 5.88 Historic England (HE) welcome the landscaping proposals being offered as part of the application which have the aim of restoring or better revealing the significance of the historic landscape both within the environs of the proposals and stretching out from here. HE acknowledges that they would achieve some degree of benefit to heritage but alone would be nowhere close to outweighing the harm the scheme would cause.
- 5.89 Their advice is that the Council should only accept the principle of development on this scale if they are satisfied that there is a clear and convincing case for this harm and that it is outweighed by the public benefits. In the view of HE the landscape benefits are modest and would not outweigh the harm alone.
- 5.90 This view is shared by the Council's Heritage Officer and both these consultees consider that the proposed development within the Pyramid Wood of the Stowe Western Gardens, which is of Grade A significance, would result in the loss of a garden feature including a large number of trees, some which are historic, and would cause less than substantial harm to the Grade 1 Historic Park of Garden, of which it is part, and to the setting of the listed buildings and Stowe Conservation Area . Insufficient justification has been provided to demonstrate that the development site is the least harmful location for the development or that temporary accommodation cannot be used to redevelop the existing site.

Public benefits

- 5.91 VALP Policy BE1 states that the Council will:
- c. Require proposals that cause less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset to weigh the level of harm against the public benefits that may be gained by the proposal, including securing its optimal viable use.
- This reflects the advice in paragraph 202 of the NPPF.
- 5.92 Table 4.2 of the Planning Statement presents a table of the public benefits that the applicant considers would arise from the proposal and more detail is provided in Appendix C.
- 5.93 In his letter to the case officer (15th May 2021), the applicant's agent repeats and summarises the public benefits and are detailed below:
- The need for suitable DTE teaching facilities which are agreed as necessary to teach the curriculum.
 - The provision of fit-for-purpose teaching facilities to enable the rollout of the STEM learning (Science Technology Engineering Maths learning)

outreach learning programme to local state schools as part of Stowe's charitable status.

- Investment and facilitation of a National Trust landscaping scheme for Nelsons Walk, Pyramid Wood/Rooks Spinney and Home Park which otherwise cannot not be delivered.
- Works to better reveal the Vanbrugh Pyramid location for public visitors to Stowe.
- Stowe School entering into a legally binding agreement not to seek further development within the area defined in plan 1 in Appendix A2. (This is a new benefit being offered).
- Supporting Stowe school's viable future as a custodian and investor in the preservation and restoration of Stowe.

5.94 An explanation by the applicant of these benefits is provided below:

5.95 Necessary teaching facility for Stowe: The nature of the application is to support the school in its ability to provide for the educational needs of children and young people. These needs are never a fixed entity, and frequently necessitate refurbished or new buildings where there is no longer capacity or adequately equipped facilities, particularly in subjects where specific modern equipment or machinery is required, such as Design Technology and Engineering (DTE). Educational establishments will always need to develop and evolve as these needs change. Through meetings there is agreement between all parties that Stowe School does require a new DTE building to meet modern standards and to meet the needs of the school.

5.96 There is a shortage of STEM skill provision in the UK and specifically in a part of the country with an otherwise global reputation for such disciplines. Stowe School is unable to provide adequately for this educational need. There is an absolute requirement for additional floorspace within the site.

5.97 Necessary for STEM charitable work: The school has both an educational and charitable role (as a registered charity). Given the importance of STEM in Buckinghamshire the school has been developing an outreach programme for local state schools. A new DTE facility is needed to enable the implementation of that programme to local schools. The details of that programme are set out in Appendix A3 of the supporting documentation submitted in May 2021. Without the new facility this function cannot be enabled.

5.98 National Trust landscaping scheme: The National Trust has begun to implement a landscape management scheme to the north of The Bastion along Nelsons Walk. There are however no funds and no plans to extend the management scheme to the south along the edge of Rooks Spinney/ Pyramid Wood and into Home Park. The National Trust support the public benefit of the proposed landscape works for their visitors to Stowe. The landscaping works include:

- Restoring the 18thC Rooks Spinney under-storey planting in the vicinity of the proposed DTE building which will create a dense thicket true to the original intent when viewed from Nelsons Walk.
 - Replanting trees in Rooks Spinney/ Pyramid Wood in the vicinity of the proposed DTE building to replace decaying specimens to provide succession continuity and avoid a potential total loss.
 - Replacement of missing, infected or declining Chestnut tree with Sweet Chestnut trees along Nelsons Walk for future biosecurity within National Trust Land.
 - Tree planting within Home Park to improve the interface between the School and National Trust land.
- 5.99 All this work is necessary now to maintain future landscape continuity to allow new planting to mature before the current species within Rooks Spinney/ Pyramid Wood decline further. The added benefit of elements of the planting scheme is to remove virtually all limited views of the proposed building and existing buildings behind it when matured. These works have been the subject of legal discussions between Stowe School and the National Trust and could be secured through a binding S106 legal agreement.
- 5.100 Better revealing the Vanbrugh Pyramid location: The location of the Vanbrugh Pyramid is not identified as part of the visitor experience to Stowe and is not publicly accessible. As part of the DTE proposals a new footpath can be provided which links to the National Trust land. The visitor experience would also be supported by interpretation boards/ material which can be agreed using a planning condition.
- 5.101 Legal commitment to limit further development: The applicant considers that the term 'development strip' is valid as it has been used to describe land running south west, parallel with Nelsons Walk, within the Stowe School ownership. It originated from the Stowe Masterplan and was referenced by English Heritage and Aylesbury Vale in connection with the Music School (see Appendix A of the Stantec Planning Statement). As part of the proposals for the DTE building, Stowe School Governors have agreed to enter a S106 legal agreement not to develop or apply for planning permission within the land identified on the enclosed plan in Appendix A2. When combined with the land in the National Trust's land, the effect of their ownership and the land bound by the proposeds.106 obligation would be to meet the concerns about potential future development of the area raised by a number of consultees.
- 5.102 Supporting Stowe School as a heritage custodian: It is important that Stowe School maintains its position as a viable and thriving occupier of Stowe. The investment that has been made to support long-term restoration work across the site is only possible through the school's ability to attract pupils. This relies upon the school's ability to deliver an educational service that matches competing schools to maintain the take-up of pupil places. Given the agreed necessity for new DTE facilities to enable Stowe to provide this part of its curriculum, the grant of planning permission has a role to perform in

maintaining the public benefit of Stowe School's future viable stewardship of the historic buildings and landscape.

- 5.103 The applicant contends that this demonstrates the wide range of public benefits associated with a modest, recessive proposed development which they consider is part brownfield land and should be considered in the heritage balancing exercise sought in paragraph 202 of the NPPF. The applicants conclude that any less than substantial harm in that planning balance is clearly outweighed by the public benefits which, are wide ranging and in some instances should be given great weight, in particular the conservation benefits. They note that the proposals also support the continued optimal viable use of the heritage asset and its conservation.
- 5.104 It is acknowledged that the National Trust have written to the Council supporting the application as part of the wider context of the site. They argue that the creation of a new Pyramid Walk will enable the public to engage with additional areas of the landscape and the creation of a circular route in this area will directly benefit visitors. They comment that the DTE project and proposed landscape restoration works offers an opportunity in respect of immediate restoration, conservation and visitor experience. It has the potential to unlock further funds to enable the National Trust to accelerate the restoration of Stowe as a whole and single heritage asset.
- 5.105 However, it should also be acknowledged that the specialist consultees including Historic England, The Gardens Trust and the Council's own specialists do not agree with this assessment. They all consider that the public benefits do not outweigh the harm to the significance of the heritage assets.
- 5.106 Also, they do not give weight to the proposal for a S106 agreement preventing further development on land to the south of the application site. This is because any development would be required to go through the planning process where a rigorous assessment must take place. The main advantage would be that it shows a clear intent on the part of the school not to further develop in this very sensitive area. Control of development remains with the LPA.

Archaeology

VALP Policy BE1 – Heritage Assets

- 5.107 The archaeological significance of Stowe relates to the seventeenth to eighteenth century landscaped park and gardens with numerous eighteenth century buildings associated with leading architects and designers such as Bridgeman, Vanburgh and Capability Brown.
- 5.108 The Council's Archaeologist welcomes the submitted Heritage Impact Assessment, but is concerned over the relative lack of archaeological content or its inclusion in the proposed mitigation measures; especially as paragraph 2.25 includes:

'The application site evidences ground disturbance in its construction as part of the designed landscape. Although not designated as a Scheduled Monument, Stowe,

and the area of the application site specifically, is considered to hold archaeological potential primarily in relation to garden-making. In 2011 Network Archaeology5 identified medium – high archaeological potential in the area of the Music School for Medieval (AD 1066 – 1540) and High potential for Medieval and Early Modern (AD 1540 – 1939) remains. As the Music School stands adjacent to the application site it is therefore reasonable to suggest that this potential also applies to the site directly. The application site is also considered an 'archaeological notification area'.

- 5.109 The Archaeologist considers that if planning permission is granted for this development then it is likely to harm a heritage asset's significance. Therefore, a condition should be applied to require the developer to secure appropriate investigation, recording, publication and archiving of the results in conformity with NPPF paragraph 205. With reference to the NPPF we therefore recommend that, based on the advice in DOE Circular 11/95, any consent granted for this development should be subject to such a condition.

Raising the quality of place making and design

VALP policies: BE2 (Design of new development), NE4 landscape Character and locally important landscape)

- 5.110 The policy provides a series of criteria by which new development proposals should be assessed.
- 5.111 The dimensions of the new DTE building at its largest extent including the heat pump enclosure and external stairway are approximately 47m x 18m including the single storey section of the building with external terrace/gallery. Spot heights are noted on the elevation drawings enabling calculation of the building height which is 8.38m. The application is accompanied by a Design Appraisal from Peter Stewart Consultancy. This explains that the proposed building would be set back from Nelsons Walk by 16 metres and takes the form of a two storey orthogonal volume with a flat roof, rectangular in plan at first floor level with a projecting element at the south-west end of the ground floor. The ground floor is of brick, with horizontal rectangular windows. The first floor is bronze coloured metal expressed as a trabeated frame within which are set back metal panels and large windows.
- 5.112 A number of statements are made in the supporting Planning Statement relating to the design and supporting its acceptability:
1. At Para 1.4.3 c it states that that '*the scheme design, character and massing are carefully designed to minimise the impact on landscape and the significance of the heritage assets and their wider settings, being of high quality design, materiality and appearance, reflecting their woodland setting and wider heritage location .*'
 2. At Para 2.1.3 '*The layout of the building responds sensitively to the historic context through the use of high quality and sensitive materials, appropriate scale and massing and features.*' It also refers to optimising the form, massing and location of the building in its woodland setting.'

3. At Para 2.1.3 '*The proposed building position, massing and plan form have been developed to optimise its relationship with the existing woodland. The accommodation has been arranged in a linear and relatively narrow plan form over two storeys'*
- 5.113 The Design Appraisal from Peter Stewart Consultancy states that careful consideration has been given to the design and that it was considered as a work of architecture in its own right.
- 5.114 The Council's Landscape Architecture and Design team have provided advice and conclude that they are unable to see how this building fits in with the surrounding woodland context of the site. Their view is that the building would be a large monolithic structure made of masonry, brickwork and glazing which is not reflective of the character or materials found in woodland. It is their opinion that the impact of the development has been underestimated.
- 5.115 In response to the letter from Quartet Design received by the Council on 18.05. 2021 which states that the '*the building consolidates and coalesces with the adjacent school buildings*' the Council's specialist officer comments that the proposed building "*has no relationship with the existing buildings and would exist as a separate entity located within the woodland. The proposed building is located within a unique landscape setting which differs greatly from the existing school buildings and therefore would not consolidate or coalesce with them.*"
- 5.116 In assessing the proposal against the relevant policies, it is considered that the proposal does not complement the physical characteristics of the site and the surroundings, nor does it feel part of the historic scale and context of the setting. The proposal would expand development into nationally important valued landscape and the visual and character effects on the site and surrounding context as a result of the proposal could not be adequately mitigated.
- 5.117 As a result of these considerations the proposal is contrary to the adopted policy BE2 of the VALP. This should be afforded significant negative weight in the planning balance.

Landscape and visual Impact

VALP policies: Policy BE2(Design of new development) and NE4 (Landscape character and locally important landscape).

- 5.118 The Stowe Historic Park and Garden, is located within the Stowe Area of Attractive Landscape (AAL). Public Right of Way (PRoW) STO/2/1- 'Nelson's Walk' is located north-west of the site and runs parallel to it separated by the ha ha. To the north-west PROW STO/9/1 travels further north-west across Home Farm towards the village of Dadford. PRoW STO/B/1 is located south-west of the site and STO/31/1 is located south east of the site, travelling some distance east around Stowe park where it intersects with RCH/10/1 on Stowe Avenue facing the Corinthian Arch. To the south east and north east of the site is National Trust (NT) parkland.

5.119 Stowe AAL has many special qualities;

- there is a sense of tranquillity and remoteness created by the intactness of the rural landscape with
- a lack of intrusion from major roads and infrastructure. The network of quiet lanes is frequented by horse riders, walkers, cyclists and farmworkers.
- A coherent landscape that provides a picturesque setting to Stowe and cultural setting for other parkland landscapes in the area such as Biddlesden.
- Distinctive views and vistas within, out of and into Stowe from elevated vantage points, of monuments and long straight tree-lined avenues, which extend the influence of Stowe in the wider landscape beyond the boundaries of the Registered Park and Garden.
- Small attractive villages scattered across the landscape in a dispersed settlement pattern, allowing the rural countryside to dominate.
- The strong influence of woodlands, many of which are ancient and which once formed part of the former royal hunting forest of Whittlewood Forest, also providing a sense of enclosure in some areas.

5.120 The Landscape guidelines for LCA1.4 Stowe registered parkland recommend 'Conserve.' Statements with particular reference to this application are:

- Support the work of the National Trust to conserve, maintain and restore the landscape of this LCA;
- Encourage the conservation and interpretation of features of historic and nature conservation interest;
- Maintain the existing extent and condition of parkland
- Identify key views from publicly accessible locations and promote the retention and enhancement of these views.

5.121 An LVIA has been submitted with the application which the applicants consider to be a robust and sound assessment. The applicants consider that the building has been designed to fit in with the landscape . The applicant's note that the proposed landscape scheme provides strong elements of mitigation which complement the built form.

5.122 The letter from the applicant's agent received by the Council on 18.05.2021 in response to the Landscape and Design Officer's objections states the:

'in the absence of a reasonable alternative location, the design, layout and location of the proposed development does not attempt to compete with the landscape views or character, unlike for example the Music School. Part of the site is brownfield and its backdrop a mixture of existing buildings when viewed from The Course/Nelson's Walk. The proposed planting and commitment to covenant against

any future proposed southerly expansion strengthens the response to this objective.'

Response from the Landscape and Design Officer

- 5.123 The officer maintains their concerns and considers that the development should adhere to the guidelines in LCA1.4 Stowe registered parkland, and make best efforts to mitigate the impact of the proposal. She does not consider that the application follows or positively responds to the guidelines and believes it to be in direct conflict with the majority of the statements above.
- 5.124 Despite the presence of existing nearby built form within the School ownership, the application site is part of the rural environment that envelopes Stowe and contributes to the wider landscape context of the AAL.
- 5.125 The intensification of development on this sensitive woodland site does not appear to be the natural evolution of the School development. Introducing a large scale building within this woodland will result in the urbanisation of Pyramid Wood, which would further erode the existing landscape character and indeed the overall rural quality associated with the woodland and wider landscape.
- 5.126 The proposed development would lead to the loss of a significant number of mature trees. This would have a major impact on the existing sylvan backdrop, screening and green walk identified in the 'Stowe Framework Conservation Plan'. The loss of trees would also be in conflict with both the landscape guidelines of LCA 1.4 .and the Stowe AAL which both aim to protect and enhance existing woodland.
- 5.127 The submitted LVIA has underestimated the impact of the proposal. This is a view shared by Matthew Tickner in his review of the proposal.
- 5.128 The LVIA fails to concede the severity of the effect on both the character of the site or the visual impact that would result from the proposed development. It is acknowledged that the replacement trees, to be planted as part of mitigation, would play a part in restoring the quality of the woodland but this cannot deflect from the fact that this would be a large scale building in a woodland setting changing the character of the site and imposing an urban influence. The mitigation proposed would not be adequate or sufficient to eliminate the harm of developing this site.
- 5.129 The loss of a number of trees and the introduction of a significant structure cannot be underestimated both in terms of landscape character and visual impact. Due to the size and maturity of the trees the canopy would be elevated above the building, thereby exposing the majority of the structure. Despite design development, material choices and mitigation, the building may be visible from a number of locations, with the greatest impact being in close proximity to the site and within the school's site.
- 5.130 The building on the site would alter the character of the woodland allowing urban character to prevail over that of the landscape garden and the wider rural landscape of which it is a part. It is a large monolithic rectangle of masonry, brickwork and glazing and not reflective of materials found in the woodland. The proposal would lead to the

loss of woodland in a Grade 1 listed landscape and the urban creep into Pyramid Wood would impact not only on the site but also upon the wider landscape.

- 5.131 The landscape improvements proposed as part of the application are not solely for the benefit of the historic landscape. Rather they are proposed as mitigation for a large scale building. The fact that Pyramid Wood has been unmanaged is not a justifiable reason for siting a building in it. The site is located in undeveloped woodland , essentially a greenfield site with significant landscape features which make an important contribution to the AAL. The proposed site is not a suitable location for the development.
- 5.132 The proposal fails to complement the physical characteristics of the site and surroundings, nor does it feel part of the historic scale and context of the landscape setting. The advice from the specialist Officer is that the proposal fails to consider the enhancement opportunities identified in the LCA and the proposal is contrary to policies BE2 and NE4. This should be afforded significant negative weight in the planning balance.

Trees and hedgerows

VALP policies NE4 (Landscape character and locally important landscape) and NE8 (Trees, hedgerows and woodland).

- 5.133 The application includes the supporting document “Tree Survey Report Pre-Development Arboricultural Impact Assessment” Dated January 2020 (Revised Oct 2020).
- 5.134 The report identifies that the proposal requires the loss of 18 trees from within the woodland group and 6 trees recorded as individuals all of these losses are rated Category B or higher. The proposal also requires the removal of G3 ,a low quality group of 3 trees, for a total loss of 28 trees. This is a reduction of 1 from the previous withdrawn proposal which proposed 19 trees removed from G1.
- 5.135 Section 5.1.1 of the supporting Arboricultural report appears to suggest that only 3 of these losses are of importance and that only one direct replacement is required:
- 5.136 In the view of the Tree Officer there are also multiple impacts to retained trees, including encroachments into Root Protection Areas (RPAs) from the building itself and associated hardstanding and the degree of encroachment that has not been quantified
- 5.137 The Tree Officer disagrees with the applicant’s assessment that the overall impact is *“moderately low, when taking into account the particular context of the wider site.”*
- 5.138 His view is that the woodland of Pyramid Wood/Rooks Spinney is clearly established as an important component of the Grade I registered garden, and is a visually important feature from the nearby PROW. The importance of the trees in terms of the heritage and landscape must be considered to impart significant additional value on them.

- 5.139 Given the level of tree loss and RPA encroachment it would appear that the proposals will have an impact to trees of substantial harm. The proposed mitigation reduces this slightly but is generally insufficient, and as such the residual harm remains substantial. Taking the site context into account this should be upgraded to severe harm. Mitigation proposed to limit impacts to retained trees is not considered to significantly reduce this harm.
- 5.140 A substantial amount of new planting is proposed, but the tree officer notes that much of this is planned (if not currently funded) irrespective of this development, and the potential for successful establishment of all proposed trees in the immediate vicinity of the proposal is extremely limited. Again, the current supporting information suggests that new planting to mitigate the impacts of the proposal, and compensate for tree loss will not be able to fully achieve this.
- 5.141 It should be noted that the report prepared by Matthew Tickner for the Council also shared significant concerns about the impact of the proposal on the trees within the woodland. It was suggested that the Heritage Impact Assessment prepared by the applicant has failed to properly consider the age of some of these trees and the impact of their loss on the significance of the historic park and garden.
- 5.142 The felling of four 19th and early 20th century trees and impacts on the root protection zones of three other trees that are likely to date to the third Duke of Buckingham's replanting and restoration and his daughter, Lady Kinloss' tenure that are classified as grade A (high quality) and B (moderate quality) in the tree survey. As stated in the applicant's own tree survey report, trees of such quality would be expected to be retained on a development site. This rule should be applied with additional weight, given the significance of the development site and its specific role in the designed landscape as a sylvan backdrop. The tree removal will remove physical evidence of the evolution of the historic designed landscape and render remaining historic trees highly vulnerable as construction will take place within their root protection zones.
- 5.143 The removal of the historic trees and the later 20th century specimens will result in the loss of an important band of woodland that has served to provide a wooded backdrop to the Home Park and the Oxford Approach and The Course for over 280 years, resulting on a negative impact on the setting of multiple listed buildings and loss of a key element of the 18th century landscape design.
- 5.144 As such the proposal is contrary to policies NE4 and NE8 of the VALP and this should be afforded significant negative weight in the planning balance.

Ecology

- 5.145 VALP NE1 (Biodiversity and geodiversity)
- 5.146 This application is supported by an ecological assessment from the consultant Ecologist Bernwood ECS dated January 2020. The Council's Ecologist has been consulted and considers the report to be an accurate account of the ecological features of interest

present on site at the time of the assessment. A series of detailed ecological mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures are detailed within the Bernwood ECS document. These are sufficient to enable this application to comply with the current ecological national and local planning policy. The exception to this is the detail provided for the dead wood habitat.

- 5.147 Further detail on the location of the proposed dead wood habitat is required to ensure this aspect of the ecology enhancement is achieved on the ground. Detail of the location and measures to protect it will need to be provided. Further detail on how the retained dead wood habitat will be protected is also required. Dead wood habitat is particularly prone to damage caused by human trampling. The retained dead wood site is directly adjacent to the new teaching block so should be afforded some fencing and interpretation to help educate and protect the site. Depending on the proposed location for the newly created dead wood habitat as discussed, fencing to protect this site may be required. The BC Ecologist has requested that these details are submitted and approved by him prior to any decision to grant planning permission for the development of this site. These details have been requested but at the time of writing have not been received.
- 5.148 Once the additional information is provided this would be reviewed by the Council's Ecology team, if the information is considered satisfactory then a condition covering all ecological matters, which would include the details in the Bernwood ECS report January 2020 and the plans drawn out in the landscape proposal would be suggested.
- 5.149 However, without the additional information the proposal fails to comply with policy NE1.

Amenity of existing and future residents

VALP policy BE3 (protection of the amenity of residents)

- 5.150 The proposed DTE building would provide a replacement teaching facility for Stowe School. Whilst there are residential properties in the vicinity of the site, these are boarding houses within the ownership of Stowe School,
- 5.151 It is not considered that the proposed DTE building would cause harm to the amenity of these neighbouring residential properties. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal accords with the VALP Policy BE3.

Environmental issues

Policy BE2 (Design of New Development), NE4 (Landscape character and locally important landscape) and NE6 (Pollution, air quality and contaminated land)

- 5.152 This policy (BE2) seeks to focus on local distinctiveness. This refers to the unique quality of buildings, landscape and topography in a locality that defines its character. Clearly in terms of this site there are numerous unique features some of which are considered in

other sections of this report. In terms of specific environmental issues consideration is given to the impact of external lighting on the unique locality. Given the landscape designation of the site policy NE4 is also relevant.

- 5.153 Paragraph 2.1.3 of the D and A refers to controlled external lighting and recycling storage provision . The pathway surrounding the new design and technology building will be illuminated via low level IP66 bollards, selection to be agreed with the architect and the school to suit the surrounding environment.
- 5.154 Lighting from Bollards will be specified such that only the pathway is illuminated, with the surrounding area prevented from light spill via appropriate shielding. The bollards will also contain a lid in order to ensure no upward lighting component, thus complying with the requirement ILE guidance note.
- 5.155 Wall mounted IP65 bulkhead fittings will be provided to illuminate the external heat pump enclosure. Roller door access to the prep room shall take the form of wall mounted IP65 bulkhead.
- 5.156 The area outside the main building entrance will be developed with the architect, and it is envisaged that illuminated signage will be required.
- 5.157 On the first floor there is a terrace gallery area with an escape stair to ground level. Generally, this will be illuminated via wall recessed fittings where possible.
- 5.158 Clearly given the nature of the building there is a need to have external lighting for health and safety reasons. Given the in-principle objection to the development of this woodland the need for lighting associated with the development would further add to the level of harm already identified. The Council's Landscape and Design Officer has identified the urbanising impact of development on this site and lighting would add to that urbanising impact. The site is currently undeveloped and the need for external lighting would blur the distinction between urban and rural areas of the site and as such would be contrary to policies BE2, NE4 and NE6 and should be afforded negative weight in the planning balance.

Flooding and drainage

VALP Policy 14 (flooding)

- 5.159 The site of this size in Flood Zone 1 does not require a site specific assessment however the adopted policy I4 requires that all development will be required to design and use sustainable drainage systems for the management of surface water run off, which should seek to reduce flood risk, reduce pollution and provide environmental benefits.
- 5.160 At the time of the first application (20/00476/APP) the Lead Local Flood Authority reviewed the information provided in the Design and Access Statement in relation to surface water drainage and objected on the grounds that there was insufficient information regarding the proposed surface water drainage scheme.

- 5.161 With the current application the LLFA have also objected, again, due to insufficient information regarding the proposed surface water drainage scheme.
- 5.162 As this is a technical issue it is likely that the objection could be overcome with the submission of sufficient evidence to satisfy the requirements of the LLFA. However, at this time without any additional information the proposal is contrary to policy I4.

Building sustainability

VALP policy S1 (Sustainable development for Aylesbury Vale) and C3 (Renewable Energy).

- 5.163 Policy C3 requires that all development achieves greater efficiency in the use of natural resources, including measures that minimise energy use, improve water efficiency and promote waste minimisation and recycling. Developments should minimise, reuse and recycle construction waste wherever possible.
- 5.164 The applicant's design and access statement has a section on sustainability. This lacks specific detail but indicates an intention that as the design progresses, the design team will review the design against a number of identified themes, encouraging sustainability within the design to ensure they are enhanced wherever possible.
- 5.165 In terms of compliance with policy C3 the detail of how the proposal meets the requirements of the policy is missing but there is an expressed intention. Further detailed information would be required to ensure compliance with policy C3.

Infrastructure and Developer Contributions

- 5.166 While it is considered that there would not be other types of infrastructure, that will be put under unacceptable pressure by the development to justify financial contributions or the direct provision of infrastructure, the applicant has offered to enter into a S106 agreement as part of the public benefits for the site to offer to restrict any further development south of the site under consideration. Were the proposed public benefits to be considered sufficient to outweigh the harm to significance of the heritage asset it is likely that those benefits would need to be secured by way of a S106 agreement.
- 5.167 The applicant has confirmed that they are willing to enter into a legal agreement.

6.0 Weighing and balancing of issues / Overall Assessment

- 6.1 This section brings together the assessment that has so far been set out in order to weigh and balance relevant planning considerations in order to reach a conclusion on the application.
- 6.2 In determining the planning application, section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In addition,

Section 143 of the Localism Act amends Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act relating to the determination of planning applications and states that in dealing with planning applications, the authority shall have regard to:

Provision of the development plan insofar as they are material,

Any local finance considerations, so far as they are material to the application (such as CIL if applicable), and,

Any other material considerations

- 6.3 As set out above it is considered that the proposed development would conflict with a number of relevant policies. Specifically, these are place making and design (BE2), landscape and visual impact (NE4), impact on trees (NE8), environmental issues and in particular light (NE6). Conflict with these policies is afforded negative weight in the planning balance. The proposal is afforded weight in terms of the economic benefits that arise from the development of the school to the locality and to the Council area as a whole.
- 6.4 It is noted that a number of matters could be dealt with by condition if sufficient satisfactory information had been submitted to address the concerns of consultees i.e. ecology and sustainable drainage. However, at the time of consideration satisfactory information has not been submitted and these matters are contrary to policy and afforded negative weight in the planning balance. However, it is possible these matters could be addressed and as such the negative weight to be attributed should be limited. Some matters such as archaeology and transport matters could be satisfactory subject to appropriate conditions
- 6.5 The key issue for this application is the impact on the significant heritage assets. The application site has been identified an area of Grade A significance within the Stowe Grade I Historic Park and Garden, the setting of a number of listed buildings and Stowe Conservation Area. Officer's views are informed by the independent assessment conducted by a heritage landscape specialist who reviewed the evidence presented by the applicant and the consultee comments received with regard to relevant policies for heritage assets.
- 6.6 As such it is concluded that the proposal would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of designated heritage assets. However, that harm would be at the higher end of the scale. At this time the evidence of why this important and sensitive site in terms of the historic landscape should be the site of the development has not been proven in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF paras 199 and 200. The overwhelming reason would appear to be based on operational needs of the school and the other reasons presented have not been supported by the relevant specialist officers.
- 6.7 Given that less than substantial harm has been identified the policy requires that this is considered in relation to the public benefits that have been proposed. The policy and the NPPF require that the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In this instance the public benefits have been fully laid out in the relevant

section of this report. However, given the level of harm (high end of less than substantial harm) the public benefits would need to be substantial to overcome the harm to designated heritage assets that would arise from the development. The mitigation and wider restoration benefits while desirable are not sufficient to outweigh the harm.

- 6.8 The development is contrary to the development plan policies BE1 Heritage Assets and specifically the impact on the Grade 1 registered Historic Park and Garden, the setting of listed building (some of which are also Grade 1) and the impact on the Stowe Conservation Area. The proposal would also result in harm to the landscape character of the Area of Attractive Landscape (NE4). The design of the development does not complement the physical characteristics of the site and the surroundings and fails to respect the historic scale and context of the setting. The development would appear out of character and therefore harmful and contrary to BE2.
- 6.9 It is recommended that the proposed development should be refused for reasons identified in Section 8 of the report.
- 6.10 Local Planning Authorities, when making decisions of a strategic nature, must have due regard, through the Equalities Act, to reducing the inequalities which may result from socio-economic disadvantage. In this instance, it is not considered given the nature of the proposal (new building within the grounds of an existing public school) that it would not disadvantage any sector of society to a harmful extent.
- 6.11 Human Rights. There are no specific human rights which will be affected by the recommendation to refuse this planning application.

7.0 Working with the applicant / agent

- 7.1 In accordance with paragraph 38 of the NPPF (2021) the Council approach decision-taking in a positive and creative way taking a proactive approach to development proposals focused on solutions and work proactively with applicants to secure developments.
- 7.2 The Council work with the applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner by offering a pre-application advice service, and as appropriate updating applications/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application.
- 7.3 In this instance the applicant was provided with pre-application advice prior to submission of an earlier application which the applicants withdrew. The applicant has been kept informed of issues whilst the current application has been under considered and has been provided with the opportunity to engage in discussions with the Council's officers and to submit additional plans and information. The applicant was informed/ advised how the proposal did not accord with the development plan, that no material considerations are apparent to outweigh these matters and provided the opportunity to amend the application or provide further justification in support of it.

- 7.4 The Director of Planning and Environment has used discretionary powers to refer this matter to the Planning Committee for determination which will afford the applicant/agent the opportunity to speak to the committee and promote the importance of the application to Stowe School.

8.0 Recommendation

- 8.1 The officer recommendation is that the application be REFUSED for the following reasons:
1. The proposed development by virtue of its siting within the Pyramid Wood of the Stowe Western Gardens, which has been recognised in the Stowe Framework Conservation Management Plan: The School Estate (Rutherford 2012) as being of Grade A significance, would result in a level of harm to designated heritage assets considered to be less than substantial, but the level of harm would be high, at the upper level of that scale. Due to the development resulting in the felling of four 19th and early 20th century trees and impacts on the root protection of three other trees, all of which are considered to be historically significant. The tree removal would result in the loss of physical evidence of the evolution of the historic designed landscape and render remaining historic trees highly vulnerable as construction will take place within their root protection areas. The loss of the trees will result in the loss of an important band of woodland which has provided a wooded backdrop to the Home Park and the Oxford Approach and The Course for over 280 years. This loss will result in a harmful impact on the setting of multiple listed buildings and loss of a key element of the 18th century landscape design. This will also have a harmful impact to the character and appearance of Stowe Conservation Area.
Insufficient justification has been provided to demonstrate that this is the least harmful location for the development and that the proposal cannot be achieved on another site. Having regard to paragraph 202 of the NPPF, the proposed public benefits do not outweigh the less than substantial harm that the development of the site would cause to the Historic Park and Garden, setting of listed buildings and the harmful impact on the Stowe Conservation Area and Area of Attractive Landscape. The proposal would therefore be contrary to policies BE1, NE4 and NE8 of the adopted Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (15th September 2021) and paragraphs 174, 200 – 202 of the NPPF 2021.
 2. The proposed building by virtue of its design including scale and form, its' siting, including loss of trees and requirement for external lighting, would fail to respect the landscape character of Stowe Area of Attractive Landscape and the historic significance of the Stowe Historic Park and Garden. The replacement of the woodland with a large scale, rectangular building will fundamentally change the historic and current landscape character and will appear out of character. The design will lead to significant visual impacts for those walking Lee's Bastion and along Nelson's Walk where the building would become the defining feature. In turn, this would result in a harmful impact on the setting of the Grade 1 Boycott Lodge. The proposed development is therefore contrary to Policies BE1, BE2 and NE4 of the VALP and to paragraphs 200 – 202 of the NPPF 2021, and parts C1, C2, I1, I2 and I3 of the National Design Guide.

3. Had the above reasons not applied, the Local Planning Authority would have sought further detail on the location of the proposed dead wood habitat to ensure this aspect of the ecology enhancement is achieved on the ground. As submitted the application fails to demonstrate that the proposal is acceptable with regards to the dead wood habitat. The proposal is, therefore, contrary to NE1 Biodiversity and Geodiversity of the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (15th September 2021) and paragraph 174d of the NPPF.

4. Had the above reasons not applied, the Local Planning Authority would have sought further detail in respect of the surface water drainage scheme to satisfy the requirement of policy I4 (Flooding). As submitted the applications fails to demonstrate a satisfactory response to surface water drainage and is contrary to I4 of the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (15th September 2021).

Appendix A: Consultation Responses and Representations

Appendix B: Site Location plan

Appendix C – Matthew Tickner Report

Appendix D - Response from Stowe School

Appendix E – Stowe School Response to Matthew Tickner Report

APPENDIX A: Consultation Responses and Representations

Councillor Comments

Councillor Warren Whyte has requested the application be considered by the Committee. Having only been able to visit the site to view the context this week, I understand that this is a sensitive site and numerous issues to be considered, but if the officer's report recommends refusal, I would request that this is called-in. (Officer note – this was outside of the timeframe applicable at that time for requesting application to be called-in. However, given the importance of the site in heritage terms and the long established public school on the site the Director of Planning and Environment has used his power to refer the matter to the Planning Committee.

Parish/Town Council Comments

No objections

Consultation Responses (Summarised)

Archaeology

The site has archaeological potential in respect of garden making and is an Archaeological Notification Site

Condition needed to require a Written Scheme of Investigation to secure investigation, recording, publication and archiving prior to determination.

Environmental Health

The EH Officer has responded that there are no environmental health comments for this application.

Heritage Officer

Initial response:

Conclusion: *The proposal would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage assets. which should be weighed against the public benefits. It is not felt that the appropriate NPPF tests have currently been met in terms of avoiding, minimising or outweighing this harm.*

Significance: Site is in Grade 1 Historic Park and Garden (HPG), Conservation Area and there are a number of listed buildings in the HPG. The Pyramid Wood part of the HPG is of the highest Grade A significance. The significance of the listed buildings are related to their setting within the HPG and the character of the CA derives from the registered park and garden.

There have been changes to the Historic Park and Garden (HPG) close to the site due to erection of school buildings (eg Music School, West Five House and New Field House). The Music School was acceptable as Lee's Bastion marks the transition of stages of the walk's development. Further development south of this should be guarded against. 'The Development Strip' (referenced by The School) is not an official designation.

Impact Due to its location the proposal would have a harmful effect on the Pyramid Wood area of the HPG. Loss of trees, addition of built form and design approach (eg areas of glazing) would impact on the sylvan backdrop, screening and green walk identified as significant to the RPG.

Despite proposed planting, in reality the block will never be truly hidden and will instead be perceived from The Course, Nelsons Walk and Stowe Park

Alternative sites No options have been included to explain why this is the least harmful site for this facility. Alternative sites have been dismissed by the School because earmarked for other projects. Redevelopment of existing DT building because of unsuitability of temporary structures to house equipment and dismissed because of the need to use that site as a decent facility.

Masterplan Concerning that there is no up to date adopted Masterplan. Piecemeal approach will result in further encroachment into the landscape.

Heritage/public benefits Some heritage benefits in terms of the facility supporting the successful operation of the School and facilitating the ongoing use and maintenance of the listed buildings and proposed restoration of the landscape. However these will have to be substantive to outweigh the harm given the significance of the site.

The proposal would not preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the CA or special interest of the listed buildings in terms of their settings contrary to Sections 66 and 72 of the Act.

2nd Response following Stowe School rebuttal:

Conclusion-The benefits would not outweigh the less than substantial harm accepted by the applicant

Public benefits: The less than substantial harm (accepted by the applicants) needs to be weighed against the public benefits

Proposed S 106 agreement Most benefits have been previously outlined except No5 –suggested 106 agreement for area of land in the ‘Development Strip’ shown on Appendix 2

Proposed 106 agreement would only cover a small area of land. ‘Development strip’ is not a formal designation therefore the benefit to not develop this area of land is not a benefit.

Section 106 agreement would not address the lack of a Masterplan for the site.

Alternative sites/Need for Masterplan : Planning Statement includes assessment of all sites dismissed due to future plans

As future uses do not have agreement in principle (eg as part of a Masterplan) it cannot be accepted that they are not suitable sites.

New information about why the facilities cannot be provided in temporary classrooms is limited.

Whilst balance of Para 196 will be a planning one the balancing exercise should consider whether the proposal could be delivered in another building in another location.

The Heritage Officer considers that the building could be delivered on another site.

It needs to be established why this is the only site for the use. A Masterplan is critical

Historic England

Conclusion The proposals will cause less than substantial harm to the significance of Stowe through the permanent development of part of a garden feature. The additional information for this application that sets out a development framework for the school, in order to justify the harm that would be caused by development of this site, lacks important detail and therefore does not provide a clear and convincing case for that harm. Further enhancements to the registered park and garden are welcomed and the Council should take these into account when weighing up the public benefits of the scheme. However these do not outweigh the question of principle and it is recommended that the Council seeks further clarification of these issues

Significance The site is known as Rooks Spinney/Pyramid Wood laid out by Lord Cobham and Bridgeman with the purpose of separating the Course and Nelsons Walk from Home Park and continues to perform that function. The high significance of this area is recognised in the 2012 Framework Conservation Plan for the School Estate which assigned a grade A significance to the area and recommended maintaining the woodland

Impact The proposed development would materially harm the significance of the Registered Landscape and Conservation Area and the significance of the Grade 1 Mansion Listed Building through change within its setting . The harm remains high (less than substantial) *Despite the reassurances in the application we remain of the opinion that the building will be clearly seen as a developed area from Nelson's Walk despite the proposed planting scheme. The character of this area will change from a woodland feature to a developed area with some mature trees and shrubs, which will harm its significance.* It will seriously compromise its historical interest and make restoration of this part of the garden impossible.

Justification/alternative sites Paras 193 and 194 of the NPPF state where there is harm there should be clear and convincing justification and great weight should be given to the conservation of the heritage asset.

The need for the DTE block is accepted but the question of whether this is the least harmful location is yet to be satisfactorily provided. Information explaining why temporary accommodation cannot be used to enable the existing DT block to be developed is not sufficiently detailed and assertions made without clear supporting evidence. Having temporary accommodation where the DTE block is proposed is preferable because the restoration of the landscape could follow. A convincing case for this site which would cause harm is not sufficiently detailed Further information is required if Para 194 is to be properly addressed.

Masterplan Historic England encourages the School to develop a well informed plan with stakeholder involvement for future developments in such a sensitive and significant place.

Mitigation The application puts forward a range of landscaping proposals with the aim of improving the significance of the historic landscape both within the environs of the proposals and stretching out from there. They are welcomed and would achieve some clear benefit to heritage. A deliverable and clear method for achieving these benefits in a timely manner will need to be secured by the Council, if they are minded to approve the application

The proposal would cause harm to a highly significant heritage asset through permanent change to the landscape.

The landscape benefits are acknowledged and welcomed. However these do not outweigh the question of principle and it is recommended that the Council seeks further clarification of these issues.

2nd Comments following rebuttal

Conclusion- Historic England has concerns on heritage grounds. LPA should only accept principle of development if clear and convincing case for harm and outweighed by public benefits. Landscape benefits welcome but would be modest and would not outweigh the harm alone.

Understand the need for School to thrive if to continue caring for one of the most important stately homes in the country. To do so they need to provide a high level of facilities.

At present not convinced that DTE block represents the least harmful way of providing the facilities. A convincing case that decanting is not feasible has not been made.

Justification for use of site/decanting - Applicant contends not possible to redevelop site due to difficulties of temporary de-canting activities taking place there. Not convinced this case has been made. Do not agree that temporary decant is more harmful to significance than proposed new building because any temporary structures could be removed and prior state of site reinstated.

Need to leave potential decant sites open for future projects can't be a good reason for not decanting as in absence of agreed Masterplan we do not know what these are and whether they are likely to gain planning permission.

However understand that decant would be costly and (though not a planning issue) that moving it twice increases costs.

Enhancements-Landscape enhancements show planting. Circular walk for visitors also proposed. These achieve some benefits to heritage but alone do not overcome the harm . Not clear how landscaping will be delivered. If granted a robust delivery mechanism to achieve planting would be needed.

Proposal to prevent development on land to south via S106 agreement of low level benefit as would be required to go through planning application with rigorous assessment.

Gardens Trust

Initial comments:

Objects; Proposal Will cause substantial harm to the historic environment at Stowe.

Significance: Site is within Rooks Spinney/Pyramid Wood laid out by Lord Cobham in the eighteenth century .Conservation Plan 2012 recognises this area as of Grade A significance.

Eighteenth century landscape is of the highest significance to the ornamental design at Stowe which is of international significance as part of the English contribution to the visual arts worldwide

The application downplays the significance of Stowe and the area regarded as a small and minor section of already compromised landscape which can be lost without substantial harm

Impact Will contribute to the damaging and insidious creep through an area of highest significance

Sets precedent for further development which will be harder to resist

Masterplan No Masterplan to inform an understanding of the site's context

Alternative sites No helpful options appraisal as submitted with withdrawn application

20/00476/APP

Mitigation- Mitigation proposed for screening the building and the proposed landscaping works cannot compensate for loss of area to irreversible development and precedent for other development alongside Nelson's walk

Public benefits- Marginal and do not mitigate damage caused by irreversible development

2nd Comments following rebuttal

Conclusion-Garden Trust's objections are clearly set out in earlier correspondence . These were guided by their statutory responsibility towards Grade 1 registered Historic Park and Gardens. Objections remain as stated. Consider the public benefits do not outweigh the harm for all the reasons previously given.

Tilted balance: Tilted balance (referred to by Mr Danks) should be tilted in favour of preventing harm and not allowing development in this context.

Historic Landscape advice by Matthew Tickner (Cookson and Tickner) - Consider the Council was scrupulous in ascertaining his objectivity in appointing him as advisor.

Landscape Officer

Objects: A building of the mass and scale proposed would have adverse landscape character effect on the proposed location and I am unconvinced that the proposed vegetation or wooded setting would 'hide' the building from view. The mitigation proposed to justify the site location would not be adequate or sufficient to eliminate the harm of developing this site. I do not feel that the proposals complement the physical characteristics of the site and the surroundings, nor do they feel part of the historic scale and context of the landscape setting. This application would extend development into nationally important valued landscape, and I am unable to see how the visual and character impacts on the site and surrounding context as a result of the proposal, could be adequately mitigated. Alternative sites within the existing school grounds should be considered.

Site is in Pyramid Wood –Assigned Grade A significance in 2012 Stowe Conservation Framework Plan which sought to resist additional development in this area

Site is also in Stowe AAL –Development of the site would fail to enhance the AAL and would erode landscape

Site is undeveloped woodland, a greenfield site with significant valued landscape which make an important historic landscape contribution to the garden . Loss of significant trees and introduction of a substantial structure cannot be underestimated.

Proposed development would lead to loss of woodland in Grade 1 listed landscape of cultural nd historical significance and urban creep into Pyramid Wood would impact not only on site but on surrounding landscape setting. A building of the mass and scale proposed would have an adverse character impact

Despite design development, material choices and mitigation the building would be visible from number of locations. The magnitude of change to views and the assessment has been under - estimated by the applicant. .

No substantive differences apparent from withdrawn application 20/00476/APP. That the site is next to another school building is insufficient justification. Alternative sites have not been properly considered . An alternative site within the School grounds should be considered and would be less harmful.

Supporting LVIA does not concede the effect on landscape character of scale and visual impact. Proposed mitigation would not be adequate to eliminate harm.. Proposal does not complement the physical characteristics of the site nor feel part of the historic scale and context of the landscape setting. Would extend development into a landscape setting and unable to see how the visual and character impacts on the site and surrounding countryside could be adequately mitigated

2nd Comments following rebuttal:

Conclusion :Proposals have not changed so the assessment of the landscape and visual effects remain the same as my previous comments. I remain of the opinion that the previously developed identified sites within the school's ownership would be less sensitive than the proposed site location and therefore potentially more suitable sites for the proposed development. These sites should be considered as an alternative location for the proposed development.

Response to points from Quartet Design:-*The building coalesces and consolidates with the existing school buildings-* Disagrees. The proposal has no relationship with the existing school buildings and wood exist as a separate entity within the woodland. Proposed building would be in a unique landscape setting which differs from the existing school buildings and would not consolidate or coalesce with these.

-*Majority of trees are poor specimens. Suitable replacements would ensure Pyramid Wood is retained and restored-* Disagrees. Comprehends that replacement trees would play a part in restoring the quality of the woodland but this cannot deflect from issue that this would be a large scale building located within a woodland setting which would change the character of the site, impose an urban influence and permanently and significantly alter the baseline of the site.

-*Proposal does not compromise the structural landscape design of the 18th century or reduce its visual significance or visual contribution to the wider Stowe landscape.* Dias agrees. Pyramid Wood

would no longer be perceived as a woodland in conflict with the original eighteenth century design and Stowe Conservation Plan 2012.

-Pyramid Wood have become devalued over time and nothing remains of original planting scheme

Disagrees, The proposed landscape proposals are to provide mitigation for a large scale building (not for benefit of historic landscape). The fact the woodland has been unmanaged is not a reason for siting a building within it.

-Architecture, materials and positioning will allow the building to fit in with woodland; the landscape character will be retained and impact minimal- Disagrees. Unable to see how building fits in with woodland context of the site. It is a large monolithic rectangle of masonry, brickwork and glazing and not reflective of materials found in the woodland. The impact upon landscape character has been underestimated.

Tree Officer

Objection Further information required/Unacceptable impacts to trees

The proposal is likely to have moderate to substantial harm which is unacceptable given the setting. Further information required to allow confidence to reduce this further.

Arboricultural harm:- Results in loss of 18 trees –does not factor in wider impacts including ecosystem services nor their value as important feature in the historic landscape

Multiple impacts to retained trees including encroachments to root protection areas and further encroachment from new surfacing which is not quantified.

Profoundly disagrees with assessment that impact will be moderately low. Woodland is component part of Grade I registered garden and important from neighbouring Public Right of Way.

Level of harm- Given level of loss and RPA encroachment impact to trees is Substantial harm . Mitigation is insufficient and given site context level of harm in arboricultural terms should be considered severe.

New planting- Despite large number of trees proposed many are already planned and would be planted irrespective of the development . Concerns about the long term prospects for the majority of trees in the woodland group. No information to show trees are capable of establishing successfully and contributing similar levels of value to the trees which are to be removed

The proposal is likely to have moderate to substantial remaining harm which is unacceptable given the setting. Further information required to allow confidence to reduce this further.

The important deadwood habitat associated with trees on the site does not have a consistent level of consideration across the supporting documents. Disappointing that the above concerns which have been previously raised have not been addressed.

2nd Comments-

The main issue of disagreement is the significance of the impact of the proposal on the trees and wood. The spinney itself is a significant feature which has existed for over 300 years and aged trees are still present on site. However the applicants have declined to take into account the additional historic and cultural value of the site. The importance of the setting magnifies the significance to the trees. The applicants suggest all trees are of low quality and near to death so require replacement and frame this as good management. However they have downplayed the fact that the woodland as a whole is a significant feature of huge importance and that the proposal is a significant new structure within it which will irreversibly transform an area of woodland into built environment and cannot be considered similar to periodic management or replanting.

The response downplays impacts to retained trees and ignores or misunderstands the concerns with regard to the adequacy and establishment of proposed planting. The proposed mitigation measures require significantly more information and it would be inappropriate to leave this to conditions.

The response states that the National Trust have no funds to undertake the planting works. However the proposed planting is intended as part of separate restoration plans and not as mitigation for this development.

Conclusion

Objects to the proposal as the development represents severe arboricultural harm.

The proposed mitigation for retained trees or establishment of proposed trees does not go into sufficient detail.

Taking mitigation into account the remaining harm is moderate to substantial. Further information required to demonstrate that the proposal could be adequately mitigated.

Highways

No objection subject to the submission of a Construction Traffic Management Plan to be submitted to prior to commencement and to be adhered to throughout the construction period.

Ecologist

Further details requested on the location proposed for dead wood habitat and protection of retained dead wood habitat. Approve ecological assessment submitted in support of this application. Condition the recommendations of this report once updated details on Dead wood habitat has been provided

Application is supported by an Ecological appraisal and considered to be an accurate account of ecological features on the site. Ecological mitigation and enhancement measures are detailed in the document. The exception is the dead wood habitat.

Further detail of proposed deadwood habitat required to ensure this aspect of ecology enhancement is achieved and should be submitted prior to decision.

A condition covering all ecological matters will be provided on receipt and approval of the dead wood information requested.

2nd comments following rebuttal

There is still a need for the applicant to provide significant assurance over the dead wood feature proposed to be retained which was referenced in my memo and also in those from the Tree Officer

Economic Development

No comments as the application only relates to the changing of 987 sq. m of open land to D1 educational use.

Lead Local Flood Authority

Object. Due to insufficient information regarding the proposed surface water drainage scheme.

National Trust

Conclusion

The National Trust supports this application as part of the wider context of the site and welcomes early and open dialogue with regard to aspirations beyond this particular development. The creation of a new Pyramid walk will enable the public to engage with additional areas of the landscape and the creation of a circular route in this area will directly benefit visitors. The DT&E project and the proposed landscape restoration works offers an opportunity in respect of immediate restoration, conservation and improved visitor experience. It also has the potential to unlock further funds to enable the National Trust to accelerate the restoration Stowe as a whole and single heritage asset.

Proposed landscape restoration works –These were developed in consultation with the National Trust. They provide an important public benefit in respect of conservation management and access to the Western Gardens

Labour resources-The labour needed to deliver the restoration works will be provided by the School's Garden Team under direction of the National Trust's Head Gardener and is a valuable contribution in terms of a resource. Undertaking this work now arrests current woodland decline and reduces the extent of future restoration required.

Partnership working- Key benefit of proposed landscape restoration works is long term commitment of National Trust to work in partnership of restoration in line with the Conservation Plan.

Enhanced visitor experience-The opportunity to expand visitor experience and access to the Western Gardens particularly the circular connection to Home Park is a key element for the National Trust

Financial investment- *Proposed restoration works will unlock access to existing donor funds which will be utilised to continue garden restoration and expand these works to deliver more corporate renovation over time. Enhanced visitor experience will provide the opportunity to attract public donation and corporate sponsorship to fund ongoing works to the Western Gardens.*

Report by Matthew Tickner (Cookson and Tickner)-Expert historic landscape specialist

Buckinghamshire Council commissioned Matthew Tickner to provide expert historic landscape Advice. The Council requested an assessment of the application and supporting documents where

they concern historic landscape and heritage matters. The report was produced and subsequently shared with the applicant. The applicant was given the opportunity to provide comment.

He concludes that the level of harm to the designated and undesignated heritage assets is considered to be less than substantial, but the level of harm would be high and at the upper level of that scale

Pyramid Wood is a highly significant and sensitive location for the proposed development. Development here would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area and would not preserve the special qualities of the settings of the listed buildings or the Registered Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest and Conservation Area.

The public benefits would need to be substantial to outweigh the harm. The proposed landscape mitigation and wider restoration proposals should be given relatively little weight, given that level of harm,

Amenity Societies/ residents associations

Georgian Group

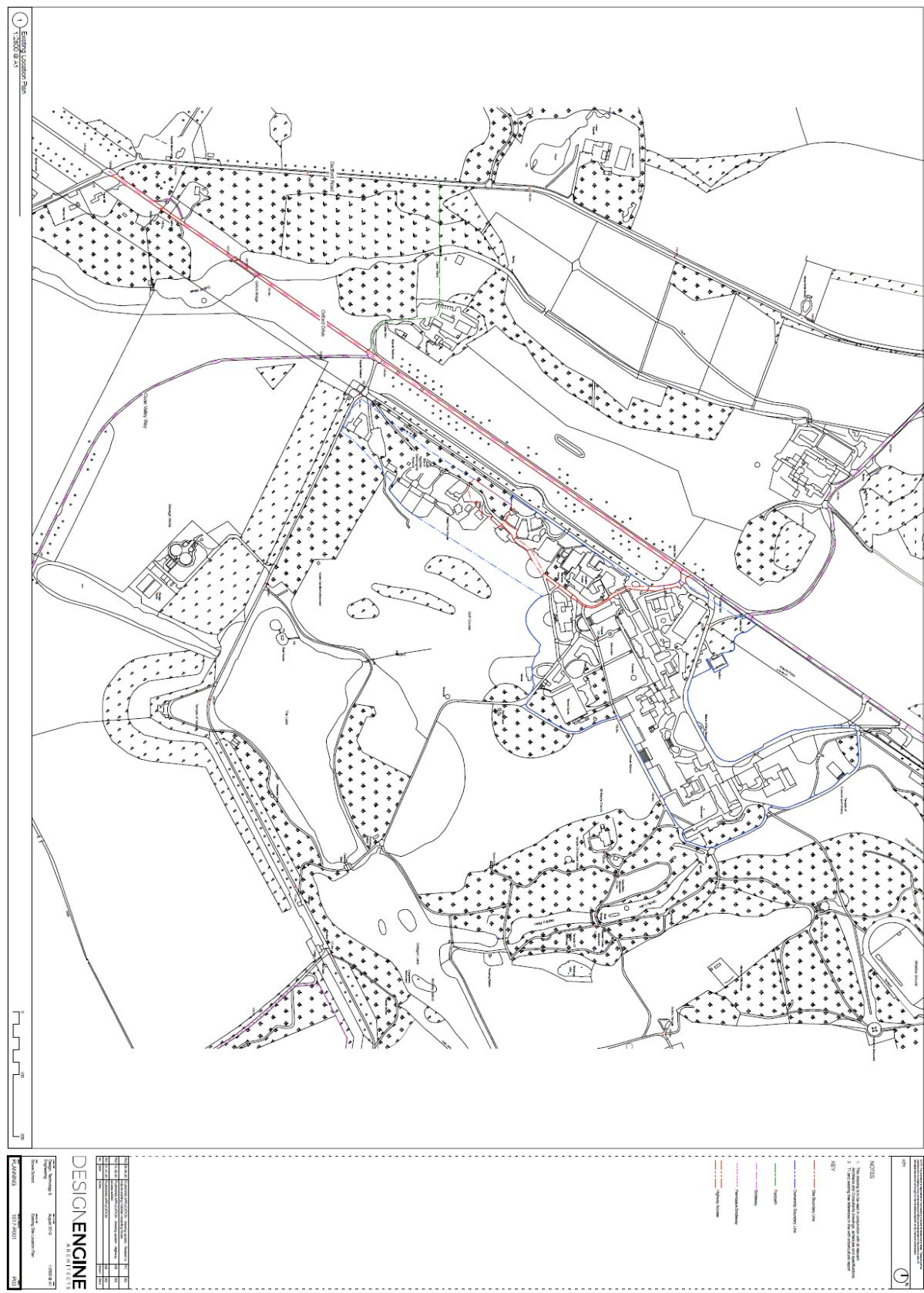
- Site lies within Pyramid Wood area of Rooks Spinney (Grade A significance in Conservation Plan)
- Important is setting of The Course and Nelsons Walk
- Development of site would cause harm to the registered landscape and agreed policies in the Conservation Plan.
- The Council should have regard to Paras 193 and 194 of the NPPF and its obligations in respect of Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (LB and CA) Act 1990

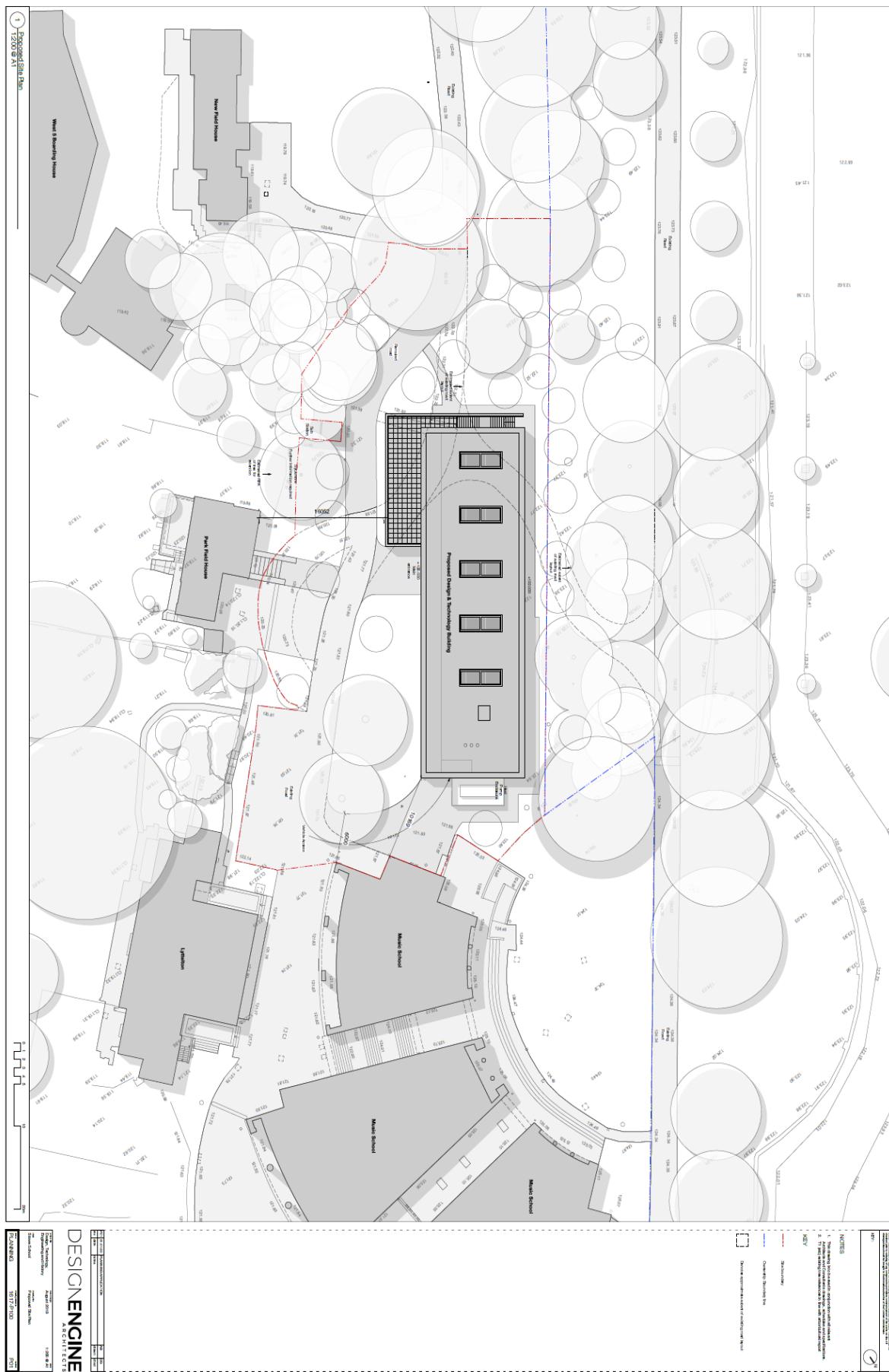
Other Representations

There were no representations received either supporting or objecting to the application.

APPENDIX B

Site Location Plans





APPENDIX C

Historic landscape advice relating to a proposed new Design Technology & Engineering (DTE) building for Stowe School (application reference 20/03822/APP)

16th July 2021



COOKSON & TICKNER
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

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1. Introduction

Instructions

- 1.1 Buckinghamshire Council commissioned Matthew Tickner to provide expert historic landscape advice relating to a proposed new Design Technology & Engineering (DTE) building for Stowe School (application reference 20/03822/APP) in June 2021.
- 1.2 The Council has requested an assessment of the application and supporting documents where they concern historic landscape matters, along with a review of consultee comments and the responses by the applicant's advisors to those comments.
- 1.3 This report concludes with an objective opinion on the application and its implications for the Grade I Registered Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest in England and the associated listed buildings.

Experience and qualifications

- 1.4 Matthew is a Chartered Landscape Architect and member of the Landscape Institute with 20 years' of experience in the conservation and management of historic landscapes at some of the United Kingdom's most notable sites including Buckingham Palace, Kensington Palace, Windsor Castle, Trentham, Wilton, Burghley, Lyme Park, Stowe, Styal, Shugborough and Lyveden.
- 1.5 His experience ranges from research and conservation management planning through to master planning, securing funding, detailed design and on site supervision. He has extensive experience in landscape planning, having prepared open space and green infrastructure strategies, woodland and forestry plans and landscape character assessments.
- 1.6 Matthew has delivered seminars and talks to ICOMOS, the Garden History Society, The London Gardens Network and the Association of Gardens Trusts. He is a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute, a member of the Gardens Trust and an associate member of the National Trust Historic Environment Advisory Group.
- 1.7 Matthew has extensive experience of delivering complex multi-disciplinary projects and has led Cookson & Tickner's competition winning bid to develop HS2 mitigation proposals for Hardwick Hall and since then at Shugborough, Nostell and Dunham Massey. Matthew has recently worked on the Lyveden Reconnected project and a masterplanning exercise at Trelissick, both for the National Trust.
- 1.8 Matthew is familiar with the designed landscape at Stowe having prepared restoration planting proposals for the Deer Park and co-authored the Parkland Plan whilst working at LUC. More recently he assisted the National Trust with a spatial planning exercise in 2018.

Structure of this review:

- 1.9 The remainder of this review is set out under the following headings:
 2. The proposed development
 3. Significance
 4. Policy context
 5. Summary of responses provided by consultees
 6. Review of the application in respect of the historic designed landscape
 7. Conclusions

Location of features referred to in this report

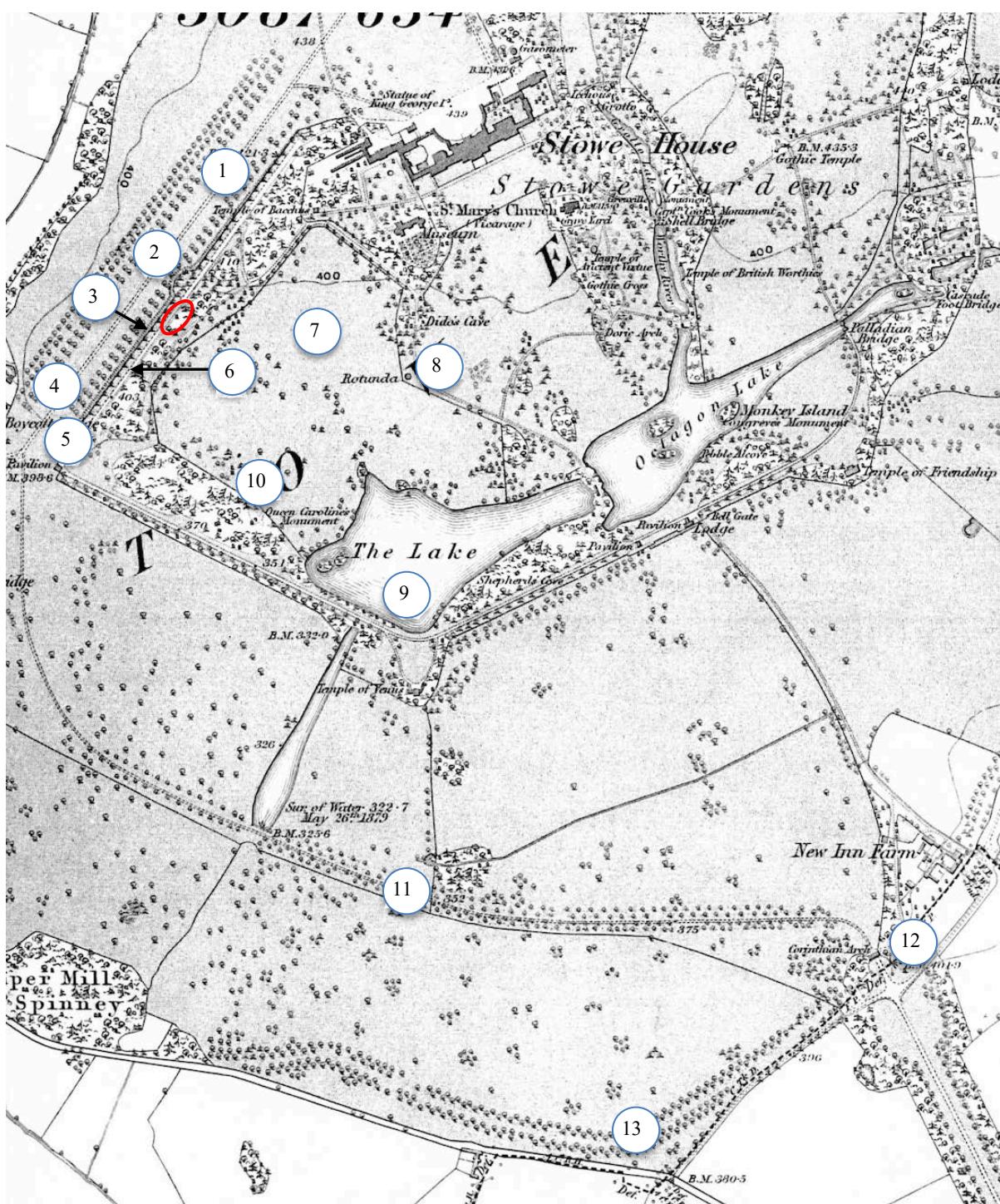


Figure 1.1: extract of the First Edition Ordnance Survey Map surveyed 1880, published 1885 showing features referred to in the text: (1) The Course (2) Lee's Bastion (3) the ha-ha (4) The Oxford Approach - extending south west of the map extract (5) Boycott Pavilion (6) Nelson's Walk (7) Home Park (8) Rotunda (9) The Lake (10) Queen Caroline's Monument (11) Queen's Drive (12) Corinthian Arch (13) Perimeter Walk. The red oval shows the approximate location of the proposed DTE building site.

2. The proposed development

- 2.1 This section provides a summary description of the proposed development and its surrounding context, making specific reference to the historic landscape.

Description of the development

- 2.2 The Design and Access statement outlines the scope of the proposed development which includes:
- Construction of a new two storey Design Technology & Engineering building to replace existing DT facility.
 - New external enclosure, integrated with the new building, to accommodate potential new air source heat pump to provide low energy heating & hot water.
 - Removal of existing diagonal path between Nelson's Walk and the existing access-way to the south east of the new building – to accommodate new facility.
 - Local re-modelling of the route of the existing access-way at the southern corner of the development in order to improve access.
 - New hard and soft landscaping to include hard landscape entrance-way to the new building and services access to north-east elevation adjacent to the Music School.



Figure 2.1: The proposed DTE building shown within the red line boundary (extract from Design Engine drawing 1617-P100 P01).

Size of development

- 2.3 Plan dimensions are not provided on the submitted drawings, therefore approximate dimensions have been scaled from the drawings to ascertain the footprint of the proposed building. The main rectangular portion of the proposed building appears to be approximately 42m x and 13.2m in plan. The dimensions of the building at its largest extents including the heat pump enclosure and external stairway are approximately 47m x 18m including the single storey section of the building with external terrace/gallery.
- 2.4 Spot heights are noted on the elevation drawings enabling calculation of the building height which is 8.38m.



Figure 2.2: South east elevation of the proposed DTE building in the centre of the image behind Park Field House. West 5 Boarding house lies to the left and Lyttelton to the right (extract from Design Engine drawing 1617-P360 P01).

Materials

- 2.5 A horizontal split between materials used in the elevation is proposed with the upper level being a ‘bronze coloured material’ and the lower being brick.

The proposed development site

The role of the development site in the historic designed landscape

- 2.6 According to the Stowe Conservation Plans: The Western Part of Stowe Gardens and the Course (Rutherford, December, 2012) the proposed development site lies in the Stowe Garden Western Area, within sub-character area 4B Pyramid Wood. The role of this area within the historic designed landscape was to provide a wooded spine and backdrop between the Home Park and Nelson’s Walk. This band of woodland would have acted as a planted backdrop and skyline in views from the Home Park and from the Oxford Approach including the Course, whilst also serving to emphasise views out to the parkland from Nelson’s Walk.
- 2.7 The Stowe Conservation Plans: The Western Part of Stowe Gardens and the Course (Rutherford, December, 2012) suggests that Pyramid Wood divides the landscape of the Home Park and western part of Stowe Gardens from the quite separate iconography of Nelson’s Walk, Nelson’s Seat, King George I, and the Roman (Boycott) Pavilion. The Plan notes that *‘its main path followed the woodland edge, giving views through open grown trees down over the Home Farm, and leading to the site of Vanbrugh’s Pyramid at its south western extremity.’*

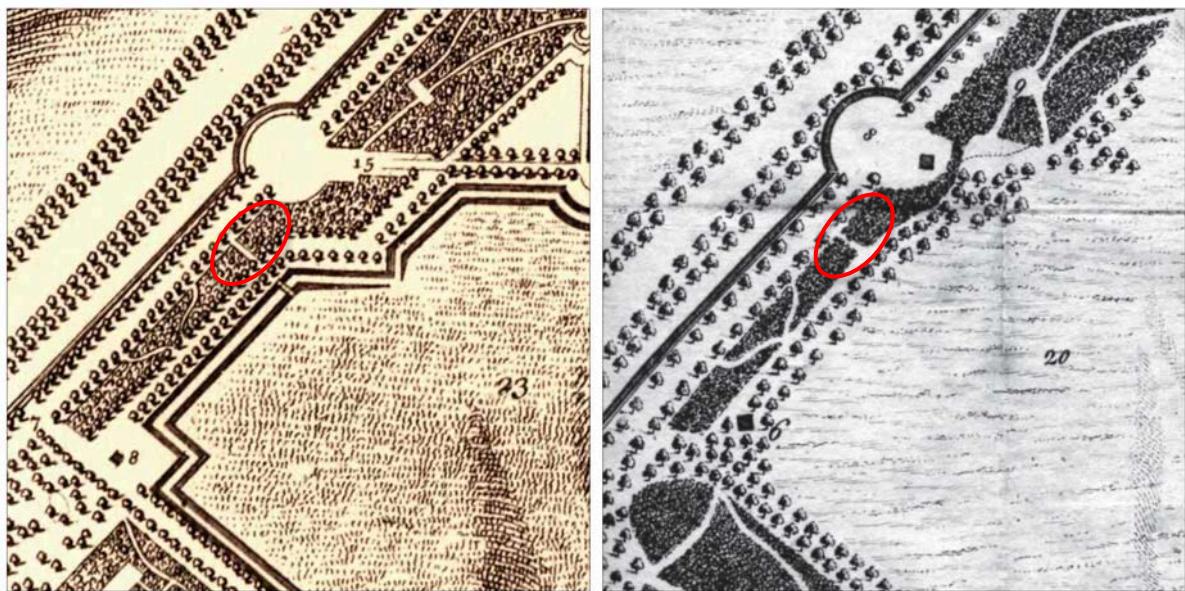


Figure 2.3: Extracts of the 1739 Bridgeman plan & 1783 Seeley guide plans from the Stowe Framework Conservation Management Plan: The School Estate (Rutherford, December 2012) – application site in red.

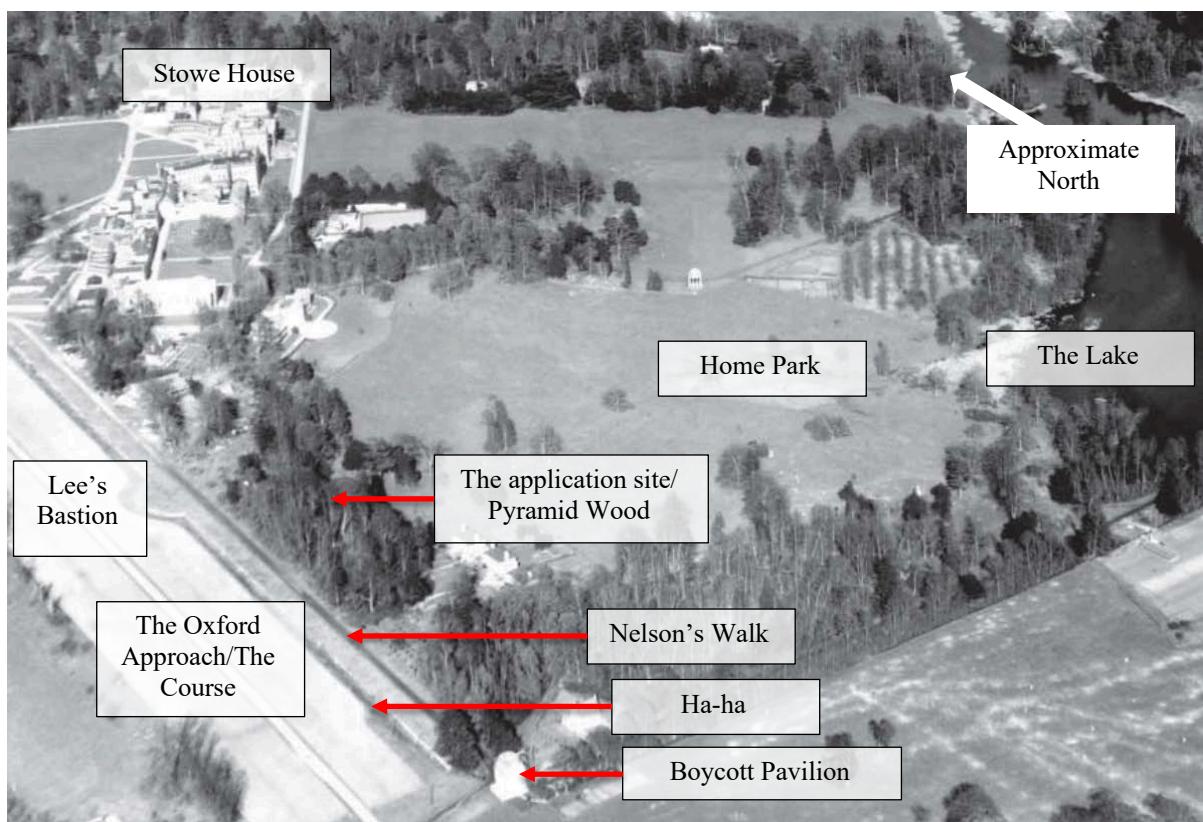


Figure 2.4: Figure 8 from the Stowe Conservation Plans: the Western part of Stowe Gardens and the Course (Rutherford, 2012) showing Stowe Gardens from the west in 1953, with annotations to explain the location of key historic features referred to in the text. Aerial photograph © Cambridge University

2.8 The 1739 and 1783 plans (see Figure 2.3) demonstrate this role in the landscape design and appear to show a clear line in the woodland, suggesting that there was a glimpsed view between Nelson's Walk and Home Park at the proposed development site. A 1953 aerial photograph (see Figure 2.4) further emphasises this role, particularly given the absence of avenue trees along the Oxford Approach and the Course at that time.

Current character, condition and survival

- 2.9 The 2012 Conservation Plan suggests that Pyramid Wood is largely intact ‘*although it was largely replanted with native trees in the mid-20th century, and the main path below the slope remains as vehicle access. The five masters’ houses and the Lyttelton boarding house along its Home Park edge are intrusive from the interior path/drive but have been largely screened from Home Park.*’
- 2.10 The Plan notes that Pyramid Wood continues to form an important dark backdrop in views north and north-west from the Eleven Acre Lake, Temple of Venus and Rotondo.
- 2.11 Since the Conservation Plan was written in 2012 the West 5 Boarding House (south east of and close to the application site) and the Music School (to the north east of and directly adjacent to the application site) have been added to this part of the designed landscape.
- 2.12 A site walkover of the proposed development site was conducted on 29th June 2021 to inform this review of the application. The woodland contained within the proposed development site continues to perform its historic design intention as described above and a number of historic trees were noted during the walkover. These would appear to pre-date the mid-20th century date of planting suggested in the Conservation Plan and include limes (T11 & T12) planted c.1875, a sycamore (T9) of c.1900, three limes of c.1910 (T13, T14 & T15) and an oak (T2) of c.1911.¹ It is likely that the older trees relate to the third Duke of Buckingham’s (d. 1889) replanting and restoration efforts, whilst the slightly later specimens might date to the Duke’s daughter, Lady Kinloss’ tenure, before Stowe was sold to Harry Shaw in 1921 and subsequently to the School in 1923. The woodland also contains a sparse understorey of yew, cherry laurel and holly.
- 2.13 Figure 2.5 – 2.8 provides photographic views of the application site with historic trees marked.



Figure 2.5: view from the south east towards the application site.



Figure 2.6: View from the south west towards the application site with Park Field House to the right of the photograph and Lyttelton in the background

¹ The DBH measurements included in the submitted tree survey have been used to inform an estimate of significant trees noted during the site walkover. The method for estimating the tree ages follows that set out by John White (November 1998) for the Forestry Commission in *Estimating the age of large and veteran trees in Britain*.



Figure 2.7: view from the north towards the application site with the Music School to the left, Lee's Bastion to the centre and right, with the pathway being Nelson's Walk.

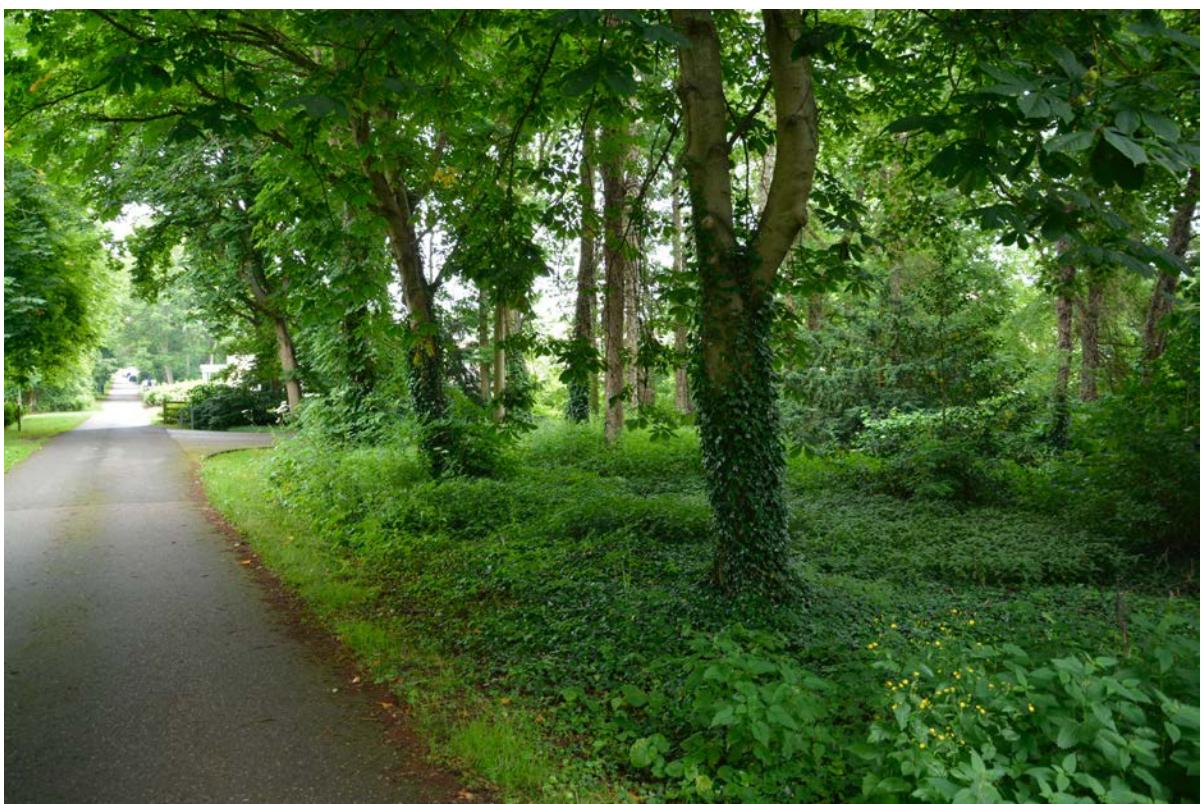


Figure 2.8: View from Nelson's Walk from the south west with the application site to the right of the photograph. The pathway to the right in the middle distance cuts through the application site and the Music School can be seen in the distance on the right hand side.

- 2.14 Much of the woodland is more recent in age, being thought to date to 1960s replanting, with some of those trees in a poor condition and with a fair proportion of ash trees. A hard surfaced path cuts through the area.

3. Significance

Designations

- 3.1 The proposed development lies within a Grade I Registered Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest in England meaning that the designed landscape is ‘of exceptional interest’ according to Rural Landscapes: Register of Parks and Gardens Selection Guide (Historic England, 2018).
- 3.2 The Heritage Impact Assessment (DE Landscape & Heritage, November 2020) identifies 47 listed buildings within the c. 500 hectare Registered Park and Garden, of which 28 are grade I listed ‘of exceptional interest’, four grade II* listed ‘of more than special interest’ and 15 grade II listed ‘of special interest’.
- 3.3 The NPPF considers grade I and II* listed buildings and grade I and II* registered parks and gardens as heritage assets of the highest significance (para. 194).
- 3.4 The whole of the Registered Park and Garden is designated as a Conservation Area.
- 3.5 Stowe is one of Aylesbury Vale’s six Areas of Attractive Landscape.

Defining the significance of Stowe

- 3.6 Given that Stowe was ‘*supremely influential on the English landscape garden during the 18th century*’² all relevant studies and plans concur that Stowe is of international significance as set out below.

The Stowe Framework Conservation Management Plan

- 3.7 The Stowe Framework Conservation Management Plan: The School Estate (Rutherford, December 2012) notes that ‘*Stowe is a special place of international significance, worthy of the greatest care in its conservation and on-going development...*’ (foreword by the Chairman of Stowe House Preservation Trust, Chairman of the Stowe School Governors, and the Regional Chairman of the National Trust).
- 3.8 The Plan also suggests that the Stowe Garden Western Area, where the proposed DTE building is located, is of grade A significance (national or international significance) and states ‘*Lord Cobham’s internationally important and seminal Stowe Garden Western Area landscape of the c.1710s – 20s, the first of his major garden schemes, which was developed in similar grandeur over the following century by his successors.*’
- 3.9 Sub-character area 4B Pyramid Wood is also classified as grade A significance (national or international significance) and the key elements of landscape significance are defined as:
 - *The sylvan backdrop to the Home Park and the screen from Nelson’s Walk.*
 - *Part of the sylvan backdrop, above the ha-ha, to the approach from the Oxford Gates and Bridge, The Course and main drive to the mansion.*
 - *Formerly a key section of the circuit walk around the Home Park c.1725.*
 - *Nelson’s Walk formed a green walk from which to observe the park and The Course beyond the ha-ha.*

Stowe Parkland Plan

- 3.10 The Stowe Parkland Plan (LUC, 2012) notes that ‘*Stowe Park is of outstanding international significance as an exemplary historic designed landscape....*’

² <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000198>

- 3.11 The Parkland Plan emphasises the important relationship between the park and garden: '*The intervisibility between house, garden, park and the wider landscape is of great importance to the composition at Stowe, and neither the park nor the garden can ever be fully considered in isolation. The significance of Stowe Park thus relates both to its role in the setting to the gardens as well as to it being a designed landscape in its own right. This intervisibility is reinforced by a series of buildings and structures – these are often of individual outstanding architectural merit, although it is the combined effects of architecture and landscape that underpin their importance within the Park.*'
- 3.12 The Parkland Plan identifies the Oxford Approach (noted as being of international importance) and the Course (noted as being of international importance) as two of the key significances of Stowe Park:

'The Oxford Approach follows the line of the Roman road to Oxford, including the grade I listed Oxford Gate Lodges and Bridge over the sinuous Oxford Water, added by Earl Temple and culminating in the grade I listed Boycott Pavilions, en route to the house via the Course. During Earl Temple's tenure the Oxford and Buckingham Approaches would have been experienced as one (the former following on from the latter), forming what must have surely been one of the grandest approaches to a house of its era.'

'The origins of the Course date to Roman times and it may have later been used as a deer course between two late-medieval deer parks, before forming the distinct planted avenue that is a key element within the historic designed landscape. Its significance thus relates both to its importance as a designed element within the park as well as evidencing the long and rich history of the landscape.'

- 3.13 The Oxford Approach and the Course combine to form a main historic and current principal approach to Stowe, from which the proposed development will be visible.

Defining the special qualities of local landscape designations in Aylesbury Vale District

- 3.14 This document (LUC, March 2016) provides evidence on the special qualities and values of locally designated landscapes within the district - the Areas of Attractive Landscape (AAL) and Local Landscape Areas (LLAs), to enhance the Council's landscape evidence base and to inform the Local Plan. Stowe is designated as an Area of Attractive Landscape and is also noted in this document as being of international importance:

'The local landscape designation of Stowe contains the peaceful and picturesque, gently rolling agricultural landscape in and around the internationally important landscape park and gardens of Grade I Stowe Registered Park and Garden, an 18th century designed landscape and recognised as one of Britain's finest Historic Parks and Gardens. Blocks of ancient woodland, the remnants of the medieval Whittlewood Forest, and other parklands in the area contain great cultural and natural value, as well as rich visual texture and provide a wooded backcloth to the landscape. A landscape of streams, parklands and small villages of local materials with focal points of medieval church towers, mature oak trees and with occasional long views from vantage points.'

4. Policy context

- 4.1 This section sets out the policy context relevant to this application from the national level (e.g. the National Planning Policy Framework) through to the site specific level (e.g. The Stowe Framework Conservation Management Plan. Rutherford, December 2012).

National Planning Policy Framework (February, 2019)

- 4.2 Section 16 of the NPPF Conserving and enhancing the historic environment sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they should be applied.
- 4.3 Para 184 states that heritage assets '*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'*

Proposals affecting heritage assets

- 4.4 The NPPF states:

Para.189. 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. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

Para.190. 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.

Para.191. Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.

Para.192. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of: a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Considering potential impacts

- 4.5 The NPPF states:

Para.193. 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.

Para.194. 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. Substantial harm to or loss of:

a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;

b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.*

Para.196. 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 including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

Para.197. The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Para.200. Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

Para.201. Not all elements of a Conservation Area or World Heritage Site will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 195 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 196, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole.

Para.202. Local planning authorities should assess whether the benefits of a proposal for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset, outweigh the disbenefits of departing from those policies.

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990

4.6 The following sections of the 1990 Act apply:

Section 66 General duty as respects listed buildings in exercise of planning functions (1) states '*in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority, or as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.*'

Section 72 General duty as respects conservation areas in exercise of planning functions (1) states '*In the exercise, with respects to any buildings or other land in a conservation area...special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.*'

Other Guidance

4.7 Planning Practice Guidance for the Historic Environment (updated 23rd July 2019) is provided at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment>.

4.8 Relevant Historic England Guidance includes Statements of Heritage Significance (HE Advice Note 12).

Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan (Written Statement Part 1, January 2004)

- 4.9 The following policies are of particular relevance to the application in relation to the historic landscape:
- GP40 – Retention of existing trees and hedgerows: '*In dealing with planning proposals the Council will oppose the loss of trees, particularly native Black Poplars, and hedgerows of amenity, landscape or wildlife value.*'
 - GP53 - New development in and adjacent to Conservation Areas: '*In Conservation Areas the Council will seek to preserve or enhance the special characteristics that led to the designation of the area. Proposals for development will not be permitted if they cause harm to the character or appearance of Conservation Areas, their settings or any associated views of or from the Conservation Area. Proposals for development or redevelopment must respect the historic layout, scale and form of buildings, street patterns, open spaces and natural features in the Conservation Area that contribute to its character and appearance...*'
 - GP59 – Preservation of Archaeological Remains: '*In dealing with development proposals affecting a site of archaeological importance the Council will protect, enhance and preserve the historic interest and its setting. Where research suggests that historic remains may be present on a development site planning applications should be supported by details of an archaeological field evaluation. In such cases the Council will expect proposals to preserve the historic interest without substantial change...*'
 - GP60 - Development and parks or gardens of special historic interest: '*Development proposals within or affecting a Park or Garden of Special Historic Interest should take full account of the area's historic and landscape significance. The Council will resist proposals that do not protect the distinctive characteristics of such Parks and Gardens.*'
 - RA8 - Development in the Areas of Attractive Landscape and Local Landscape Areas: '*The Proposals Map defines Areas of Attractive Landscape, identified in the County Structure Plan, and Local Landscape Areas, defined by the District Council, which have particular landscape features and qualities that are considered appropriate for particular protection. Development proposals in these areas should respect their landscape character. Development that adversely affects this character will not be permitted, unless appropriate mitigation measures can be secured. Where permission is granted the Council will impose conditions or seek planning obligations to ensure the mitigation of any harm caused to the landscape interest.*'

Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan 2013 – 2033

- 4.10 There are several emerging policies in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) of relevance to this application including:
- BE1 - Heritage Assets: ... '*All development, including new buildings, alterations, extensions, changes of use and demolitions, should seek to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, including their setting, and seek enhancement wherever possible... The Council will b. Require development proposals that cause substantial harm to, or loss of a designated heritage asset and its significance, including its setting, to provide a thorough heritage assessment setting out a clear and convincing justification as to why that harm is considered acceptable. Where that case cannot be demonstrated proposals will not be supported unless the harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss and accord with the requirements of national guidance, and c. Require development proposals that cause less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset to weigh the level of harm against the public benefits that may be gained by the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.... Developments affecting a heritage asset should achieve a high quality design in accordance with*

adopted SPD and the Council will encourage modern, innovative design which respects and complements the heritage context in terms of scale, massing, design, detailing and use.'

- BE2 – Design of New Development: '**All new development proposals shall follow the guidance set out within the Council's design SPD and shall respect and complement:** a. **The physical characteristics of the site and its surroundings including the scale and context of the site and its setting** b. **The local distinctiveness and vernacular character of the locality, in terms of ordering, form, proportions, architectural detailing and materials** c. **The natural qualities and features of the area, and d. The effect on important public views and skylines.**'
- NE5 – Landscape character and locally important landscape: '*The Policies Map defines areas of attractive landscape (AALs) and local landscape areas (LLAs) which have particular landscape features and qualities considered appropriate for particular conservation and enhancement opportunities. Of the two categories, the areas of attractive landscape have the greater significance. Development in AALs and LLAs should have particular regard to the character identified in the report 'Defining the special qualities of local landscape designations in Aylesbury Vale District' (Final Report, 2016) and the LCA (2008). Development that adversely affects this character will not be permitted unless appropriate mitigation can be secured. Where permission is granted, the Council will require conditions to best ensure the mitigation of any harm caused to the landscape.'*

The guidelines for landscape management in the Stowe AAL include '**Protect the existing woodland...**'.

Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment (JE Jacobs, May 2008)

4.11 The landscape guidelines for Stowe Registered Parkland (LCA 1.4) are framed under 'Conserve' and include:

- Support the work of the National Trust to conserve, maintain and restore the landscape of this LCA.
- Encourage car free access to the area particularly from Buckingham with routes accessible to the less mobile and safe routes for cyclists of all ages.
- Encourage the conservation and interpretation of features of historic and nature conservation interest.
- Maintain the existing extent and condition of parkland.
- Maintain the existing extent and condition of swamp.
- Encourage access to the countryside for all sections of the community.
- Identify key views from publicly accessible locations and promote the retention and enhancement of these views.
- Ensure the preservation of archaeological earthworks by maintaining grassland.

Stowe Framework Conservation Management Plan

4.12 The Stowe Framework Conservation Management Plan: The School Estate (Rutherford, December 2012) includes the following general conservation policies of relevance:

2.2.6.3 Respect and enhance the school layout of the 1920s and 1930s focussed on Chapel Court which established the framework for a high quality school campus set sensitively within the existing layout.

2.2.6.4 Ensure that modern school buildings and their environs fit easily together in the character of a united school campus and do not intrude upon or attempt to compete with the C18/C19 landscape views or character.

4.13 The key issues identified in the Stowe Framework Conservation Management Plan: The School Estate (Rutherford, December 2012) are:

- *The wood forms the backdrop to the Home Park, and the division against Nelson's Walk.*
- *The reinstatement of the circuit walk around the Home Park.*
- *The importance of the site of the Pyramid, as a viewing mount, and its clearing and conservation.*
- *The effect of intrusive buildings should be mitigated by planting and defining and managing as a discrete enclave within the designed landscape.*

4.14 The policy for the area is '*Maintain as a 'pretty shallow thicket' (Latapie, 1771), as established by 1779 as a wooded flowering shrubbery backdrop to the Home Park and the division against Nelson's Walk, and conversely as the backdrop to The Course above Nelson's Walk, screening views of modern buildings from the Course.'*'

4.15 The recommendations for the area are:

1. *Maintain the woodland, thin where necessary, and underplant as a 'pretty shallow thicket' with flowering shrubs against the Walk.*
2. *Reinstate as part of the sequence of wildernesses and of the circuit walk around the Home Park.*

5. Summary of responses provided by consultees

- 5.1 This section outlines the responses provided by consultees as part of the planning process where they are relevant to heritage and landscape matters.

Buckinghamshire Council Officers

Principal Heritage Specialist

- 5.2 The officer considers that the proposal would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage assets, but does not feel that the appropriate NPPF tests have currently been met in terms of avoiding, minimising or outweighing this harm. The officer notes that '*Lee's Bastion marks the transition of the two stages of the Walk's (referring to Nelson's Walk) development, this was one of the reasons why the music block was permissible, along with its design being felt to respond to the context. Therefore development south of this point would be contrary to this and should be guarded against.*'
- 5.3 In response to the latest information provided by the applicant including a suggested section 106 agreement to prevent further development on an area of land referred to as 'the development strip' the Heritage Specialist believes that the benefits suggested would not outweigh the less than substantial harm arising from the proposed development.

Senior Archaeology Officer

- 5.4 The officer is concerned over the relative lack of archaeological content in the Heritage Impact Assessment or its inclusion in the proposed mitigation measures.

Landscape Architect

- 5.5 The officer raises a number of concerns over the applicants LVIA judgements (the severity of the effects on landscape character of the site and the scale of the visual impact that would result from the development) and the LVIA/design process, which does not adequately consider alternative sites.
- 5.6 The officer concludes that the landscape and visual harms identified should weigh against the scheme in any consideration of the planning balance of the proposed development.
- 5.7 In response to the latest information provided by the applicant, the officer remains '*of the opinion that the previously developed identified sites within the school's ownership would be less sensitive than the proposed site location and therefore potentially more suitable sites for the proposed development. These sites should be considered as an alternative location for the proposed development.*'

Tree Officer

- 5.8 The officer disagrees with the applicant's advisors' assessment that the proposed development will result in moderately low harm and that it will result in '*severe harm in terms of arboriculture*' and that the mitigation proposed to limit impacts to retained trees is '*not considered to significantly reduce this harm.*'
- 5.9 The officer also considers that the proposed development '*is likely to have moderate to substantial remaining harm, which is unacceptable given the setting.*'

External consultees

Historic England

- 5.10 Historic England believe that the proposals will cause harm to the significance of Stowe through the permanent development of part of a garden feature. They consider that harm to be high (less than substantial) as it will '*seriously compromise its historical interest and make the future restoration of this part of the garden impossible.*'
- 5.11 In response to the latest information provided by the applicant Historic England believe that the landscape benefits would not outweigh the harm and that the proposal to prevent development on land to the south of the application site through a section 106 agreement is a low-level benefit as any new development would be subject to the planning process and further rigorous assessment.

The Gardens Trust

- 5.12 The Gardens Trust strongly object to the proposed development and consider that the significance of the site has been downplayed. They suggest that substantial harm would be caused to the historic environment of Stowe and that the proposed mitigation and wider restoration works detailed in the application '*cannot compensate for the loss of this area to irreversible development and the precedent that this proposal sets for further development alongside Nelson's Walk.*'
- 5.13 The Gardens Trust urge that the application be refused and that an alternative site be selected in part of the already developed school campus.

The Georgian Group

- 5.14 The Georgian Group objects to the application and believe that the proposed building will '*cause considerable harm to the registered landscape as a whole and contrary to the agreed policies set out within the Conservation Plan.*'

The National Trust

- 5.15 The General Manager of the Stowe & Aylesbury portfolio supports the application '*as part of the wider context of the site...The creation of a new Pyramid walk will enable the public to engage with additional areas of the landscape and the creation of a circular route in this area will directly benefit visitors. The DT&E project and the proposed landscape restoration works offers an opportunity in respect of immediate restoration, conservation and improved visitor experience. It also has the potential to unlock further funds to enable the National Trust to accelerate the restoration of Stowe as a whole and single heritage asset.*'

Pre-application advice

- 5.16 Aylesbury Vale District Council provided pre-application advice in advance of the current application in a letter dated 25th October 2019, following a site visit with Historic England in attendance on 27th February 2019 and following the submission of additional information by Stowe School and internal meetings attended by the Heritage Officer, the Planning Officer, the Tree Officer and the Landscape Officer.
- 5.17 The advice within that letter is consistent with the comments that have been made by Council Officers on the current application.

6. Review of the application in respect of the historic designed landscape

6.1 This section provides a review of the documents submitted as part of the application where they concern heritage and landscape matters.

Heritage Impact Assessment (DE Landscape & Heritage, November 2020)

6.2 The Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) sets out the legal and policy context before describing ‘key designated heritage assets’ and their significance; the report provides a description of the proposed development and an assessment of the impact of the proposals on the significance of the ‘key designated heritage assets’ and an assessment of the effects of mitigation, before offering a conclusion.

6.3 Whilst there is much useful information contained within the HIA there are a number of detailed points or omissions which serve to downplay the significance of Stowe and the proposed development site including the following:

- HIA Chapter 3 suggests that Stowe is ‘internationally recognised’ and that it ‘involved ‘internationally celebrated architects’ but does not provide a clear assessment of significance of the Registered Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest that reflects the level of significance outlined in previous plans of studies (see Section 3 of this report). The only reference to a level of significance is consigned to a footnote noting that the Western Garden is assessed as national/international significance.
- HIA Chapter 3 does not provide an assessment of significance for sub-character area 4B Pyramid Wood (refer to para. 3.9 of this report).
- HIA Chapter 3 focuses heavily on individually listed buildings but there is no description and assessment of significance of key features of the Registered Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest, specifically those that lie adjacent to and that might be affected by the proposed development including the Oxford Approach and the Course. These features are highly significant elements of the designed landscape and integral to the understanding and enjoyment of the historic, architectural and artistic interest of the heritage assets.
- The HIA does not include any historic mapping or images (as suggested in HEAG279 Statements of Significance, p.15) to help define significance and explain the role of the proposed development site within the historic designed landscape to a sufficient level of detail.
- There is no assessment of significance of the existing trees as historic planted features, specifically two limes (T11 & 12) planted c.1875, a sycamore (T9) of c.1900, three limes of c.1910 (T13, T14 & T15) and an oak (T2) of c.1911.
- There is no map showing the location of all heritage assets and features referred to in the text making it difficult to understand their spatial relationship with the proposed development site.

6.4 Chapters 5, 6 & 7 of the HIA understate the impacts of the proposed development on the heritage assets for the following reasons:

- The location map of the proposed development site is not clear and the blue circle does not reflect the full extent and scale of the proposed building.
- Chapter 4 (description of the built and planted proposals for the scheme) only highlights the removal of T9 (mature sycamore) and makes no reference to the removal of other historic trees including T11 a lime of c.1875, T13 a lime of c.1910 and T2 an oak of c.1911. Chapter 5 makes

no reference to or assessment of the impact of the loss of these trees which form part of the heritage asset.

- The assessment of impacts on the Registered Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest (HIA paras 5.6 – 5.7) appears to focus on the assertion that the development will result in less than substantial harm, rather than a robust assessment of the impacts which would include loss of historic trees, loss of later woodland that continues to fulfil a historic design function, impacts on historic views and circulation and impacts on historic character.
- The assessment of impacts on the Registered Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest (HIA para 5.7 suggests that Stowe can accommodate '*such a discreet development*' due to its '*scale and complexity*' and '*its history of dynamic adaptation without undue harm to its significance.*' There is no supporting analysis or evidence to suggest why the development is discreet or why there is not undue harm to its significance.
- Para 5.12 appears to be assessing the Music School rather than the proposed development.
- There is no reference in Chapter 5 to the impacts arising from the removal trees and how that will affect the sylvan backdrop to Home Park, which in turn affects the setting of the Grade I listed Rotondo and Grade I listed Queen Caroline's Monument.
- Viewpoints from the Oxford Approach in the vicinity of Lee's Bastion have not been considered by the HIA as they are considered to '*reflect current use and experience of this part of the RPG*' and on the basis that the view from Lee's Bastion was not reciprocal. The Oxford Approach and the Course are highly significant historic designed approaches to Stowe that are intrinsically linked to multiple listed buildings. As such, any impacts to this historic approach (e.g. loss of historic trees, loss of later woodland that continues to fulfil a historic design function, impacts on historic views and circulation and impacts on historic character) must be considered and included in the HIA.
- The reference to size of development relative to the overall size of the Registered Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest is used to downplay the impact of the development e.g. '*its modest size*' (para. 5.30) and '*the size of the proposed development in relation to the RPG (0.13 ha: c. 500ha)*' (para 5.7) oversimplifies the level of impacts and does not overcome the fact that there will be harm.
- The HIA's suggestion that the location of the proposed development is '*within existing development*' (para. 5.30) is misleading as the development would extend the developed area into a site that currently contains no buildings and is largely an area of woodland that contains historic trees and fulfilled a historic design function.
- In Chapter 6 of the HIA there is a suggestion that the proposed DTE building's '*modernist design, like that of the Music School, enables the building to respect “its C18 setting and (does) not attempt to compete with the C18 design”*'. The underlined portion of this statement is quoting the Historic Landscape Analysis & Conservation Statement which identified potential for new build in the area of Music School '*to which the present site is adjacent.*' This statement does not consider the cumulative impact of the proposed DTE, the Music School and other more recent buildings (e.g. the West 5 Boarding House) and appears to use a previous study to justify the development as it lies adjacent to a site previously considered to be appropriate for development.
- Para 6.6 suggests that the proposed mitigation planting '*enhances and better reveals the significance of this area in accordance with NPPF Paragraph 200.*' This overstates the positive impact of the proposed mitigation planting and fails to reflect the impacts associated with the addition of a new building within such a significant landscape. This positive impact is again overstated in para. 6.8.
- Para. 6.12, bullet 1 suggests that the proposed DTE is '*a recessive design that responds sensitively to the historic environment*' without explaining how an understanding of the historic landscape has informed the design. Para 6.12 continues '*within the context of other existing*

development' implying that development is therefore more acceptable without considering cumulative impacts.

- Para 6.12, bullet 2 suggests that '*the screening of the building by period correct planting which simultaneously enhances the character of this part of the RPG and, by association, the setting of the listed buildings.*' This overstates the positive impact of the mitigation planting and fails to reflect the fact that the character of the historic designed landscape will be denuded.
- Para 6.13, bullet 3 downplays the impact of the visibility of the proposed DTE building by suggesting that '*...by year 15, the impact of the proposed development experienced from these viewpoints (1&3) is substantially reduced through the combination of maturing planting and the context of existing development.*' This statement implies that the presence of existing development provides justification for further development, without adequately considering cumulative impacts and fully explaining the extent of harm to historic planting and character.
- Verified views 2 and 4 (Landscape Supporting Information, Appendix B) are not referenced in the HIA even though they show views from Nelson's Walk, a key element in the historic designed landscape that will be subject to landscape and visual impacts.
- Viewpoint 1 (Landscape Supporting Information, Appendix B) which will be subject to change is not considered by the HIA even though this viewpoint relates to the Home Farm which dates to the 18th century and is a Public Right of Way from which the historic, architectural and artistic interests of the heritage assets can be understood and enjoyed.
- Viewpoint 13 (Landscape Supporting Information, Appendix B) '*from which there is potential for rooftops to be seen*' is not considered by the HIA even though this viewpoint relates to the highly significant Buckingham Approach and Grade I listed Corinthian Arch and located adjacent to a Public Right of Way from which the historic, architectural and artistic interests of the heritage assets can be understood and enjoyed.
- Possible views from the wider parkland to the south (New Park) specifically the Queen's Drive and the Perimeter Walk which are in part along the same line of a Public Right of Way from which the historic, architectural and artistic interests of the heritage assets can be understood and enjoyed are not considered. In this case the kinetic views provide sequential views to several of the listed buildings within Stowe Garden).
- Possible views in addition to those from the submitted verified viewpoints from Home Park from which the historic, architectural and artistic interests of the heritage assets can be understood and enjoyed are not considered.

LVIA and associated supporting information (Quartet Design, October 2020)

- 6.5 A detailed review of the LVIA has been carried out by the Buckinghamshire Council Landscape Architect (see Section 5 of this report) and I would concur with her views, which are not repeated in detail here.
- 6.6 In addition to the Landscape Architect's comments, I would raise the issue of selection of viewpoints and mapping visibility (see Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, LI & IEMA 2013, paras 6.6 – 6.12) as this is an essential stage in establishing the visual effects baseline and can play an important part in the different stages of the iterative design process. Critically it can '*contribute to the early stages of site design and assessment to determine the potential visibility of a site compared to a similar development located on an alternative site...*' The LVIA doesn't appear to include either a manual mapping analysis or Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) map to inform viewpoint selection or comprehensively analyse potential visibility. A ZTV would help address the final four bullet points of para. 6.4 above and is a fundamental building block for LVIA which has not been provided by the applicant.

- 6.7 Quartet Design have provided a response to the Landscape Architect's comments (dated March 2021) and in turn, the Buckinghamshire Council Landscape Architect has responded. I would also concur with her latest response, the most relevant points to the historic designed landscape being (in italics):

In my previous response I set out the existing baseline landscape character and visibility of the site, and identified both the landscape character and visual impact of the proposed application on the site itself and the wider landscape context. In summary, a building of the mass and scale proposed would have adverse landscape character effect on the proposed location and I am unconvinced that the proposed vegetation or wooded setting would 'hide' the building from view. The mitigation proposed to justify the site location would not be adequate or sufficient to eliminate the harm of developing this site. I do not feel that the proposals complement the physical characteristics of the site and the surroundings, nor do they feel part of the historic scale and context of the landscape setting. This application would extend development into a nationally () important valued landscape, and I am unable to see how the visual and character impacts on the site and surrounding context as a result of the proposal, could be adequately mitigated.*

- 6.8 (*) Please note that the valued landscape of Stowe has been consistently referred to as internationally important as per Section 3 of this report. This comment also applies to the significance that the LVIA assigns to Stowe, which is national rather than international (LVIA, para. 4.5).

The proposals have not changed and therefore my assessment of the landscape and visual impacts remains the same as my previous comments. The letter received from quartet design on 25.05.21 in response to my comments seeks to justify the siting of the proposal, 'in this location the building consolidates and coalesces with the existing adjacent school buildings' (1.0, pg. 1) the proposal has no relationship with the existing buildings and would exist as a separate entity located within the woodland. The proposed building is located within a unique landscape setting which greatly differs from existing school buildings, and therefore would not consolidate or coalesce with these.

'The majority of trees that are to be removed as part of the development are poor specimens and suitable replacements are to be provided to ensure that Pyramid Wood is retained and restored' (1.0, pg. 1) I fully comprehend that replacement trees proposed as part of the mitigation strategy would play a part in restoring the quality of the woodland but this cannot deflect from the issue that a large scale building is being located within the woodland setting, inherently changing the character of the site and imposing an urban influence on to it, permanently and significantly altering the baseline of the site.

- 6.9 I would add that the LVIA fails to sufficiently address the loss of trees of high and moderate quality as the Tree Survey Report (RGS, October 2020) states '*All A & B Category trees (high & moderate quality) will under normal circumstances be retained on development sites, and should ideally influence and inform the conceptual design, site layout, and in some cases the specific construction methods to be used...*' The LVIA suggests that '*the Site has no physical features which would inhibit development, although serious consideration on the impact upon existing trees must be factored into tailoring the design around these existing trees.*' Given the proposed removal of several high and moderate graded trees and impacts on others marked for retention, it is clear that tree retention has not been adequately factored into the design process.
- 6.10 The suggestion that '*The Majority of trees to be removed as part of the development are poor specimens*' does not make the remaining minority of trees of better quality less important.

The letter notes that 'The proposal does not compromise this structural landscape design of the 18th Century or reduce its visual significance or its visual contribution to the wider Stowe landscape. The

'intended function is retained within the landscape design' (2.0, pg. 2) I am unable to agree with this statement, the proposed development would wholly change this portion of Pyramid Wood, it would no longer be perceived as a woodland, which conflicts with the original landscape design of the 18th C and the Stowe Conservation Framework Plan: The School Estate (2012) which ensures the protection and restoration of this landscape. The letter further states 'The existing content of Pyramid Wood has been subject to change and devaluation over a considerable timescale and nothing remains of the original planting design of the shrub and understorey elements. The resulting planting has become a mixture of self-seeded and invasive species combined with random contributions over the years' (2.0, pg. 2) Recommendations were made in 2012, but these have not been acted upon. The landscape improvements proposed as part of this application are not solely for the benefit of the historic landscape, they are proposed as mitigation for a large scale building. The fact that Pyramid Wood has been unmanaged is not a justifiable reason for siting a building within it.

The letter goes on to state 'The architecture, materials and positioning of the building will allow the building to fit in with the surrounding woodland character' and 'that the landscape character is retained and impact would be minimal' (2.0, pg. 3) I am unable to see how this building fits in with the surrounding woodland context of the site, the proposal is a large monolithic rectangle made of masonry, brickwork and glazing which is not reflective of the character or materials found in the woodland. I believe the impact on landscape character as a result of the development has been underestimated.

- 6.11 The application includes a number of landscape proposals that include mitigation planting as part of the Home Park restoration, mitigation planting as part of the West House development and Home Park restoration, a path linking Home Park with the position of the Pyramid and onto Nelson's Walk, additional woodland understorey planting in the remaining sections of Pyramid Wood and replacement specimen trees along Nelson's Walk. With the exception of the proposed path these measures focus on the screening of the proposed buildings, but the majority are proposed on the lower slopes so are unlikely to replace the distinctive skyline woodland backdrop currently provided by Pyramid Wood.



Figure 6.1: Extract from Quartet Design Landscape Architects drawing QD770_104 showing wider restoration elements

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 This report provides a review of application 20/03822/APP for a proposed new Design Technology & Engineering (DTE) building for Stowe School.
- 7.2 The need for the School to continue to provide outstanding facilities and the contribution that it makes to the conservation of Stowe is understood and clearly stated in the material submitted with the application.
- 7.3 The DTE application has been under development for several years and Council Officers and Historic England have provided pre-application advice. The proposed DTE scheme appears to have changed very little despite that pre-application advice and therefore the same concerns remain and are repeated in the Council Officers and Historic England's responses to the current application.
- 7.4 Having reviewed the application for a new Design Technology & Engineering (DTE) building I would provide the following conclusions:
- ***The proposed development site lies within a heritage asset of the highest significance which has been described by multiple experts as of international importance*** (A Grade I Registered Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest in England) that contains multiple component features (including Grade I listed buildings) in close proximity. Stowe's designation as a Conservation Area and as an Area of Attractive Landscape further reflects its significance and sensitivity.
 - ***The proposed development site (Pyramid Wood) has been described*** in the Stowe Framework Conservation Management Plan: The School Estate (Rutherford, December 2012) ***as being of grade A significance (national or international significance)***.
 - ***The applicants HIA and LVA downplay the significance of Stowe and the proposed development site and underestimate the impacts of the proposed development.*** Both documents and subsequent correspondence responding to Council Officers comments seek to justify the proposed development, rather than provide robust and objective assessments. Council Officers have sought to address this by providing feedback, but that has not been taken on board by the applicant's advisors. Due to the concerns and omissions identified in Section 6 of this report these supporting documents should not be relied upon to make an informed planning judgement and Council Officers' own judgements, along with those of their appointed advisors, should be given greater weight in the planning balance.
 - ***The proposed development is not consistent or compatible with existing the local policy framework*** including Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan, 2004 (policies GP40, GP53, GP60 & RA8); Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (policies BE1, BE2 & NE5); Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment, 2008 (landscape guidelines) and the Stowe Framework Conservation Management Plan, 2012 (general conservation policies 2.2.6.3 & 4 and policy and recommendations for area 4B).
 - ***The level of harm to the designated and undesignated heritage assets is considered to be less than substantial, but the level of harm would be high and at the upper level of that scale*** as the proposed development will result in the following impacts:
 - The felling of four 19th and early 20th century trees and impacts on the root protection zones of three other trees that are likely to date to the third Duke of Buckingham's replanting and restoration and his daughter, Lady Kinloss' tenure that are classified as grade A (high quality) and B (moderate quality) in the tree survey. As stated in the applicant's own tree survey report, trees of such quality would be expected to be retained on a development site. This rule should be applied with additional weight, given the significance of the development site and its specific role in the designed landscape as a sylvan backdrop. The tree removal will remove physical evidence of the

- evolution of the historic designed landscape and render remaining historic trees highly vulnerable as construction will take place within their root protection zones.
- The removal of the historic trees and the later 20th century specimens will result in the loss of an important band of woodland that has served to provide a wooded backdrop to the Home Park and the Oxford Approach and The Course for over 280 years, resulting on a negative impact on the setting of multiple listed buildings and loss of a key element of the 18th century landscape design.
 - The replacement of the woodland with a large scale, rectangular building will fundamentally change the historic and current landscape character of the site that prevents the perpetuation of the wooded backdrop and skyline in the way it was historically intended. Aside from the loss of woodland with its associated canopy, shrub layer and ground flora, the underlying landform will be fundamentally altered by foundations and retaining walls.
 - The presence of a large-scale rectangular building will result in significant visual impacts for those walking to Lee's Bastion and along Nelson's Walk where the building would become a defining feature. In turn this would result in a negative impact on the setting of the Grade I Boycott Lodge.
 - A new large-scale building south of the new Music School, in an area that contains no buildings and is predominantly woodland, will result in a continuation of built from and extension of urban character, rendering the heritage assets ever more vulnerable to adverse visual impacts, particularly in winter and in the event of tree loss through disease, pests, climate change, lack of management or storms.
 - ***The full extent of heritage and landscape and visual impacts is not yet fully understood*** due to the lack of either a manual mapping analysis or Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) map to inform viewpoint selection or comprehensively analyse potential visibility. This could result in the need for further verified viewpoints to examine impacts in parts of the Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest that have yet to be considered.
 - ***The cumulative impact of piecemeal development in the area surrounding Pyramid Wood and including the proposed development has not been considered*** which is important given that '*the most significant landscape effects are likely to be those that would give rise to changes in the landscape character of the study area so as to result in significant effects on its key characteristics and even, in some cases, to transform it into a different landscape type.*' GLVIA, 2013). The school has also highlighted that there are additional future plans in terms of further proposed development and these have the potential to result in even greater cumulative impacts.
 - ***There is a clear need for an options appraisal and masterplan for the whole of the Stowe School Estate that is integrated with the National Trust Estate.*** The approach to development at Stowe appears to be being driven by current operational needs and market demands/funding availability, rather than a nuanced and creative approach to meeting those needs whilst respecting, conserving and enhancing the heritage assets.
- 7.5 Pyramid Wood is a highly significant and sensitive location for the proposed development. Development here would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area and would not preserve the special qualities of the settings of the listed buildings or the Registered Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest and Conservation Area.
- 7.6 The public benefits would need to be substantial to outweigh the harm. The proposed landscape mitigation and wider restoration proposals should be given relatively little weight, given that level of harm.



Your Ref: 20/03822/APP

Our Ref: CP0010

9 September 2021

Buckinghamshire Council
Aylesbury Area Planning Department
Walton Street
Aylesbury HP20 1UA

By email only: Diana.Locking@buckinghamshire.gov.uk and Sarah.armstrong@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

For the Attention of Diana Locking and Sarah Armstrong

Dear Diana and Sarah,

RE: APPLICANT'S FINAL COMMENTS

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the Council with any final comments on the recent work carried out by Mr Tickner on behalf of Buckinghamshire Council.

I enclose a short clarification note from Stowe School's landscape consultant, Quartet Design, which highlight factual matters that were in some instances dismissed by Mr Tickner when reaching his conclusions. Quartet's response is supported by way of cross-referencing information already submitted as part of the current planning application. I hope this is a helpful indication of the extensive and thorough work that Quartet has carried out.

The Council is also in receipt of Copperfield's letter dated 21 May 2021, which sets out the planning basis on which the application has been made (supported by technical submissions from both Quartet Design and Peter Stewart Consultancy). The conclusions of that letter and the clear evidence that supports them are explained in detail. It also sets out the clear and wide-ranging public benefits supported where relevant by appended documents.

Copperfield's letter of May 2021 explains the rationale that supports a conclusion that the public benefits outweigh the less than substantial harm to Stowe as a heritage asset. Therefore, in accordance with paragraph 11 of the NPPF, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is engaged and for the reasons outlined.

In reaching this conclusion, great weight was given to the asset's conservation, as well as consideration of alternative development options. As you know, design, technology and engineering are a key aspect of pupils education whether through STEM for the wider community or as part of the Stowe School curriculum. The provision of suitable teaching facilities is therefore an important component of maintaining the school as the

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optimum viable use of this part of the Stowe estate. The importance of Stowe School and the works that are carried out to support the heritage assets are self-evident on site.

I hope that the letter dated 21 May 2021 (including the appendices A1- A9), as well as the commentary from Quartet Design enclosed with this letter provides the Council with sufficient clarity. The team however, would be pleased to explain or amplify any of the points raised. I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely

Colin Danks MRTPI
Director
on behalf of Copperfield L&P Ltd

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Enc:

Appendix A1: Quartet Landscape and Design response



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Application Number: 20/03822/APP – New Design Technology & Engineering Building for Stowe School. Accommodation to include workshops, teaching rooms and staff facilities, with associated landscape works to immediate surroundings

Location: Stowe School, Stowe Park, Stowe, Buckinghamshire MK18 5EH

Response to Matthew Tickner's historic landscape advice relating to the above Planning Application dated 16th July 2021

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This is a constructive response to Matthew Tickner's review and advice commissioned by Buckinghamshire Council on the above application.

The responses from Quartet Design will follow the points and items that have been raised within his review document.

However, Quartet Design have responded to many of these points in previous responses to the Gardens Trust as well as the landscape officer at Buckinghamshire Council to address these concerns.

2.0 LVIA AND ASSOCIATED SUPPORTING INFORMATION (para 6.5)

There are queries on the selection of viewpoints included within the LVIA. The viewpoints included within the LVIA were selected by a desktop exercise by the method of mapping the visual envelopes on the Site with the use of OS base map and the production of a bare earth ZTV. (Mapping potential visibility followed the recommendations and were informed by the guidance given within GVLIA 3 Para 6.6-6.12)

Throughout the surrounding context of the Application Site there is a large amount of vegetation within the rolling topography of the landscape character at Stowe which limit views towards the Site. The potential wider viewpoints found by the initial mapping were found to be heavily screened during the Site assessment. There were many potential visual envelopes which upon further investigation were found to have no views of the Application Site . The LVIA correctly contains the most visible viewpoints.

Quartet Design is in the unusual position of having a considerable amount of existing local landscape information and context related to Stowe gathered in several ways over many years. This has been acquired via involvement with previous major projects at Stowe School and the Quartet Design's head office was within a 3km distance from the Site for 25 + years. Additionally, a Partner still lives within 3km and has done so for 34 years and is a regular walker in the Public Right Of Way's and local roads which surround Stowe and the surrounding district.

The combination of this local knowledge gathered through previous School projects and local recreational activity within the area together with professional interest and experience of the progressive programme of National Trust renovation of Stowe Gardens has provided a comprehensive field experience of the local landscape content, characteristics and complexions which have been experienced over the many visits and seasons over a considerable period of years. This knowledge/information base has provided a very robust baseline of guidance in respect of visual impact assessment as well as the guidance outlined by GLVIA 3.

3.0 EXISTING TREES (para 6.9)

The existing trees that are located on the Application Site were assessed by RGS Arboricultural Consultants and we have been advised and influenced by them on specific tree matters. It is noted within the RGS report that the tree stock is identified as mature.

Throughout the design process the positioning of the proposed building and associated FFL have been influenced by the existing trees and Site constraints to minimise impacts and retain trees. A percentage of the proposed building is located within a large area of existing hard surface and the majority of the trees to be removed are of the poorer conditions e.g. Group 1 'Fair/Poor including 4 dead and slender form' as stated in RGS tree report. It is suggested that these trees may have an historic association however this statement has not been verified.

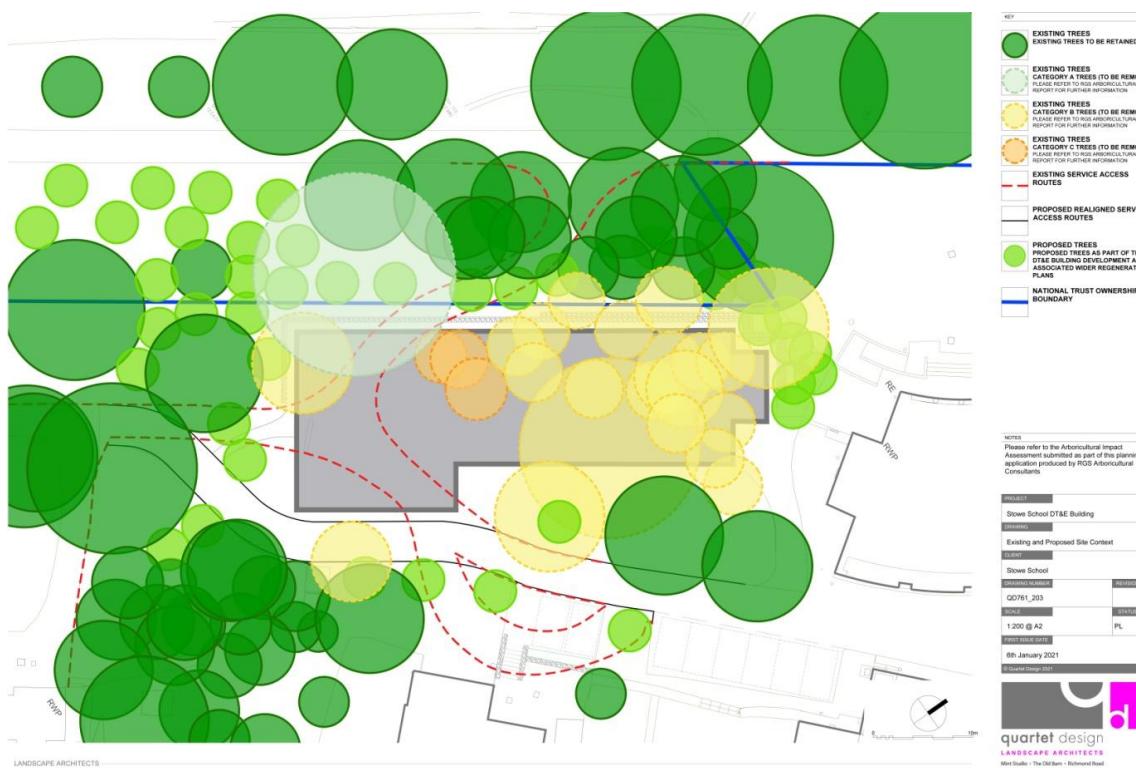
It should be noted that all the Pyramid Wood trees on the higher contour land associated with Nelsons Walk are retained and the existing belt from the music school to the existing access road are also retained as part of the proposed development. These trees are located within National Trust ownership land and do not form part of the building development and are retained. The retained trees on the National Trust land will maintain the visual presence of the Pyramid tree canopy.

The proposed building is located on the lower contours of Pyramid Wood and a percentage of the proposed building footprint occupies the existing service routes of the school and is subservient to the surrounding trees. The planting proposals associated with the scheme will complete the visual enclosure. This illustrated by the verified views.

In the context of the scale of Rooks Spinney the effect of the proposal is minimal. The existing trees located on the higher contours adjacent to Nelsons Walk are retained. The continuity of Pyramid Wood (Rooks Spinney) tree canopy between The Bodicote and Lee Bastion is maintained.

To ensure the long-term protection and historic integrity of Rooks Spinney Stowe School proposes to enter into a section 106 covenant against building or even applying for planning permission on the remainder of Pyramid Wood (Rooks Spinney). The provision of such a covenant as part of this proposal is intended to address concerns voiced by others about future development "creeping" along Pyramid Wood (Rooks Spinney).

The removals of the three trees referenced on the Site (T2 Oak, T9 Sycamore & T13 Lime) as part of the Application Site to facilitate the proposed building. As part of the Application there are an additional 36 No replacement trees would be planted within the site.



Site Context Plan

4.0 WIDER LANDSCAPE RESTORATION ELEMENTS (para 6.11)

Within the application there are a number of landscape restoration elements proposed which seem to have largely been dismissed. This would appear a missed opportunity in respect of the conservation and restoration of Stowe Gardens, particularly as key historic landscape design/tree components are in decline and in need of restoration work prior to their loss.

These elements are all identified or listed within the Rutherford Conservation Statement 2011 Recommendation.

The proposals also contain the opportunity to begin the restoration of some elements that have been lost to the Garden for some time and to create footpath links with Home Park and feature of the Western Garden.



Wider Landscape Restoration Elements Plan

4.1 **Pyramid Wood:** (Rooks Spinney). Tree management with restoration planting works over a 7 year period.

An important element of these restoration works is the renewal and reinstatement of the woodland understory planting throughout Pyramid Wood allowing for the woodland to regain its key function of the original 18th Century design principles. In addition this is supplemented by successional tree planting to ensure its status for future generations.

4.2 **Nelson's Walk:** Removal and replanting to a key line of trees due to infection

The existing Chestnuts to Nelsons Walk are in decline due to bacterial canker infection leading to the need to remove and replant. The Chestnuts are key design element of Nelson Walk and The Course and these proposals enable this work to commence immediately.

4.3 The Vanbrugh Pyramid location and Access.

As part of the wider landscape proposals is the clearance works to the Pyramid location which will also include tree new access footpaths and connections to the National Trust footpath network to Home Park and the wider Western Gardens which creating greater visitor experience and destination.

4.4 Home Park and School Interface

The planting of informal groups of trees on the edge to Home Park delivers succession planting to ensure long term continuity of the wooded edge in this sector of the garden. These works to the School boundary interface and the restoration of Home Park would be carried out in partnership with the National Trust.

These proposals are more fully described in the 'Landscape Restoration and Public Benefit Elements' (dated 27th October 2020) as submitted with the application

A significant factor is that the National Trust advise these Restoration and Public Benefit proposals would also create the opportunity to act as a catalyst to generate further funding opportunities from public donations and corporate sponsorship. Funding ongoing restoration for the Western gardens is a consideration as there are many unrestored elements of earlier garden by Vanbrugh, the improvement of which would also importantly widen the visitor experience of Stowe Gardens.

The restoration proposals are consistent with the overall Rutherford conservation recommendations. The proposals have been developed in close association and partnership with the National Trust and their restoration plans for the Western Garden at Stowe.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment conducted on the Site has been produced in accordance with and guided by GLVIA 3. The viewpoints selected within the LVIA were selected with the assistance of a ZTV.

Given that a ZTV is a bare earth baseline and the Stowe landscape and its wider landscape is a complex combination of built form, woodland and tree groups which create a tapestry of landscape effects and compartments the consideration of visual impacts and assessment is best carried out through extensive field surveys supported by ZTV's/

The magnitude of change and significance assessed as part of the LVIA has been considered along with a wide range of factors. GLVIA 3 requires the process of assessment of significance to be clearly defined for each project and to be expressed as transparently as possible. This has been explained within the methodology within the LVIA. The change in the view has additionally been fully considered by the use of winter assessment as well as the use of the verified viewpoints submitted as part of the planning application

The verified views comply with guidance from the GLVIA 3 and the TGN 6/19 Visual representation of development proposal guidance. The verified viewpoints represent the proposal in Y1 & Y15 and visually show the change to the viewpoint which overall we have assessed as not significant. It seems the review conducted on behalf of the LPA does not give the proper weight to the verified views and or the outcome that they show in support the overall Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects.

The proposed landscape scheme provides strong elements of replacement planting which replicates the original design objectives and content of the 18th Century. These include replacement tree planting to the immediate area of the development together with elements of replanting within Pyramid Wood to provide succession tree planting. Together with the tree planting, understorey planting is included, and the species specified will achieve heights of 2-3m.

These will be species of shrubs that reflect the historic wilderness garden and planting densities to achieve the character intended by the original planting design. The woodland edge planting will include lower decorative shrubs and herbaceous material and accord with the original design intent

As part of the above planning application is it proposed that a number of trees are removed. These trees are of varying quality as stated within the RGS Arboricultural Impact Assessment and some of them are part of mixed quality groups. The trees are identified as mature and are therefore reaching the latter stages of presence and contribution.

The Arboricultural consultant has highlighted that a large amount of trees within the Site have potentially less than 20 years life remaining. As part of the proposals succession tree planting is provided. The decline and condition of Pyramid Wood (Rooks Spinney) is referenced within the Rutherford report of 2011/12 as mentioned and referenced to within the numerous responses.

The existing content of Pyramid Wood (Rooks Spinney) has been subject to change and devaluation over a considerable timescale and nothing remains of the original planting design. The resulting planting elements within the wood have become a mixture of self-seeded and invasive species combined with some random tree planting contributions over the years.

The value of the trees as part of the wider landscape within the historical context has been taken into consideration throughout the design process. The positioning of the building on part brownfield land ensures that the effect upon the trees is kept to a minimum. The replacement trees as part of the landscape proposals also provide replacement trees with understorey planting based on the original plant species pallet from the 18th Century.

The combined landscape proposals will contribute and assist towards the continued restoration of Stowe Gardens and provide a positive and tangible public benefit for future generations whilst ensuring the continued historic integrity of Pyramid Wood.

The proposed Landscape Restoration and Public Benefit elements would offer a significant restoration opportunity to regenerate historic landscape design components that are in decline (and have been for significant time). Together with wider funding opportunities this part of the park can be managed and restored to ensure its continued presence for future generations to appreciate.