

Planning, Design and Access Statement

Offa House,
Village Street,
Offchurch,
Leamington Spa,
CV33 9AS

November 2021

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This planning, design and access statement is submitted in support of the application made for full planning permission and listed building consent for the removal of 20th Century extensions to Offa House, erection of a kitchen extension, refurbishment of the property and erection of two new dwellings.
- 1.2 The following paragraphs of this statement will address the relevant development plan policy and national planning policy guidance pertinent to the determination of the application and set out the reasons why planning permission should be supported.

2 THE SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1 The application site comprises the property known as Offa House and its associated residential curtilage and ancillary outbuilding (The Coach House), together with part of the residential curtilage of the more modest neighbouring property known as 'The Lodge Cottage.' Offa House is owned by Joe and Louise Hartog and; The Lodge Cottage is owned by another family member, Maggie Hartog.

- 2.2 Offa House is a large detached property dating from the early eighteenth century. The



property is a Grade II Listed Building situated on the northern side of Village Street set within the village of Offchurch Conservation Area. Offa House was originally constructed as a vicarage for the adjacent parish church but was later used as diocesan retreat house, during which time the property was extensively altered and extended. As a consequence of the former uses and periods of vacancy, the historic house is in a very poor condition and requires significant investment and restoration. At the present time, Joe, Louise and their children are currently residing within the 1980's wing of the property but

have always aspired to restore the historic house back to its former glory and to occupy it as their family home.

2.3 Whilst set within the Conservation Area, the application site is also situated within the identified Infill Village Boundary of Offchurch, within the designated Warwickshire Green Belt. Open countryside extends beyond the north and western site boundaries; Grade II* St. Gregory's church is situated to the east of the site; and, The Lodge Cottage is situated to the south. Residential properties face the site from the opposite side of Village Street.

2.4 There is a vehicular access and driveway to the site from Village Street to the east of The Lodge Cottage. This driveway leads to a parking area to the front and side of Offa House. There is a secondary access drive from Village Street located to the west of The Lodge Cottage site boundary. Within the extensive grounds of Offa House there is a detached ancillary outbuilding known as The Coach House.

An extract copy of the existing site plan is provided below.



2.5 Photographs of the existing Offa House and Coach House are provided below:



The principal elevation of the property (East elevation)



The rear of the property (West elevation) showing 20th Century extensions



Side (South elevation) showing 20th Century extensions



Side (Northern elevation) showing 20th Century extensions and spiral stair case.



The Coach House



The Lodge Cottage

Examples of existing properties within Village Street



2.6 Properties within Village Street vary in terms of their age, scale and design. There are examples of cottage style properties with associated outbuildings and converted rural buildings.

3 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- Planning permission was granted for the use of the property as short term refuge accommodation for refugees for a period of 5 years from November 2015 (planning reference **W/15/1738**). The 2015 planning permission was never implemented and the premises remained vacant.
- In December 2017 planning permission was secured for the change of use from retreat (Use Class Sui Generis) to dwelling (Use Class C3) under planning reference **W/17/2104**. That permission has been implemented and the 1980s single storey wing of the property is now occupied by the applicants.
- Since 2018 the applicants have sought planning permission and listed building consent for the refurbishment and restoration of Offa House - including internal alterations to support the use of the property as a single dwelling house together with single storey extensions, window and door alterations, 2no. dormer windows, re-roofing and new roof lantern. In addition to the works proposed to Offa House the proposals included the creation of 2no. additional dwellings. The two new dwellings were proposed in substitution for the partial demolition of the 1960's and 1980's later extensions to the main house. Unit 1 comprised a retained extension wing of Offa House with new extensions and Unit 2 comprised the existing ancillary Coach House with extensions.

The above proposals were submitted to Warwick DC under application references **W/18/2145** and **W/18/2146/LB**. Unfortunately the proposals were refused and subsequently dismissed under conjoined planning appeals APP/T3725/W/19/3232186 (Sec 78 appeal) and APP/T3725/W/19/3232187 (Sec 20 appeal) in December 2019.

- There was a further iteration of the proposals resulting in withdrawn applications **W/19/1908** and **W/19/1909/LB**.

4 THE PROPOSAL: use, amount, scale, appearance and access

- 4.1 The current proposals have been prepared following an assessment and considered reflection of the dismissed appeal proposals and the Inspector's reasoning. As part of the pre-planning development of the revised application, pre-application consultation was undertaken with Historic England and the Senior Conservation Adviser for the Georgian Group (a member of CAF).

4.2 Unlike the previously dismissed appeal, the current proposal includes the whole scale removal of the 20th Century wing extensions to Offa House. An extract copy of the demolition plan is provided below detailing the extent of built form to be demolished as that shaded red with a dashed red outline.



4.3 **Offa House**

As detailed above, the external works proposed to Offa House now include the whole scale removal of the existing 1960s and 1980s rear extensions (West elevation). The new extensions and external alterations include:

- Erection of a new single storey rear kitchen extension (West elevation) and alterations to the first and second floor fenestration.



Proposed rear elevation (West Elevation) with new kitchen extension and fenestration



Existing rear elevation (west elevation) with current 20th Century extensions proposed for removal

- Removal of the external commercial spiral stair case to the side (North elevation) and closure of corresponding doorway openings to the first and second floor, together with alterations to the fenestration details at ground floor level.

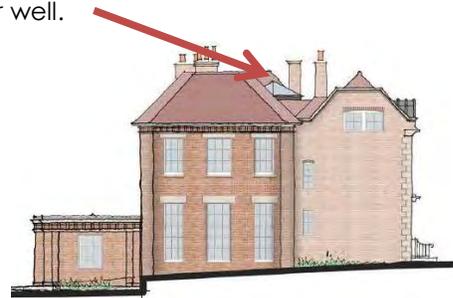


Proposed side elevation (North Elevation) with side view of proposed kitchen extension

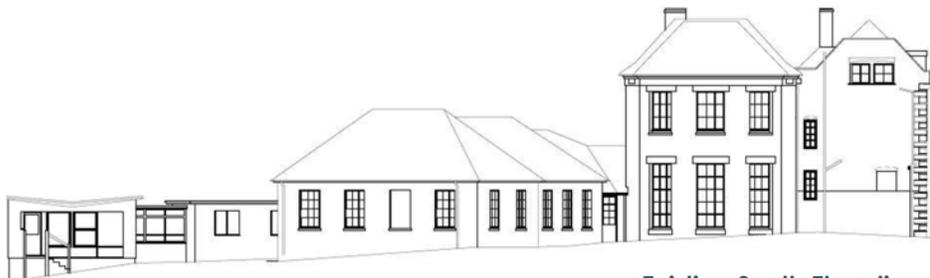


Existing side elevation (North Elevation) with external spiral commercial stair case and sprawling 1960s and 1980s extensions

- Insertion of a glazed lantern above the stair well.



Proposed South Elevation (to Village Street)

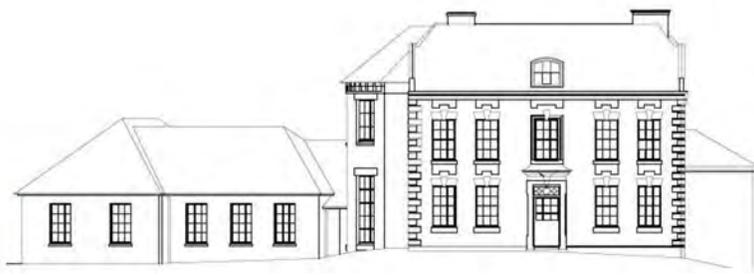


Existing South Elevation (to Village Street)

- Insertion of two new dormer windows to the principal elevation (East elevation).



Proposed principal elevation – showing removal of 20th Century extensions and new dormer windows.



Existing principal elevation with 20th Century extensions.

The total amount of footprint and cubic volume of the 20th Century extensions proposed for demolition from Offa House are tabulated below:

	Offa House as Existing (excl the Coach House)	20th Century extensions to be demolished	Offa House with proposed kitchen	% Difference to Offa House
Footprint	683.11m ²	420.26 m ²	281.33 m ²	- 58.82%
Volume	3,936.6 m ³	1,697.59 m ³	2360.25 m ³	- 40.04%

The internal alterations proposed to Offa House are described in the accompanying heritage statement prepared by Dr David Hickie.



4.4 **Property C**

Property C is a detached three bedroom property proposed to the north western corner of the site; north of the existing Coach House and west of Offa House as shown encircled red on the site plan extract adjacent.

The proposed dwelling has an L shaped floor plan configuration with the main section of the property two storeys in height and the right hand turn proposed as single storey accommodation.



Proposed front elevation



Proposed rear elevation

The design ethos for property C is chosen to emulate a traditional Coach House style property complementing the age and existing character of Offa House. The existing boundary wall and arched entrance is retained as a feature for property C. Property C is sensitively positioned and designed to form a complementary grouping with the existing outbuilding leaving the Coach House as a freestanding building. This is a significant change from the previously refused scheme which sought to extend and alter the Coach House to provide a new dwelling.

The location of property C was purposefully selected to not only complement the existing 'Coach House' but to also take advantage of the existing topography of the site. The artistic impression below shows property C in context with the existing landscape levels. Offa House is shown here in the foreground with the roof top of property C in the background. The Coach House, retaining wall and property C has a nestled position within the landscape and are



largely hidden from Offa House as a consequence.

Access for property C is taken from the existing point of access off Village Street to the west of the property known as 'The Lodge Cottage.' The driveway follows the line of the former avenue within the pleasure grounds of the historic house as detailed on historic maps. Amenity space is provided to the front and rear.

4.5 **Property D**

Property D is proposed as an infill plot within Village Street and is situated to the south of Offa House and west of The Lodge Cottage. Property D is shown encircled red on the site plan below. Property D is a detached three bedroom property and also has an 'L' shaped floor plan configuration.



Property D is situated on a pocket of land currently utilised as an extended garden area for The Lodge Cottage. Property D has been designed to respond to the topography of the street scene and has a split level formation providing two and single storey elements. The design ethos for this property adopts the style of a converted barn. This design solution not only ensures an ancillary relationship with Offa House and The Lodge Cottage but also seeks to complement the character of other properties elsewhere within the existing street scene. Artistic impressions of the proposed street scene are provided below.



The location of property D is an entirely new approach to the development from the previously dismissed proposals. The previous scheme proposed the partial retention of the 20th Century extensions to Offa House with newly added extensions to create a separate dwelling. Previously, all of the new development was clustered and arranged within a linear row set back within the site and in proximity to the main house.

Vehicular access to property D is taken from the existing point of access from Village Street. A new pedestrian access is also proposed to the side of the property through a newly formed archway within the boundary wall.

4.6 **Overall summary of existing and proposed built form**

	Total site as existing (Offa House & Coach House)	Total post development	% Difference
Footprint	733.35 m ²	624.03 m ²	-109.31 m ² -14.91%
Volume	4,141.16 m ³	4,093.73 m ³	-47.43 m ³ -1.15%
Internal floorspace	1032.56 m ²	1016.51 m ²	-16.05 m ² -1.55%
Hardstanding	1385.00 m ²	1054.50 m ²	-330.50 m ² -23.86%

5 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

5.1 In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 an application for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan relevant to this application is the adopted Warwick District Local Plan (adopted September 2017). The NPPF is also a material planning consideration in the context of S38(6).

Warwick District Local Plan

- **DS18** – Green Belt
- **H0** – Housing
- **H1 (c)** – housing development will be supported within the boundaries of Growth Villages and Limited Infill Villages.
- **H11** – Limited Village Infill Housing Development in the Green Belt.
- **HE1** – Designated Heritage Assets and their Setting
- **HE2** – Conservation Areas
- **HE4** - Archaeology
- **SCO** – Sustainable Communities
- **BE1** – Layout and Design
- **BE3** – Amenity
- **TR1** – Access and Choice
- **TR3** – Parking

Supplementary Planning Documents

- Residential Design Guide – July 2018
- Parking Standards – June 2018

Other material planning considerations - National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

5.2 The NPPF identifies the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. In achieving sustainable development the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives). The three overarching objectives are economic, environmental and social.

5.3 So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11). For decision taking this means:

- c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or
- d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

5.4 When decision taking, para 38 advises local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

5.5 ***Delivering a sufficient supply of homes***

Para 60 - to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed and that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed.

Para 69 – identifies that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area and are often built out relatively quickly. To promote the development of a good mix of sites local planning authorities should: (c) support the development of windfall sites through their policies and decisions – giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes; and (d) work with developers to encourage the sub-division of large sites where this could help to speed up the delivery of homes.

With regard to promoting sustainable development in the rural areas, paragraph 79 of the NPPF advises housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services.

5.6 ***Achieving well-designed places***

Para 124 advises that the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how

these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.

Para 134 – significant weight should be given to: (a) development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes.

5.7 **Green Belt**

Section 13 of the NPPF relates to Green Belt land. The construction of all new buildings in the Green Belt is inappropriate development by definition unless it relates to one of the exceptions listed at paragraphs 149 or 150 of the NPPF. The listed exceptions include:

- *Para 149 (c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;*
- *Para 149 (e) - Limited infilling in villages*
- *Para 149 (g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:
 - *not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or*
 - *not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.**

5.8 **Conserving and enhancing the historic environment**

Para 194 - 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 195 - 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 197 - 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.

Para 199. 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 200. 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 201. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- (a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
- (b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- (c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- (d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

Para 202. 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 206. 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.

6 POLICY ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 The Council has previously acknowledged that the principle of removing the unsympathetic additions to Offa House, its alteration and extension and the provision of new replacement development within the site boundaries is acceptable. However, the turning issues that culminated in the previous refusal, related to the impact of the proposals on the listed building and its setting, the conservation area and the openness of the green belt. As described above, the current proposals represent a complete overhaul and re appraisal of the previous scheme and the Inspector's reasoning. Unlike the previous proposals, the unsympathetic 20th Century additions are proposed for whole scale demolition and removal (whereas previously they were retained in part with extensions to create a new dwelling); the Coach House is to be retained as a freestanding building (whereas previously that was also proposed for extension, alteration and conversion to residential use); and, the new dwellings are sympathetically sited

to leave the immediate setting of the historic building free from development to ensure a fitting setting for the historic house.

It is considered the main issues for consideration are:

- The effect of the proposals on the special interest of the listed building, its setting and on the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- Whether the proposals would amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt and, if so, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm would be clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposals

Other development control considerations relate to:

- Design
- Impact on residential amenity
- Highway safety
- Ecology and landscaping
- Drainage and flood risk

Heritage Impact

6.2 In accordance with para 194 of the NPPF the applicant has described the significance of the heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The application is supported by a detailed heritage impact assessment prepared by Dr David Hickie, a former Regional Director of Historic England, and the pre-planning development of the current proposals were undertaken in pre-application consultation with both Historic England and the Senior Conservation Adviser for the Georgian Group (CAF member). An archaeological desk-based assessment has also been provided with the application pack to assess the likelihood and impact of the proposals on any archaeological significance.

A full appraisal of the previously refused scheme and associated dismissed appeal has been undertaken and the current proposals developed with a heritage led approach.

Effect of the proposals on Offa House and its setting:

As highlighted within the accompanying heritage impact assessment it was acknowledged under the previous appeal that, although they provide evidence of an important phase in the life of the building, the external alterations and extensions to facilitate the former retreat house appear almost entirely detrimental to the house's character and the existing 20th Century

wings added to the rear have a harmful effect on the building's integrity. As summarised in the supporting heritage impact assessment the works proposed to Offa House including: demolition of 20th Century extensions, removal of 20th Century partitioning to form rooms and bedrooms, external maintenance works, new kitchen extension and reinstatement of original dormer windows are all beneficial to the historic house. The new glazed roof lantern above the stair case and the proposed external works to the grounds of the historic house each have a neutral/minor impact. The proposals in their totality are of benefit to the significance of the historic asset and therefore meet with the objectives of policy HE1 of the development plan and the NPPF.

The pre-application comments received from both Historic England and The Georgian Society conclude, that considerable effort had been made to arrive at a sympathetic scheme and neither consultee had an objection in principle.

In order to be able to deliver the range of benefits to Offa House more than 50% of the current built form will be removed from the site and; as acknowledged by the Georgian Society this will **“both improve the setting of the grade II listed building and help to safeguard its viability as a single private dwelling, which is arguably its optimum viable use.”** However, in order to facilitate the removal of those 20th Century additions the proposals include the provision of some replacement/alternative development through the construction of two new standalone dwellings.

In terms of the plots C and D, the heritage impact statement notes that property C will have a beneficial impact and plot D a neutral/minor impact. Neither Historic England nor The Georgian Society had an objection in principle to the siting or scale of either of these new dwellings and their associated access points. It is concluded that the revised proposals meets the objectives of policy HE1 of the development plan and the NPPF.

Effect of the proposals on other nearby listed buildings:

Other than Offa House itself, the nearest designated heritage asset is located at the Grade II* Church of St Gregory. It is concluded within the heritage impact assessment that by virtue of the enhancement provided to Offa House, the proposals are also of benefit to the setting of this heritage asset.

Effect of the proposals on the conservation area:

The proposals provide an enhancement to the setting of Offa House which in turn contributes to the character of the Conservation Area. The careful siting of the two new dwellings ensures

an appropriate setting for the historic house. The heritage impact assessment concludes the proposals provide a benefit to the conservation area.

The development meets with the objectives of development plan policy HE2 and the NPPF.

Archaeology:

A desk based archaeological investigation has been undertaken and the report provided with the application pack. The assessment has evaluated the potential for buried remains to occur within the site and the extent to which the proposed development will impact on these remains. The report concludes:

- There is a moderate-high potential for the proposed development to disturb archaeological remains relating to the medieval occupation of Offchurch.
- There is high potential for buried structural remains associated with Offa House and its numerous former outbuildings, which are depicted on historic mapping, to lie buried within the site. Such remains would retain little evidential and historic value and would accordingly be of limited heritage significance. However, any such buried structural remains identified in the site would have the potential to inform further about the use, status and development of Offa House.
- Although no significant archaeological remains have been identified within the site, the development is at a scale that has the potential to have a significant impact on any archaeological remains present.

WCC Archaeology has previously assessed the site in response to the previous applications and the County Archaeologist previously recommended a condition be attached requiring the provision of a written scheme of investigation and an Archaeological Mitigation Strategy document. The applicant does not object to the inclusion of such a planning condition.

The proposal is considered to be in accordance with Local Plan Policy HE4.

Conclusions:

For the reasons set out above, the heritage impact assessment prepared by Dr David Hickie and the pre-application feedback from both Historic England and the Georgian Society, it is concluded that the proposals are a demonstrable improvement over the previous schemes; they better reveal the significance of Offa House, leave it free from unsympathetic modern intrusions to provide a fitting setting for the historic house. In heritage terms, it is considered the

proposals offer significant betterment and meet with the objectives of development plan policies HE1, HE2, HE3 and HE4.

Green Belt Policy

6.3 The NPPF confirms the great importance of Green Belts, whose essential characteristics are their openness and their permanence. Inappropriate development in the Green Belt is harmful by definition and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The limited categories of new building that are not inappropriate in the Green Belt are defined by paragraphs 149 and 150 of the NPPF. Policy DS18 of the adopted Warwick District Local Plan states the Council will apply national planning policy to proposals within the Green Belt.

In assessing the current proposals against green belt policy it is apparent that the application is comprised of two interlinked elements:

1. Partial demolition, extensions and alterations to Offa House
2. Erection of two new build properties

With regard to the first aspect of the application and the works proposed to Offa House, in terms of green belt policy this element of the development can be considered against the exception test provided at para 149 (c) of the NPPF relating to the extension or alteration of an existing building.

Para 149 (c) provides policy support for the extension or alteration of a building within the green belt so long as it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.

It is clear from the table provided at section 4.3 and page 12 of this document, that Offa House was altered and extended considerably during the 1960s and 1980s and that the current proposals include the removal of some 58.82% of existing footprint and 40% cubic volume; the proposed addition of a modest single storey new kitchen extension to the rear elevation is clearly both subordinate and proportionate to the original dwelling. The extension proposals to Offa House do not therefore result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building and thereby meet with Policy DS18 of the development plan and the exception test at para 149 (c) of the NPPF.

The whole scale demolition and removal of the 20th Century additions is clearly intertwined with the second element of the proposal relating to the construction of the two new detached dwelling. The exception tests of relevance to this aspect of the proposal include:

- Para 149 (e) - Limited infilling in villages
- Para 149 (g) Limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land

6.4 ***Property D - Limited infilling in villages:***

Limited infilling is not inappropriate development within the designated Green Belt and this is supported by development plan policies H1 (c) and Policy H11 of the adopted Warwick District Local Plan.

Whilst there is no definition of 'limited infilling' provided within the NPPF, adopted development plan policy H11 seeks to clarify what the Council considers "limited infilling" to be in the context of the district's green belt. Policy H11 requires development to be located within a Limited Infill Boundary as shown on the adopted Policies Map and to be in accordance with the following list of criteria:

- a) The development is no more than two dwellings;*
- b) The development comprises the infilling of a small gap fronting the public highway between an otherwise largely uninterrupted built up frontage, which is visible as part of the street scene; and*
- c) The site does not form an important part of the integrity of the village, the loss of which would have a harmful impact upon the local character and distinctiveness of the area.*

The application site is situated within the identified 'Limited Infill Boundary' for Offchurch as defined by adopted Policies Map 14. The extent of the infill village boundary is identified on the submitted site plan as a dashed purple line. The application site is wholly within the infill village boundary. The proposal therefore meets with the first requirement of Policy H11.

- Criterion (a)

The application meets with criterion (a) of Policy H11 which seeks to restrict limited infilling to no more than two units.

- Criterion (b)

Criterion (b) requires the following conditions to be present:

1. "small gap" in a largely uninterrupted built up frontage
2. Fronting the public highway and visible within the street scene

It is acknowledged that property C would not meet criterion (b) of policy H11 on the basis that the property is set back from Village Street and not visible within the established street scene. Whilst it is accepted that property C does not meet the exception test at para 149 (c) it is contended that this property can be considered under the exception test at para 149 (g) and the merits of which will be discussed later in this report.

Unlike property C, property D is situated within the established street scene. This is a marked difference from the previously refused scheme which saw development positioned within the centre of the site away from the street scene.

The village boundary and range of existing village buildings extend beyond the east, west, north and southern boundaries of property D. Village Street is made up of clusters of development arranged in an alternating pattern of built form on positioned either side of the road. An aerial image of the alternating pattern of built form is shown below. It is considered that this continuous alternating pattern of development creates the sense of an uninterrupted built frontage passing through this section of the village.



The new dwelling proposes to fill a small gap between an existing access drive to Offa House and the existing residential property at The Lodge Cottage. The property fronts onto the public highway and is visible within the street scene.

A copy of the proposed street scene showing property D and the neighbouring property is provided below.



In the context of the established character of Village Street, it can be concluded that property D fills a small gap within a largely uninterrupted built up frontage, fronts onto the public highway and is visible within the street scene. On that basis, it is submitted that property D meets with criterion (b) of policy H11.

- Criterion (c)

Whether a site forms an important part of the integrity of the village, the loss of which would be harmful, is a matter of planning judgement.

The area of the site proposed for property D already has a residential use attributed to it by association with the neighbouring property The Lodge Cottage. The parcel of land proposed for development is largely concealed behind the existing boundary wall situated along Village Street. The existing landscaping contained within this parcel of land currently conceals the grounds of Offa House which is located behind it.

The Lodge Cottage and the parcel of land proposed for property D was not previously included as part of the application site. It is only since its recent acquisition by Maggie Hartog that this particular property is available and encompassed into the application site. Whilst the previous appeal Inspector concluded the green space of Offa House, as a whole, contributes to the character of the village, it is contended that the small scale parcel of land assigned for property D does not form an integral part of the village nor would its development have a harmful impact upon the local character and distinctiveness of the area.

The supporting heritage impact assessment and the observations of the pre-application consultees conclude that the position of this building would neither harm the listed building, nor The Lodge Cottage nor would it have a harmful impact on the character and setting for the Conservation Area. As shown by the site photographs provided at section 2 above there are other examples of cottage style properties with neighbouring converted rural buildings found elsewhere within the vicinity of the site along Village Street. The character of existing development inspired the design approach for property D from conception stage resulting in a development sympathetic to its setting. Thus, rather than harm the integrity of the village, it is concluded that the style and character of the development would reinforce it. What's more, with the removal of existing trees, and proposed use of the access drive, it is considered there is the potential for the development to provide more opportunity to view Offa House from the public realm to better reveal the significance of the historic building.

It is concluded the proposal does not frustrate the objectives of criterion c of Policy H11.

Based on the above it is concluded that property D meets the definition of infill village housing and is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

6.5 **Property C – Limited infilling or partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land:**

The limited infilling or partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land is also not inappropriate development in the green belt provided the development:

- does not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development.

Property C is essentially proposed in replacement of the built form proposed for demolition from Offa House and therefore seeks the partial redevelopment of previously developed land.

The impact of property C on the openness of the green belt should be appraised with reference to both quantitative and qualitative assessment.

In quantitative terms it is apparent that the combined impact of Property C (together with the kitchen extension to Offa House) has a lesser impact than the existing 20th Century extensions proposed for demolition. This is tabulated below:

	1960s & 1980s Demolition	Property C	Kitchen extension to Offa House	% Difference
Footprint	420.26m ²	197.4m ²	18.48m ²	-48.63%
Volume	1697.59m ³	1030.63 m ³	121.24m ³	- 32.15%

In addition to the clear benefit in quantitative terms, property C also has a lesser impact on openness in qualitative terms.

The current 20th Century extensions to Offa House have a sprawling effect across the site, and present an elongated and incoherent arrangement of two and single storey development. The current structures largely fill the width of the site. In contrast to this, property D is proposed as a detached standalone building. The position of the new dwelling is purposefully selected to optimise on the natural topography, occupying a nestled position within the site. An extract copy of the site section showing the existing and proposed built form is provided below.



As clearly shown by the site section above, the proposed reconfigured and repositioned built form actually increases the sense of openness across the site from what currently exists. Moreover, in design terms, the architectural quality and character of the replacement built form is of a far superior quality to that which it seeks to replace.

The access drive proposed for property C is an existing one and can be seen on historic maps as an existing site feature. The Georgian Society comment within their pre-application advice, that the reinstatement of the driveway/ avenue through the site to access the Coach House and property C is an appropriate form of development. A copy of the pre-application response is provided in the accompanying heritage impact statement.

In addition to reducing the extent of built form across the site, preventing sprawl and consequently improving the sense of openness, it is clear that the development as proposed also provides significant opportunity to reduce the extent of hardstanding across the site and increased landscaping.

It is noted that concerns were previously raised in response to the earlier application submissions over the prospect of domestic paraphernalia associated with three separate dwellings and a resulting harmful impact on openness. It is submitted that the careful design and siting of the revised proposals negate these previous objections. Property C is situated within an area of the site previously occupied by development (as shown on historic maps), it also occupies a nestled position, contained by the existing Coach House wall boundary and not visible from within the street scene. Property D is situated within an existing residential curtilage. As shown on the axonometric plan, the grounds surrounding Offa House remain open providing an appropriate setting for the historic house. It is concluded that the reduction in built form, reconfigured layout and significantly reduced hardstanding, the current proposals

have a far lesser impact on openness than the alternative uses previously supported at the site.

It is concluded that property C meets the exception test at para 149 (g) of the NPPF and is not inappropriate development in the green belt.

Whilst it has been concluded that the various elements of the proposal meet with the relevant exception tests at



para 149, as detailed in the table provided at para 4.6 above, even when the development is assessed in quantitative terms as a whole (i.e. the extension to Offa House, property C and D), there still remains an overall reduction in built form across the site from what currently exists to the benefit of openness to the green belt and setting of the heritage asset.

6.6 **Are there any special circumstances?**

For the reasons already set out above, it is concluded that the proposal is not inappropriate development by definition. Notwithstanding those conclusions, should the Council conclude that there is a conflict with green belt policy, it is submitted that there are very special circumstances in this case that would justify the grant of planning permission.

It is no secret that Offa House has suffered from years of inappropriate development as a consequence of its varying former uses. It is common ground between all parties concerned that this historic building would benefit significantly from the removal of the unsympathetic 20th Century additions and a programme of sensitive restoration. As identified in this statement, in order to achieve those results considerable investment and the loss of more than 50% of the current built form is required. It is unrealistic to expect the building to be reduced so drastically in scale without some form of alternative or replacement development on the site. The Council has previously accepted that the delivery of some replacement development is acceptable in principle and this is also supported by both Historic England and The Georgian Society.

The development, as proposed, brings significant benefit in heritage terms to better reveal the special architectural character of Offa House and its setting. We are advised at para 206 of the NPPF that 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.

In consideration of the clear public benefit of these revised proposals in seeking to preserve and enhance the historic environment for future generations, securing the optimum use of the asset and the clear benefits to the historic house in seeking its sensitive restoration and long term future, it is concluded that this amounts to the very special circumstances required to outweigh any harm to the green belt by reason of inappropriateness.

Design

- 6.7 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) places significant weight on ensuring good design which is a key aspect of sustainable development. Development should positively contribute towards making places better for people. Warwick District Council's Local Plan Policy BE1 reinforces the importance of good design and requires development to be constructed using appropriate materials and seeks to ensure that the appearance of the development and its relationship with the surrounding built and natural environment does not detrimentally impact the character of the local area.

It is concluded that the proposal has carefully considered the character of the built environment and delivers a high quality scheme in accordance with the objectives of BE1 of the development plan and NPPF.

Residential amenity

- 6.8 Warwick District Local Plan Policy BE3 requires all development to have an acceptable impact on the amenity of nearby users or residents and to provide acceptable standards of amenity for future users or occupiers of the development. The Residential Design Guide provides a framework for Policy BE3, which stipulates the minimum requirements for distance separation between properties.

There is ample separation distance between Offa House and the proposed new properties to ensure a high standard of amenity for existing and future occupiers.

The nearest neighbour to the site is at The Lodge Cottage. The development in closest proximity to this neighbour is proposed property D. As shown on the site plan these properties have a side by side relationship within the street scene. The topography and split level design of property D means the nearest built form to The Lodge Cottage is of single storey proportion. Whilst there are side facing windows to The Lodge Cottage there are no side facing windows within the side elevation of property D. In addition, given the single storey design of the side wing of property D, it is considered that there is no loss of privacy or cause for concern with reference to overshadowing for the existing neighbour.

All of the properties have an appropriate level of private amenity space.

The development would provide a high quality living environment for future and existing occupiers. The development meets with the objectives of Policy BE3 of the development plan and the Residential Design Guide.

Highways and Parking

- 6.9 Paragraph 109 of the Framework indicates that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

The proposal utilises two existing access points for Offa House. There is ample space within the site to accommodate parking for each of the properties and to allow for vehicles to turn and exit the site in a forward facing gear.

The scale of development and associated traffic movements are significantly reduced from the uses previously supported at this site.

It is concluded that there are no highway safety reasons to prevent the development. It is noted that there was previously no objection from the relevant highway authority with regard to highway safety.

The development is considered to be in accordance with the NPPF and Local Plan Policies TR1 and TR3.

Ecology

- 6.10 The application site has previously been identified as part of a large Ecosite (Offchurch Bury Park Ref. 41/36), which is a non-statutory site identified by the Warwickshire Biological Records Centre (WBRC) as having some ecological value and recorded history. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has previously been undertaken and an updated bat survey is provided as part of the application pack. There are no ecological impact reasons to prevent the development.

- 6.11 **Landscaping**

The application is accompanied by a tree survey and associated removal and landscaping plan. The trees proposed for removal are clearly identified on the tree removal plan as those shaded red.

There are two sycamore trees at the site frontage proposed for removal and identified as T29 and T30 on the tree plan. Both of these trees are noted as being in a poor condition within the tree survey. Similarly, those trees identified for removal located elsewhere within the site are also in a poor condition and not particularly good specimens.

The extent of tree removal has been kept to a minimum and it is proposed that suitable compensatory landscaping can be secured by planning condition.

Drainage and Flood Risk

6.12 The application site lies within Flood Zone 1. There are no drainage or flood risk concerns to prevent the development.

7 OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

7.1 In summary:

- The revised proposal has been carefully considered and developed following a full analysis of the previously refused scheme.
- The revised submission has been progressed in consultation with relevant consultees at Historic England and The Georgian Society and neither of which raised any principle objections to the proposals.
- The proposal will deliver significant benefit in heritage terms to the historic house in accordance with policy HE1 of the development plan and NPPF.
- The development can be delivered without causing a negative impact on other nearby designated assets including the conservation area in accordance with the objectives of development plan policies HE1 and HE2 and the NPPF.
- The proposal is not inappropriate development in the green belt and delivers proposals meeting the exceptions tests relevant to the extension of an existing building, limited village infilling and the redevelopment of previously developed land in accordance with the development plan and NPPF.
- Notwithstanding the conclusions reached over the appropriate form of development proposed in green belt policy terms, it is submitted that the significant heritage benefits of the proposals would provide the very special circumstances to outweigh any identified conflict with green belt policy in any event.
- The proposal is a high quality design in accordance with development plan policy BE1 and the NPPF.
- There are no concerns for residential amenity in accordance with development plan policy BE3 and the Residential Design Guide SPD.

- The development can be delivered without negatively impacting highway safety.
- There are no ecological, landscaping or drainage reasons to prevent the development.
- The proposal meets with the objectives of the development plan and NPPF.
- The proposal represents sustainable development and in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development can be supported without delay.

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