

NOVEMBER 2023

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

LAND AT WOODSIDE DRIVE, ALMONDSBURY

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Statement of Significance has been prepared by Stokes Morgan Planning on behalf of Freemantle Developments (Almondsbury) Ltd. It is required because the site shares a boundary with a Grade II Listed building, and the brick wall on that boundary is included in the listing description (but would not be affected by the proposals).
- 1.2 The Statement accompanies a detailed planning application for the erection of 3no. buildings with a combined floorspace of 2,843sqm for flexible uses within Class E (g i, ii and iii), Class B2 and Class B8 together with associated access, landscaping works, and drainage.
- 1.3 This statement assesses the proposed developments' impacts on the adjoining listed building's architectural and historic importance, in a manner that is proportionate to the proposed scale of development.

2. APPLICATION SITE & SURROUNDINGS

LOCATION

- 2.1 The application site lies on the southern edge of Almondsbury, adjoining but outside the defined settlement boundary, approximately 170m north of Junction 16 of the M5 and approximately 900m northwest of the M4/M5 Almondsbury Interchange. The Bristol North Fringe lies to the south with Aztec West on the opposite side of the M5.
- 2.2 Housing on Oaklands Drive and Woodside Drive enclose the site to the north, separated by an Ambulance Station. The Gloucestershire FA Headquarters sit to the west, on the opposite side of Woodside Drive, with the North Bristol Rugby Football Club beyond. The land to the south between the site and the motorway is occupied by the National Highways Motorway Depot and to the east, the site is bordered by the A38 with Almondsbury Sports and Social Club beyond.

HERITAGE ASSETS

2.3 There are no heritage assets (designated or undesignated) on the site, however there is a Grade II listed building; Pear Tree Cottage, to the north-east of the site, separated by a stone wall and an established garden with mature trees and shrubs along the boundary.

2.4 The listing states:

“House. Early C19 refronting of earlier house with C20 alterations. Brick, rubble at rear with stone dressings, rendered sides and slate roof with gable stacks. L-plan. 2 storeys and 4 windows, all with pointed arch and Y-tracery with impost-blocks, keys and cills, door in second bay from right with pointed arch, brick relieving arch with stone impost-blocks and key. Left bay recessed at first floor level containing round headed window and stone string courses, parapet wall ramped down at each side, brick coped. Rear has C20 central porch and door in stone pointed arch, windows as on front, projecting wing to right with gable and wooden eaves cornice on blocks, brick strings and quoins, C20 extension to left. At front, boundary wall in brick with stone coping on rubble and black brick plinth, ramps down to right over C20 garage doors and extends about 30 metres, with single pointed arched opening in brick surround with plank door with studs and strap hinge.”

2.5 The site is outside Almondsbury Conservation Area and is not visible in views to or from it.

SITE DESCRIPTION

2.6 The site itself is triangular in shape with a site area of 1.1ha. Currently vacant with no planning use, it previously formed part of the estate to Oaklands House, now demolished and redeveloped as a care home.

2.7 Access to the site is via the A38 dual carriageway and onto Gloucester Road and subsequently Woodside Drive, which is a private road, built to adoptable standards, under the control of the applicant.

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2.8

Figure 1: Google Earth view of Pear Tree Cottage



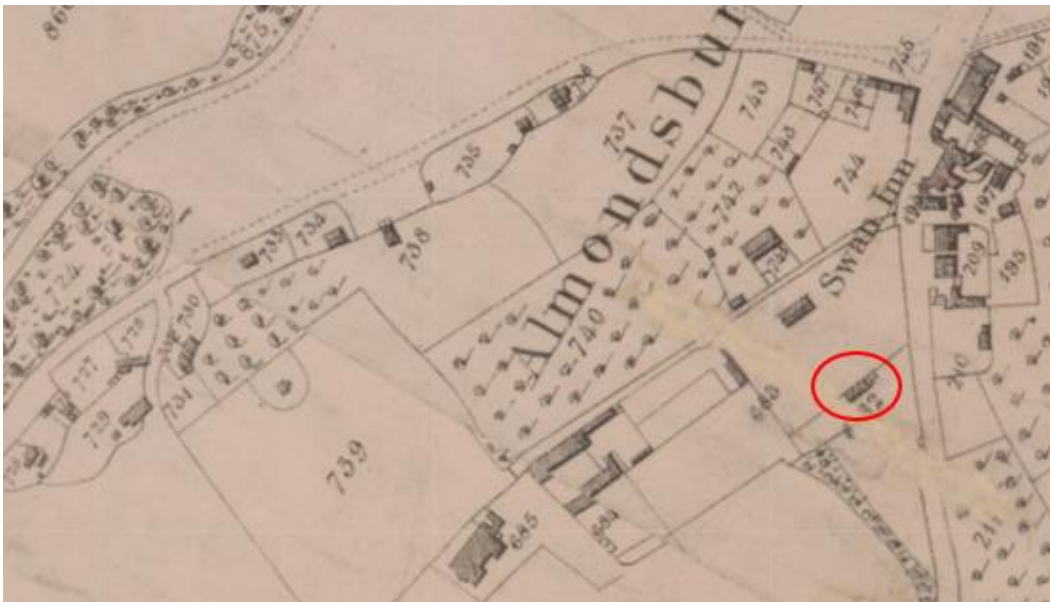
Figure 2: Google Earth view showing the listed building within the context of surrounding

3. HERITAGE ASSET SIGNIFICANCE

HISTORIC EVOLUTION

- 3.1 As noted at paragraph 2.4, the dwelling dates from the early 19th Century, and is understood to be a re-fronting of an earlier house.
- 3.2 Planning permission was granted in 1984 for the erection of a car port (shown in photograph 6, in front of the boundary wall). No other planning history is available for the site.
- 3.3 In terms of the context to the site, the following OS plan extracts (courtesy of South Gloucestershire Know Your Place) shows how the context to the site has changed over time. Pear Tree Cottage is circled red in each figure.

Figure 3: 1840's Tithe Map



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Figure 4: 1844-1888 OS

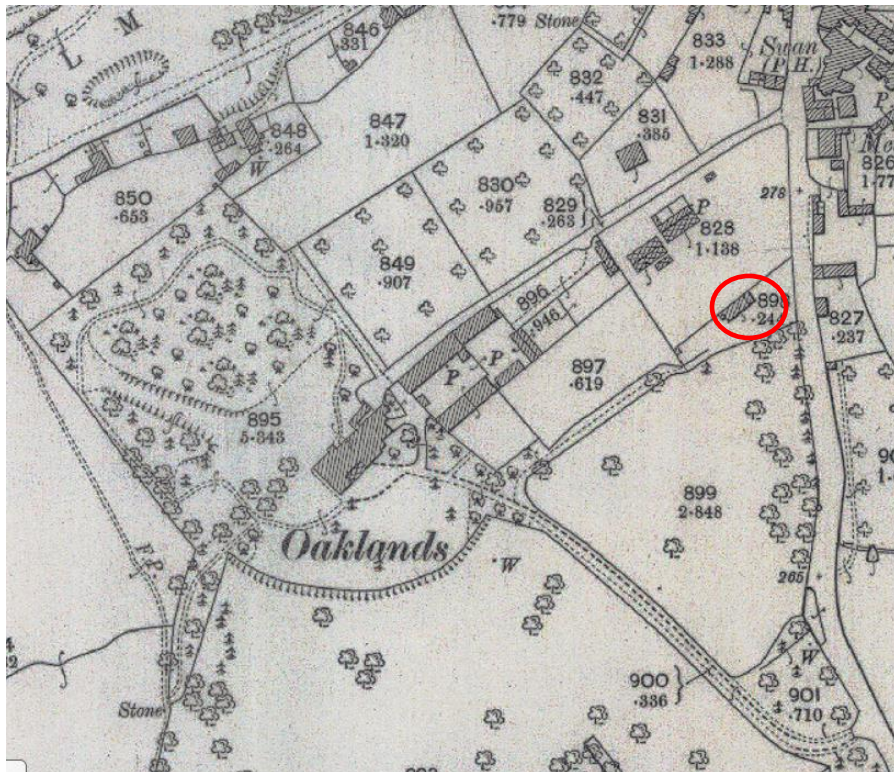


Figure 5: 1894-1903 OS

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Figure 6: 1898-1939 OS



Figure 7: 1921-1943 OS

- 3.4 The historic maps demonstrate that the application site formed part of the Oaklands Estate, with a swathe of trees next to the boundary with Pear Tree Cottage extending down along Gloucester Road.
- 3.5 The maps also demonstrate that the application site has always been separate from Pear Tree Cottage. The 1840's Tithe Map indicates that the northeast corner of the application site may have formed part of Pear Tree Cottage – the map appears to be damaged, so it is not clear whether the line that is cut off by the mark on the map extends across the garden, or changes direction to include a triangular

shaped section. In any event, the 1844-1888 OS map shows a smaller plot and although the boundary alignment appears to change on the subsequent maps, which indicate a deeper garden, the physical separation from the site is very clear.

- 3.6 The delegated report for application P21/00851/O states that the landscaped gardens of Pear Tree Cottage extended south along Gloucester Road up until circa 2016. This is not supported by the historic maps so it is presumed that statement is based on old Google Earth maps, which from 1999 to 2014, show dense trees all along the A38 and up to Pear Tree Cottage. The Google Earth maps do not show any boundary treatments due to the density of the trees, however it is understood that the garden of Pear Tree Cottage has never extended further into the site than the current boundary line that exists today.

SITE RELATIONSHIP TO LISTED BUILDING

- 3.7 The heritage asset is now bound by the residential properties to Oaklands Drive and the Ambulance Station to the north and north-west; by the A38 dual carriageway to the east; and by commercial, industrial, and sports buildings, as well as telecommunications infrastructure, to the southwest.
- 3.8 The delegated report for application P21/00851/O states:

“The listed building was originally surrounded by gardens and open space on the southern edge of the village, but has since seen residential development to the north and west sides, and the substantial widening of the A38 to the extent that the east elevation is nearly touching the boundary wall. From the A38, looking southwest, there is a degree of co-visibility, with the listed building viewed against the backdrop of an open field, with floodlighting and the low-slung buildings of the football grounds beyond, and the taller, 3-storey brick building to the far south.”

- 3.9 It goes on to state:

“The extensive removal of the planting and the erection of the fence have compromised the contribution this area makes to the significance of the

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listed building, although some residual value lies purely in the absence of built form, and the sense of openness that still exists south of the built-up edge of the village, as defined by the garden of Pear Tree Cottage and the residential development to the west."

- 3.10 In assessing the impact of the two proposals for 9no. dwellings¹, one to the north and the other to the south of the application site, the Conservation Officer concluded that the setting to Pear Tree Cottage *"still makes a small contribution to the significance of the heritage asset through the absence of built form on the historic edge of the village, separating it from the motorway and the northern edge of Bradley Stoke and Aztec West"* although it was accepted that the setting had been eroded. It was identified that *"the building's significance can be attributed largely to the architectural and historic interest of its physical remains and its immediate garden setting, with a small contribution arising from its wider setting including the application site."* [Underlining is Stokes Morgan emphasis].
- 3.11 It is accepted that the application site contributes to the setting of the listed building, however, that contribution is only small as identified by the Conservation Officer. Furthermore, the historic maps and the old google earth images clearly demonstrate that there has never been a clear, open view or aspect over the application site due to the dense trees that enclosed its rear garden and which extended along the application site's boundary with Gloucester Road.
- 3.12 As identified in the delegated officer report for a previous application for the site², *"The Primary, northwest-facing elevation of Pear Tree Cottage directly addresses Oaklands Drive, whilst the secondary, rear elevation faces south-east, overlooking the A38 and with oblique views over the application site."* This is demonstrated on Figure 1. The building's rear elevation is most visible in views north, from Gloucester Road, on the approach from the south. The building has oblique views to the south, over the application site, but these views are restricted to the trees along the A38

¹ P21/00851/O and P21/00852/O

² P21/00851/O

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boundary and the now open land immediately next to them, which was previously occupied by dense tree cover as demonstrated on the historic maps.

3.13 The listed building is largely concealed in views from the site by the dense screening provided by the mature trees and shrubs within its garden, which includes some cypress trees. Some of these are deciduous so the building is more visible in views from the site in autumn and winter (see Photo 3, which shows a close-range view of Pear Tree Cottage and its garden from the A38 near the application site's northeast corner), but overall the intervisibility is limited, with views directed away from the application site in the direction of the national grid site and associated apparatus on the opposite side of the A38 with the Almondsbury interchange beyond.

3.14 Therefore, it is considered that the trees along the A38 boundary together with the open land immediately adjoining (i.e. the land that was covered by trees until around 2014) contribute positively to the setting of the listed building, however, the contribution made by the remainder of the site is deemed of low significance.

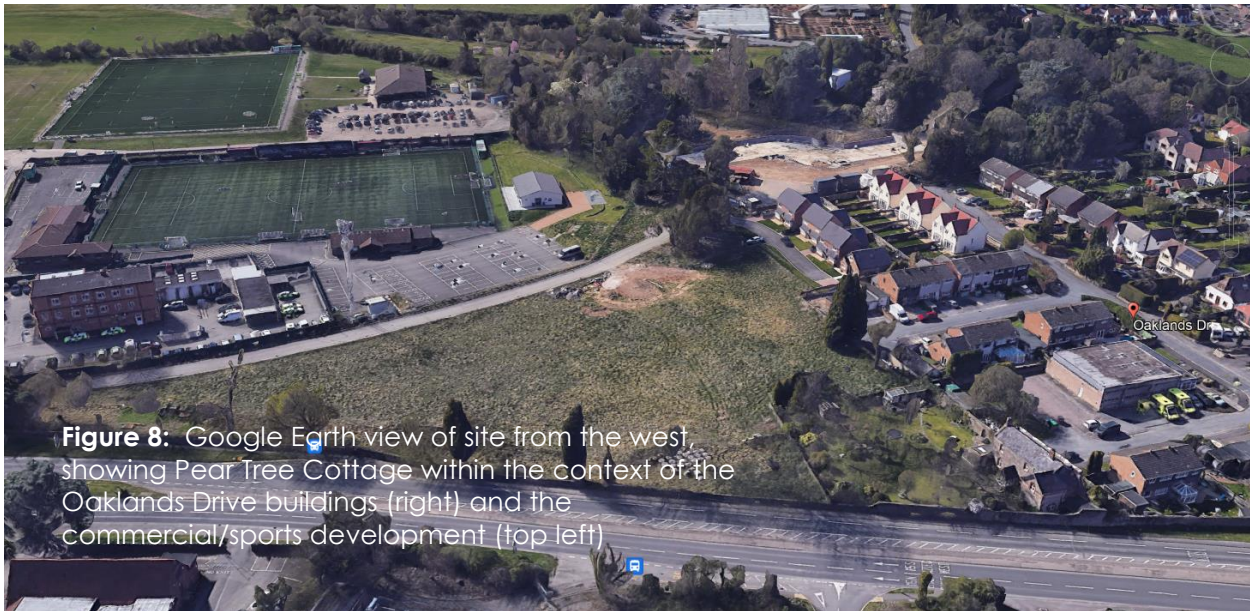


Figure 8: Google Earth view of site from the west showing Pear Tree Cottage within the context of the Oaklands Drive buildings (right) and the commercial/sports development (top left)

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Photo 1: View of Pear Tree Cottage from Oaklands Drive (front elevation)



Photo 2: View of rear elevation from A38



Photo 3: View of rear elevation and garden from A38, application site in foreground



Photo 4: Side elevation of Pear Tree Cottage from application site

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Photo 5: Front boundary wall and car port looking towards application site

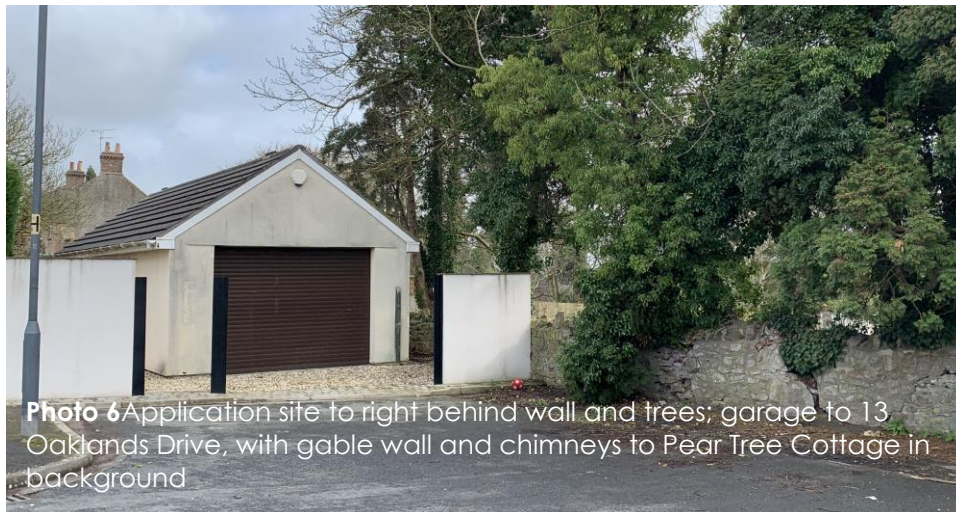


Photo 6 Application site to right behind wall and trees; garage to 13 Oaklands Drive, with gable wall and chimneys to Pear Tree Cottage in background

4. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

4.1 The proposed description of development is as follows:

“Erection of three buildings with a combined floorspace of 2,843sqm to provide modern, flexible use units within Use Classes ‘E – Commercial, Business and Service (g(i)(ii)(iii)); B2 and B8, together with associated access, drainage, and hard/soft landscape works.”

4.2 The buildings are arranged as a linear development extending horizontally across the site, following its triangular shape. With the exception of a small parking courtyard for Units 1-7, the parking areas would be visually contained by the buildings.

- 4.3 The buildings are sited to preserve the southeasterly vista from the rear elevation of Pear Tree Cottage. The tree-lined boundary along the A38 would be retained and supplemented with new trees and shrubs, and the area immediately to the south of the garden would be landscaped with native copse planting; and new native hedges; shrubs and trees. These planted areas, which would include plant species of known value to wildlife, would appear as a continuation of the garden to the listed building, while screening the proposed development and providing green commuting routes and wildlife corridors.
- 4.4 A more detailed description of the scheme is provided in the Planning and Design Statement and so is not duplicated here.

5. LOCAL PLANNING POLICY & HERITAGE

- 5.1 The planning application should be assessed in accordance with the following legislation; national policy and guidance; and local plan policies; which seek to protect the significance of heritage assets and their setting.
- The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
 - Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework September 2023 and the relevant paragraphs of the associated Planning Practice Guidance;
 - South Gloucestershire Local Plan, Policies Sites and Places Plan Nov 2017, Policy PSP17 – Heritage Assets and the Historic Environment
 - South Gloucestershire Core Strategy (Adopted) December 2013, Policy CS1 – High Quality Design and CS9 – Managing the environment and heritage.

6. HERITAGE IMPACTS

- 6.1 This section should be read in conjunction with the submitted Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) and the Landscape Strategy by Cambium.
- 6.2 The listed building is most visible in close-range views from the east on the A38 where the building is visible above the stone boundary wall to the dual carriageway (see

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Photo 2); from the northeast on the A38 looking southwest towards the site (see Viewpoint 5 in the submitted LVA); and from the north on Oaklands Drive looking south, where the building terminates the view and encloses the cul-de-sac (see Photo 1 and Viewpoint 6 in the LVA).

- 6.3 Views of the building's principal front elevation and boundary wall from the north, on Oaklands Drive, would not be affected by the proposal because the development would sit a considerable distance back into the site and away from the listed building.
- 6.4 The submitted LVA demonstrates that the listed building, and the proposed development, would not be visible in views from the southeast looking north west (see LVA Viewpoint 1) and the proposed development would also be largely concealed by the boundary trees in views from the northeast, looking southwest (LVA Viewpoint 5). Viewpoint 9 in the LVA demonstrates that trees within the garden of Pear Tree Cottage and within the application site provide a visual barrier, and although there will be some intervisibility in the autumn/winter when some of the trees have lost their leaves, this would diminish over time as new planting proposed as part of the scheme, which includes a small native copse, establishes and acts as a visual barrier. Furthermore, the proposed siting, orientation and alignment of the proposed buildings, outside the southeasterly aspect and the oblique line of sight demonstrated on Figure 1, would reduce the visibility of the proposed development in views from the listed building.
- 6.5 Consequently, it is considered that the proposal would result in a low level of less than substantial harm to the setting of, outlook from; and views of the heritage asset, and this would be offset by the compelling public (economic) benefits associated with the delivery of flexibly designed commercial/industrial units, for which there is high, unmet need not only in the Bristol North Fringe but in the wider district. The site's urban, edge of motorway location within minutes of the M5 and Almondsbury Interchange makes it highly suitable for the proposed development. The need for the development proposed, and in this location, is set out in detail in the submitted Planning and Design Statement and so is not repeated, in this statement.

7. CONCLUSIONS/PLANNING BALANCE

- 7.1 As identified by the Council, the significance of the listed building is attributed largely to the architectural and historic interest of its physical remains and immediate garden setting. The wider setting, including the application site, makes only a small contribution to its significance.
- 7.2 Pear Tree Cottage has a southeasterly aspect away from the application site, across the A38 dual carriageway, towards the national grid site and associated apparatus with the Almondsbury Interchange in the background. The proposal would have no effect on views of the listed building's rear elevation and garden, which faces southeast obliquely across the A38. Although there are oblique views from the listed building of the tree-lined boundary and the adjacent strip of open land running along the A38, on the application site, these views are limited due to the density of tree cover.
- 7.3 The site, and therefore the proposed development, would not be visible within the context of the listed building due to trees and shrubs in its established garden; intervening trees on the party boundary; and the tree-lined boundary along the A38. Any existing gaps in tree cover will be filled over time as new planting establishes, and this will reduce and most likely remove any intervisibility between the listed building and the site; and remove any glimpsed views of the buildings from the east and north-east, on the A38.
- 7.4 Consequently, it is considered that the proposal would result in a low level of less than substantial harm on the significance of the listed building's setting; its outlook; and views of it. This harm would be outweighed by a compelling economic public benefit, consistent with Paragraph 202 of the National Planning Policy Framework.