

FAO Stephen Pester
Modulek House
19 Bessemer Close
Ebble Industrial Estate
Verwood
Dorset
BH31 6AZ

16th April 2024

Job Ref: J004867

Dear Mr Pester

Re: YORK HOUSE SCHOOL, SARRAT ROAD, CROXLEY GREEN, RICKMANSWORTH,
WD3 4LW

I write with respect to the above and to discuss proposals for a development at the site for the purposes of a planning application. Proposals would include the construction of a single storey classroom building with associated landscaping.

The following account first addresses the historic background of the application site, before considering proposals themselves and the associated potential for impacts upon the built and/or historic environment of the locale more generally and, associated heritage assets of relevance.

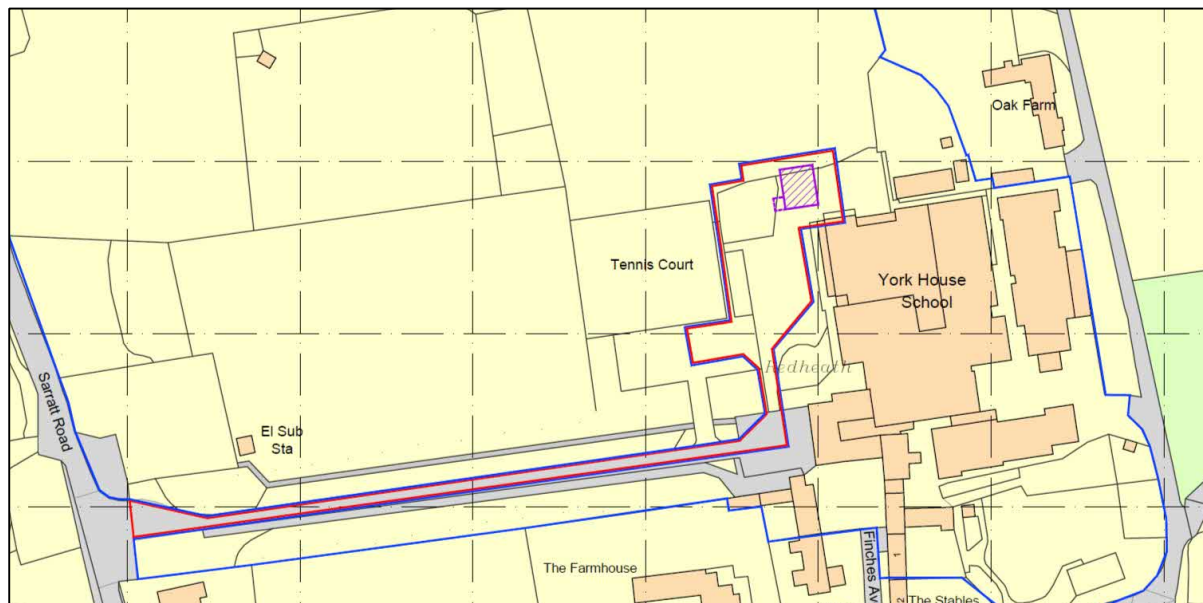


Figure 1: Site Location Plan

The application site is located within the curtilage and near setting of the Grade II* listed Redheath, approximately 50 meters to the north of the heritage asset. The list description for the site may be summarised as follows:

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'Country house, now school. 1712 front range added for C. Finch to a C16 house, now gone. Altered 1743, extended and altered 1866 for H.C. Finch. Further extended in C20. Brown-red brick with lighter red brick dressings. Hipped tiled roof. 9 bays, 1 room deep. 3 storeys. Central 3 bays project slightly. Central entrance: 8 panelled door with rusticated surround, vermiculated blocks on Roman Doric pilasters, richly carved brackets to semi-domed hood. Moulded plinth. Glazing bar sashes in moulded flush frames, gauged brick flat arched heads, those flanking and above entrance scalloped. Cyma reversa plat band over ground floor, Cyma recta floating cornices over central first floor windows. Ovolo plat band over first floor on outer sections. Small 9 pane sashes on second floor, '1712' cut into brick in recessed apron below central window. Eaves cornice. Central cupola on ridge, a C20 replacement of 1743 original. Square drum with moulded cornice, octagonal bell turret with Roman Doric columns to ogee leaded dome with weathervane finial. 3 bay right return, plat bands, altered openings. Ground floor: 2 sashes. First floor, central cross casement, small vertical casement to right, blind opening to left. Second floor: 2 light central and 1 light right casements, blind opening to left. Left return: 2 bays, plat bands, glazing bar sashes, blocked cellar windows. Rear wall has altered openings and brickwork. Ground floor lean-to addition to centre. c19 stacks on rear ridge. 1 storey C19 block to rear left: 3 bays, glazed entrance, flanking sashes, roof hipped to rear. Interior: some original bolection moulded fielded panelling on ground floor, stone fireplace in hall. (VCH 1908: Pevsner 1977: RCHM Typescript). C20 additions not of special interest.'

Therefore, potential impacts upon the significance of this setting must be considered. I have now had the opportunity to consider matters and would set out our thoughts below.

Historic Background

The application site is located within the parish of Sarratt; however, the estate is situated in closer proximity to the village of Croxley Green located to the south. Croxley Green is located to the northeast of the larger market town of Rickmansworth. This area was originally included within the Manor of Croxley which existed by at least 793, when the Mercian King Offa founded the Monastery of St Albans. Offa endowed the monastery with four manors, including the Manor of Croxley Green. The origin of the name of Croxley is unknown but 'ley' is common amongst Anglo-Saxon placenames and likely derives from the word 'leah' which means 'woodland clearing'.

The Manor of Croxley remained in the possession of the monastery until the dissolution in 1539 when it came into the possession of the crown. The manor was subsequently purchased by Dr John Caius in 1557 who then gave the manor to Gonville College, Cambridge. Croxley remained a small hamlet within the parish of Rickmansworth over the following centuries where the economy and landscape was entirely agricultural aside from three small watermills.

Amongst the copyholds held by the Manor of Croxley was that of the Redheath estate. This estate had been held by the Baldwin family who were likely responsible for the original construction of the 16th century mansion house. The house was originally called 'Reedheath' and remained in the Baldwin family until the last of that family Thomas Baldwin died in 1710, where he left the property and estate to his nephew Charles Finch.

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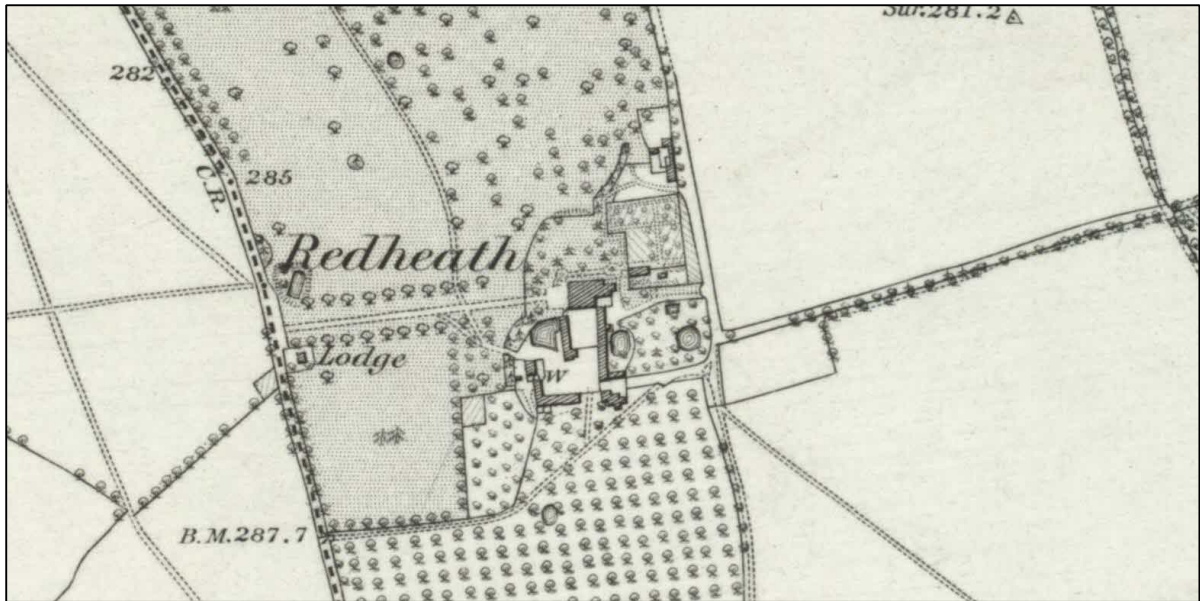


Figure 2: OS Map Extract Application Site, 1864

Charles Finch added a new front to the mansion house in 1712 which was subsequently altered again in 1743, including the construction of a clock tower. The house remained in the Finch family for another century and was further extended and altered for H.C. Finch in 1866, which included additions to the rear and an extension to the north side. From the Ordnance Survey Map of 1864 (Figure 2) the main house is located to the east of the main entrance where a long drive is flanked by trees to the north and south.

A lodge occupies a position at the main entrance and the estate is dominated by gardens, fields and woods. Several smaller ancillary structures can be observed to the northeast of the main house and a collection of structures is observed to the south including a stable block.

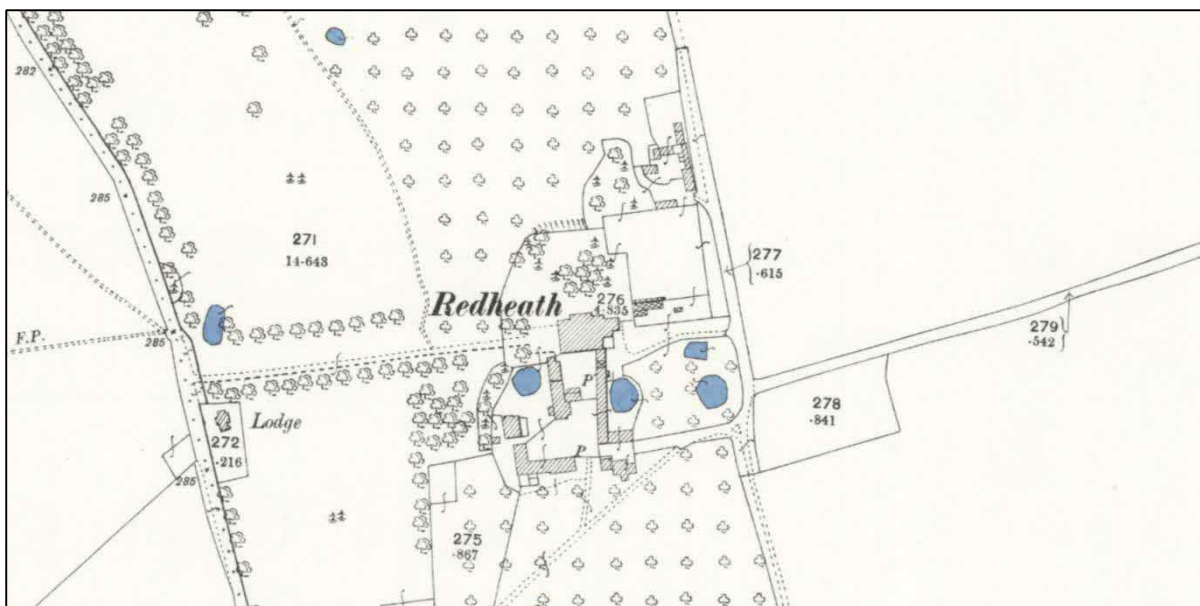


Figure 3: OS Map Extract Application Site, 1896

Between the Ordnance Survey maps of 1864 and 1938 (Figures 2-5) a significant number of extensions and alterations can be observed to the main building which appear to have completely obscured the original 16th century house, which no longer survives in the present day. The house was let to the Newell family after 1900 and the house was subsequently bought by a member of the Ebury family in 1922. Redheath was requisitioned during the Second World War by the P & O company who moved their office and staff to the site to provide a safe location in the countryside.



Figure 4: OS Map Extract Application Site, 1913



Figure 5: OS Map Extract Application Site, 1938

The P & O company eventually left the site after the war ended and around this time the council granted a demolition order which demolished the majority of the 19th century additions to the rear of the house. The house went through various successive ownerships until it was purchased by Lord and Lady Poole in 1952. Eventually the house and grounds

were purchased by York House School in 1966 and until this point the lands to the west, north and east of the house had remained predominantly undeveloped aside from several small, ancillary structures located to the east and northeast.



Figure 6: Aerial View York House School, 1999 (Google Earth)

After the school purchased Redheath, the site underwent significant developments, many of the remaining 19th century elements to the rear of the house were altered or entirely replaced. Large extensions were added to the rear which formed a large complex of part single and part one and a half storey school buildings which completely transformed the landscape to the east of the main house. The gardens and estate grounds to the north and west were converted for use as school playing fields. The extent of these developments can be observed from arial imagery from 1999 (Figure 6).



Figure 7: Aerial View York House School, 2022

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Further extensions and redevelopments of these 20th century school buildings occurred throughout the 2000s. However, the most notable development in the site's recent history was the construction of a new extension to the 20th century school building to the northeast of the main house, extending this further northwards (Planning Reference: 18/1070/LBC). This included various landscape elements and the reconfiguration of the parking to the front of the school buildings. This is clearly observed from aerial imagery from 2022 (Figure 7).

Heritage Assets

The application site forms part of the grounds of the former country estate of the Grade II* listed Redheath (List Entry Number: 1347875). This was first listed on the 31st of August 1953 and a summary of the list description may again be summarised as follows:

'Country house, now school. 1712 front range added for C. Finch to a C16 house, now gone. Altered 1743, extended and altered 1866 for H.C. Finch. Further extended in C20. Brown-red brick with lighter red brick dressings. Hipped tiled roof. 9 bays, 1 room deep. 3 storeys. Central 3 bays project slightly. Central entrance: 8 panelled door with rusticated surround, vermiculated blocks on Roman Doric pilasters, richly carved brackets to semi-domed hood. Moulded plinth. Glazing bar sashes in moulded flush frames, gauged brick flat arched heads, those flanking and above entrance scalloped. Cyma reversa plat band over ground floor, Cyma recta floating cornices over central first floor windows. Ovolo plat band over first floor on outer sections. Small 9 pane sashes on second floor, '1712' cut into brick in recessed apron below central window. Eaves cornice. Central cupola on ridge, a C20 replacement of 1743 original. Square drum with moulded cornice, octagonal bell turret with Roman Doric columns to ogee leaded dome with weathervane finial. 3 bay right return, plat bands, altered openings. Ground floor: 2 sashes. First floor, central cross casement, small vertical casement to right, blind opening to left. Second floor: 2 light central and 1 light right casements, blind opening to left. Left return: 2 bays, plat bands, glazing bar sashes, blocked cellar windows. Rear wall has altered openings and brickwork. Ground floor lean-to addition to centre. c19 stacks on rear ridge. 1 storey C19 block to rear left: 3 bays, glazed entrance, flanking sashes, roof hipped to rear. Interior: some original bolection moulded fielded panelling on ground floor, stone fireplace in hall. (VCH 1908: Pevsner 1977: RCHM Typescript). C20 additions not of special interest.'

Redheath therefore comprises an asset of more than special interest by virtue of its Grade II* designation and is considered to represent a high level of sensitivity. The application site has historically remained under the same ownership as the listed building, also at the time of listing, and therefore comprises part of its curtilage. Importantly, the application site comprises part of the setting of the listed building.

The development history of the site, as set out above, demonstrates a highly evolved scenario of successive phases of change and alteration to both the physical fabric of Redheath and its immediate setting. The modern 20th century developments have considerably impinged upon the significance of the setting of Redheath. The application site, whilst an undeveloped patch of land, is located to the north of the listed building adjacent to the large school buildings and therefore comprises an element of the setting which is already highly compromised. The site therefore represents an element of low significance which has been subject to substantial loss and erosion of the baseline situation.

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Proposals

Proposals for which planning consent is sought comprise the construction of a new single storey art classroom building and associated landscaping. The application site is located to the west of the main school building. To the north is located the school's sports fields, to the south a gravel car park, to the east the external terraced seating area and astro tennis courts are located to the west. The Grade II* Redheath is located approximately 50 meters to the south.



Figure 8: Proposed Block Plan

The siting of the new classroom is considered to have a minimal impact upon the setting of the listed building given the overwhelming presence of modern built form within its immediate context, of a much larger and significant scale. The new classroom building continues this modern phase of development of educational structures within the setting of the listed building, and given the small overall footprint, does not excessively impinge upon the significance of this over and above that which is existing.

Considering the design of the new classroom, this will be a single-storey structure with a shallow pitched roof with a protruding canopy over the entrance. The design is of a

definitively contemporary ethos which, combined with its sympathetic and unfussy design, will not seek to compete with the traditional architecture of the listed building in order to ensure the requisite legibility of phasing across the site is achieved. However, the material palette of red brick facing is reflective of the listed building, whilst the areas of timber cladding and use of glazing is reflective of the school buildings to the east, helping the new building to assimilate well within both its historic and modern context.

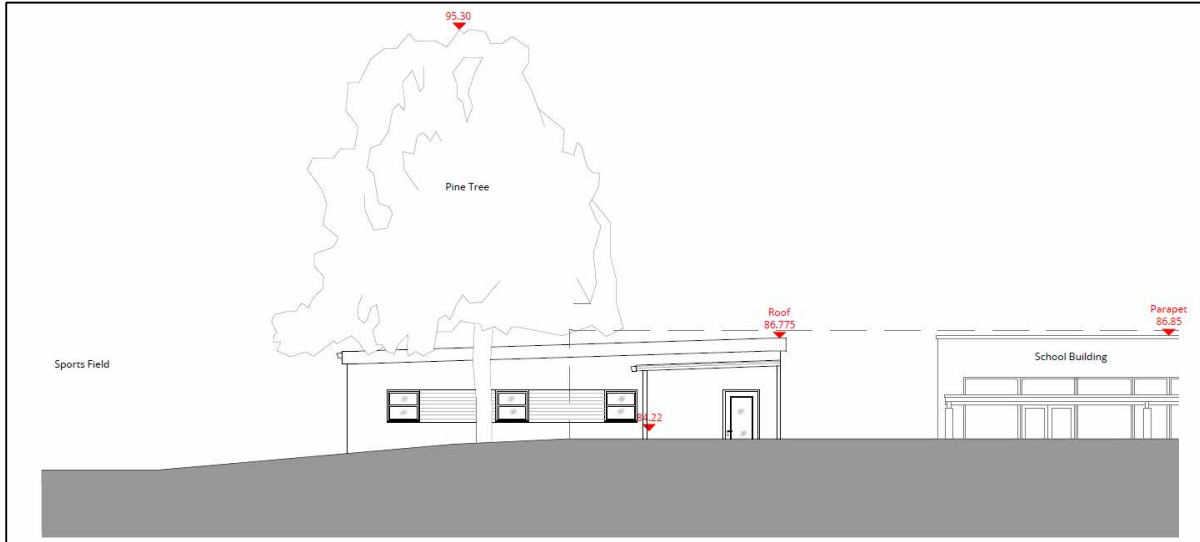


Figure 9: Proposed West Elevation

The scale and mass, being single storey, is considered entirely appropriate given that it will remain subservient to the listed building which rises to three storeys. The height of the classroom will match that of the main school building to the east, which has already been deemed an appropriate scale within the setting of the listed building. Redheath will still remain the dominating structure within the wider built landscape and whilst intervisibility between the two structures will be possible when viewed from the north, the scale of the classroom will result in minimal obscurity whilst remaining subservient in this view, where this aspect of the setting will remain predominantly preserved.

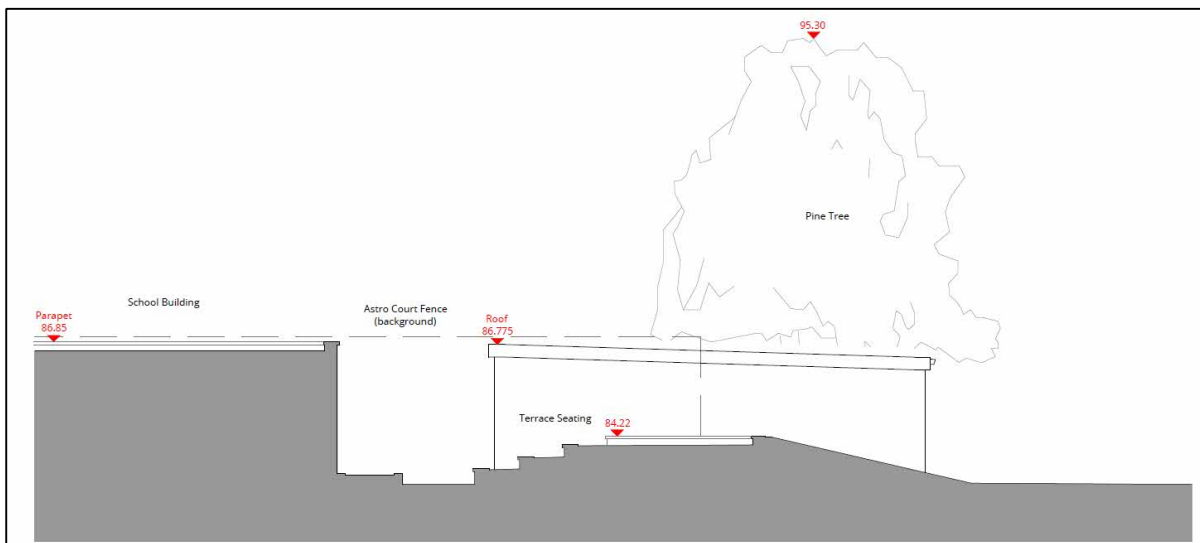


Figure 10: Proposed East Elevation

Overall, the new single storey art classroom, by virtue of its small scale, sympathetic and therefore high-quality design will merely present as a neutral aspect within the setting of the Grade II* listed Redheath which continues a context of educational structures in an established development area. Public interest would also be generated by proposals by providing new educational facilities for the children of the school whilst engendering the optimum viable use of the application site. Importantly, no proposals affect the historic fabric of the listed building, ensuring that its significance and special interest are entirely preserved.

In light of the account given above, the construction of the new school classroom may therefore be seen as according with paragraph 196 & 203 of the NPPF where proposals have regard for the desirability of sustaining the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation whilst further making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness through high-quality and reflective architecture. Furthermore, paragraph 212 states that local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Importantly, proposals which preserve the elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset should be treated favourably.

Furthermore, proposals can therefore be seen as according with the objectives set out by the wider regulatory framework, principally this would include s.66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 where special regard has been had for the desirability of preserving the listed building and its setting. Proposals will therefore result in a positive outcome with respect to preserving the special architectural and/or historic interest of Redheath and its setting and the wider historic environment more generally.

Summary

Proposals for York House School comprise the construction of a single storey art classroom building and associated landscaping. The application site is situated approximately 50 meters north of the Grade II* listed Redheath and is therefore within the setting and curtilage of the listed building.

In light of the account given above, proposals more generally seek the development of the application site in accordance with paragraph 8 (c) of the NPPF, where one of the main objectives of the scheme would include the protection and enhancement of the built and historic environment. Proposals further seek to improve and maximise the use, functioning and efficiency of the school and provide children with a high-quality learning environment.

Again, the scheme more than amply responds to the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990 (s.66) whereby the setting of the listed building would remain fundamentally preserved.

This would be achieved by the implementation of a considered, sensitive, and therefore high-quality scheme which seeks to retain and preserve all aspects of a high significance, whilst enhancing the wider site and the asset's setting more generally.

In such scenarios, local planning authorities are directed to paragraph 135 of the NPPF where it states that decisions in relation to such development should be sympathetic to local

character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change.

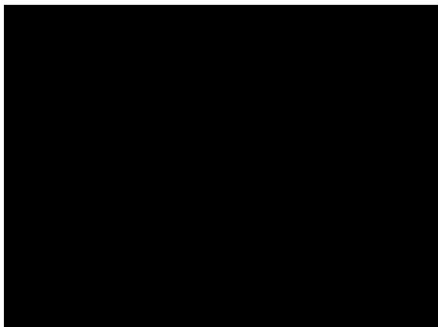
Proposals would accord with the *Three Rivers District Council Core Strategy (2011) Policy CP12* whereby the development seeks a high standard of design which seeks to *conserve heritage assets whilst making efficient use of land whilst respecting distinctiveness of the surrounding area in terms of density, character, layout and spacing, amenity, scale, height, massing and use of materials.*

Furthermore, proposals would accord with *Policy DM3 of the Development Management Policies Local Development Document (2013)* where these seek to *sustain, conserve the character and setting of the asset itself and the surrounding historic environment.*

Proposals therefore respond positively towards the historic and/or built environment whilst achieving a high standard of design and layout which respects the special architectural and/or interest of the listed building and its setting.

For this reason, the principle of development is not considered to be at odds with the significance of the application site and/or its wider locale.

Yours sincerely,



Daniel Baty BA (Hons), MA
Heritage Consultant

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Sources

<https://www.croxleygreenhistory.co.uk/>

<https://trmt.org.uk/local-history/our-town-and-villages/croxley-green>

'Parishes: Rickmansworth', in A History of the County of Hertford: Volume 2, (London, 1908) pp. 371-386. British History Online <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/herts/vol2/pp371-386> [accessed 12 April 2024]

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