



ECC Ref: 23/01994/FUL  
Date: 11/09/2023

## HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREA ADVICE

Dear Sir / Madam,

### **RE: THE WOODLANDS HOTEL COUPALS ROAD STURMER ESSEX CB9 7UW**

This letter provides Historic Buildings and Conservation Area Advice concerning the application for the demolition of the existing buildings on site, and the erection of a 64no. bed care home (Use Class C2), together with access, car parking, landscaping and associated works.

The application Site is within the setting of the Grade II listed Woodlands Cottage (List Entry Number: 1122275) and is situated adjacent to the western side of Woodlands Green. The Green is labelled as Woodlands Common on the 1777 Chapman and Andre Map and subsequently as Woodland Green on the 1839 Sturmer Parish Tithe Map. Woodlands Cottage dates to the late-eighteenth to early-nineteenth century and the Green is an important part of its setting.

The Woodlands Hotel, which is proposed for demolition may in part have early nineteenth-century origins, as the Heritage Statement concludes that the present building was formed through the addition of an extension to a building depicted on the 1839/40 Tithe map. The building can be considered to have some historic interest. Should an application for its demolition be approved, I would recommend a programme of historic building recording as a condition of that approval.

I have some concerns regarding the proposed scheme and its impact on the setting of the listed building and on local character and distinctiveness. The elevated position of the Site and the proposed three-storeys of the building would result in it having a prominent visual presence within the listed building's setting. At present, the Green and the surrounding rural character of the area are a positive element in setting of Woodlands Cottage.

The size and appearance of the care home would not preserve or enhance the listed building's setting, contrary to Paragraph 206 of the NPPF. The development would diminish the ability to appreciate the significance of the listed building. While the Green plays a more significantly positive part in the setting of the heritage asset than the Site, the development as proposed would still have a detrimental impact. It would therefore result in a low level of less than substantial harm to the significance of the listed building.



The design of the proposed care home is at odds with the rustic character of the Green and Woodlands Cottage. The presence of the new building would not make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness, contrary to Paragraph 197c of the NPPF.

I note that the proposed block plan indicates some planting to the south of the new building. This may help mitigate the visual impact of the scheme to some degree, although it would not remove the resulting harm. Further details of planting and landscaping specifically to mitigate the visual impact of the building are needed.

The boundary treatment of the Site is not specified in the application documents. A hard boundary such as a fence would increase the visual impact of the scheme and a soft boundary, such as a hedge would be appropriate in this instance. Details of landscaping and boundary treatments would be required for approval, either as a condition of planning approval (should the scheme be approved) or as additional details submitted with the application.

The Green is an important space within the listed building's setting and it enhances the local character, although it has recently become neglected. The enhancement of the green would benefit both the setting of the listed building and the character of the local area, yet it is outside the red line boundary of the Site. I understand that it is owned and managed by Sturmer Parish Council. A programme of enhancement and management of the Green would also lessen the impact of the development.

In summary therefore, the scheme would have a detrimental impact on local character and distinctiveness and would result in a low level of less than substantial harm to the listed building. This harm could be mitigated (but not removed) by an effective screen of planting and appropriate landscaping and boundary treatments, details of which have yet to be provided.

In accordance with Paragraph 202 of the NPPF, the harm identified should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, with the appropriate great weight given to the conservation of the heritage asset (NPPF, Paragraph 199).

Should the assessment of the harm to public benefit be found in favour of the development, conditions to provide for a programme of historic building recording of the Woodlands Hotel buildings and details of screening, landscaping and boundary treatments, would be required.

Yours sincerely,

David Sorapure BA (Hons)  
Historic Buildings Consultant

*Note: This letter is advisory and should only be considered as the opinion formed by specialist staff in relation to this particular matter*