

Planning Committee

6 March 2025

Late Representations

Since the last date for the submission of views on applications/matters before the Committee this evening, representations in respect of the under mentioned applications/ matters have been received. The letters, copies of which will be available for inspection by councillors at the meeting, are summarised below.

Item 4 – Planning Applications

24/P/01681 – (Page 19) – Clandon Park (National Trust), West Clandon, Guildford, GU4 7RQ

One additional letter of objection has been received. The following is a summary of the main points noted. The letter can be read in full on the Council's website.

- the new additions are significantly out of character with the original building and its context. New walkways, modern interventions, etc., are unnecessary and detract from the historical significance of the building. The demolition of the Bachelor Stair would be a significant loss of an historical feature.
- the new bulky additions to the roof including terraces with metal railings, will ruin the historic roofline of the building. These additions will detract on longstanding vistas of the house from other historically important viewing points.
- restoration of the property is completely feasible as has been demonstrated by other sensitive restoration projects in the UK and overseas. Moreover the responsibility of conservation of an important historic building like Clandon includes preserving the original character and features as well as utilising sympathetic restoration skills design and techniques. This application does not do that.
- it would set a dangerous planning precedent if the owners of protected and historic buildings are able to dramatically re-develop after fire damage. Particularly in a way that bears little or no resemblance to the original usage, interiors and includes modernist interventions that detracts from the historic features and appearance of the building.

24/P/01682 – (Page 147) – Clandon Park (National Trust), West Clandon, Guildford, GU4 7RQ

Guildford Society: The Society supports the application for listed building consent. The following points are noted:

- Clandon Park has lain derelict for too long since it was severely damaged by fire in 2015, which resulted in only one of its rooms remaining substantially intact and with only limited rescue of the interior artefacts.
- Clandon Park is in a very different state to Uppark, which suffered a severe fire several decades ago, where a large proportion of the interior artefacts were saved and unlike Clandon fire damage was more limited as the fire started in the roof as opposed to the basement.
- the National Trust are proposing an interesting...scheme which has raised considerable debate as to the best approach to what is a complex conservation project
- externally the submitted plans will restore Clandon to being a classical house of early 18th century character, little altered from architect Leoni's original vision. Leoni was an important figure in the early 18th century Palladian movement, thus the house externally remaining as built preserves an important example of his work. The house will remain within its surrounding parkland (re-landscaped by Capability Brown) and its surrounding gardens. The destruction of the roof, which has been altered since first built, has returned the external appearance to closer to its original design. The proposals for the roof will in the main respect the original roof line. The Society support the National Trusts proposals for the exterior.
- internally the fire destroyed the entire interior except for the surviving Speakers Parlour and parts of the Marble Hall and Stone Stairs. The speakers Parlour will be restored/conserved to its pre-fire condition. The fire has revealed previously concealed aspects of the house construction, illustrating processes of construction and early design changes.
- the National Trust has looked carefully, supported by nationally recognised heritage building architects Allies & Morrison and historic consultants Purcell at several options, including complete restoration of the principal rooms. Complete restoration has immense challenges due to lack of skilled craftsmen and to a degree some of the skills have been lost. The restoration approach has also been compromised by the lack of the artefacts rescued from the main rooms e.g. Wall Hangings.

- the proposed scheme is to exhibit the interior of the house mainly as a bare shell with appropriate interpretation material, and exhibits. The house will be made accessible by a series of well-designed insertions including access galleries and sensitively reconstructed floors at lower levels. The Society, supports this innovative approach to preserving the house and creating an important and unusual attraction for the visiting public and private events e.g. Meetings and Events;
- commend the Trust for committing at Page 11 of the Design and Access Statement in para Reversibility and future opportunity – *‘to allow for aspects of the Trust's current scheme to be augmented or reversed by future generations or for other approaches, such as greater reinstatement (or replication) to be undertaken in the future’*.
- this is further supported in the para Quiet, sensitive architectural interventions - *that the Trust's new architectural interventions should, generally speaking, be limited to the minimum necessary to deliver a functional and sustainable building. In addition, these interventions should in plan, design and materiality respond to the historic and surviving architecture and fabric of the house; and be visually secondary to it.*
- the Trust is proposing to open throughout the year on between 260 and 363 days per annum, compared with 169 days before 2015. Use of timed ticketing will allow peak daily visitors will be managed to levels not exceeding pre fire peaks. Due to the extended opening the Trust is anticipating around 110,000 visitors per annum potentially growing to some 160,000 across the year; compared with 66,000 before the fire. This range equates to an average daily visitor figure of 300 to 440 people.
- Historic England consider the level of harm caused by the proposals would be less than substantial, so would need to be assessed against paragraph 215 of National Planning Policy Framework which states that 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.
- the Society believes this is an unusual and exciting scheme for Clandon House which does little harm to the house as it exists at present. Believe that it will bring public benefits not least as a very engaging and educational way to experience how major houses were built and evolved. Reopening Clandon in this re-invigorated way will benefit Guildford as town, building on its existing heritage and contemporary attractions. How

the House is presented and used may evolve over time and the proposed scheme preserves, by a light touch impact on the internal fabric as it exists at present, options for future generations.

One additional letter of objection has been received. The following is a summary of the main points noted. The letter can be read in full on the Council's website.

- for the sake of listed building status in Guildford and beyond it is imperative that this application is turned down. The proposals are unsympathetic and fail to meet the requirements to preserve and protect an historic building. Specifically, the proposals should be dismissed on the following grounds:
- the new additions are significantly out of character with the original building and its context. New walkways, modern interventions, etc., are unnecessary and detract from the historical significance of the building. The demolition of the Bachelor Stair would be a significant loss of an historical feature.
- the new bulky additions to the roof including terraces with metal railings, will ruin the historic roofline of the building. These additions will detract on longstanding vistas of the house from other historically important viewing points.
- restoration of the property is completely feasible as has been demonstrated by other sensitive restoration projects in the UK and overseas. Moreover the responsibility of conservation of an important historic building like Clandon includes preserving the original character and features as well as utilising sympathetic restoration skills design and techniques. This application does not do that.
- finally, it would set a dangerous planning precedent if the owners of protected and historic buildings are able to dramatically re-develop after fire damage. Particularly in a way that bears little or no resemblance to the original usage, interiors and includes modernist interventions that detracts from the historic features and appearance of the building.

One letter has been received which does not indicate which of the two applications that it relates to. Notwithstanding this, the following is a summary of the comments which have been made. The letter in full can be read on the Council's website.

- Clandon House died on that tragic night in 2015.

- strongly believe that the house should be left as a tragic ruin. A ruin that remains accessible to members of the National Trust to walk into and around.
- if the house cannot be left as a ruin, then restoration would be the next best approach.
- cannot sanction or support a 'challenging, interesting, modern interpretation'.
- the planning application proposes just such a modern interpretation.
- why is it deemed legal for a Grade I listed not to be restored back to its listed form prior to the damage [Officer Note: This point has been covered in the officer reports].
- the fact that a large and powerful national preservation organisation can simply apply to regulators to ignore the Grade I listing is both morally and logically challenging.
- two reasons given for not restoring are the cost involved and the skills available to carry out the work. What evidence has been put forward to support these contentions. Clear evidence has been put forward by others to the contrary.
- as experts in the field confirm that both the capability and the cost are within reach, why is anyone suggesting that the Grade I listing be ignored simply because the owner would like something else.
- no margin of error has been built into the numbers of vehicles that will travel to the site or margin of error for journey times travelling to Clandon or margin of error of the time spent in Clandon. If there is any movement or variation in the wrong direction the proposed visitor numbers will bring the traffic on The Street to a logjam.
- the roof terrace is totally against the historic viewing height of the original design and also goes against the planning principle that it is not permissible to grant planning permission to overlook a neighbour's property.
- it is incorrect of the applicant to state that there are no additional views of the private Park or the forest school from the proposed terrace. The vantage point created by the elevation of 60 feet will dramatically increase the ability of those on the roof to peer into the private Park and view the children in the forest school, as well as the other temporary education areas.
- these points would seem to prove that this application fails on points of planning law.

