

A Statement on the LUC  
Strategic Historic  
Environment Assessment of  
Proposed Allocation Sites  
and Reasonable Alternatives  
(December 2017)  
North Warwickshire Local  
Plan Examination

indigo.

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February 2019

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# **A Statement on the LUC Strategic Historic Environment Assessment of Proposed Allocation Sites and Reasonable Alternatives (December 2017) North Warwickshire Local Plan Examination**

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Statement has been prepared by Indigo Planning on behalf of Hodgetts Estates in response to the Strategic Historic Environment Assessment of Proposed Allocation Sites and Reasonable Alternatives, prepared by LUC, (December 2017), for North Warwickshire Borough Council in support of their Draft Submission Local Plan.
- 1.2. The two sites that are the focus of this Statement are POL/DOR1b (H7), 'Land East of Polesworth & Dordon', (page 20 of the LUC assessment); and site DLP299, 'Land West of Dordon, north of A5/Watling St' (page 51 of the LUC assessment).
- 1.3. The LUC Strategic Heritage Assessment was produced in response to the consultation on the Draft Local Plan, and because Historic England raised a number of concerns with regard to the handling of historic environment issues in terms of policy and the potential effects of proposed site allocations on the significance of heritage assets, including the contribution made by their setting.
- 1.4. The LUC Strategic Heritage Assessment is intended to provide a proportionate understanding of the significance and sensitivity to change of heritage assets, including the capacity of their setting to accommodate change.
- 1.5. There are limitations with the desk-based methodology employed in the LUC Strategic Heritage Assessment, for example, paragraph 2.5 of the study states that,

*'No assumptions have been made with regard to the potential for mitigation to be applied, as this would require detailed site-specific understandings of both heritage assets (their significance and the contribution of setting to that significance) and of development proposals to understand the potential interactions and opportunities to avoid or mitigate harm.'*

- 1.6. Indigo Planning's Associate Director – Heritage, a Member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation, with over twenty years of experience of working in the field of heritage planning, has undertaken field investigation in support of this Statement, and has visited all of the heritage assets identified on both sites, including their setting.

## **Land East of Polesworth & Dordon, Site POL/DOR1b (H7) (page 20 of the LUC Strategic Heritage Assessment)**

- 1.7. The LUC Strategic Heritage Assessment states that it cannot be presumed that the grade II listed obelisk on the site of St Leonard's Chapel (Historic England list entry number: 1319944) will be retained and therefore total loss of this designated heritage asset is a potential outcome of the site's allocation, and even if the heritage asset is retained, its setting would be completely altered from a rural landscape to one of residential development, resulting in potentially substantial harm.
- 1.8. The LUC assessment in relation to the grade II listed Dordon Hall (Historic England list entry number: 1034713) is that development is likely to result in significant setting change. It would completely change the immediate setting of the asset from rural agricultural land to modern development. It would also sever the visual and historical links between the hall and the village of Dordon. It is claimed this could approach substantial harm, i.e. almost total loss of

significance.

- 1.9. Indigo Planning's assessment of the grade II listed Dordon Hall and its setting, including the ancient woodland (The Hollies), where there may be post medieval mine shafts, and the grade II listed obelisk on Hoo Hill, (the site of St Leonard's Chapel, which was the old chapel of Hoo) and its setting beside Hoo Hill, which includes the possible site of an Iron Age hillfort (missed in the LUC Strategic Heritage Assessment), is that the designated heritage assets (Dordon Hall, and the obelisk), draw special architectural and historic significance from being positioned on hilltops. They are designed features in the landscape, intended to be seen from miles around, and they interact with other hilltop heritage assets, including churches built by the same aristocratic family that owned Dordon Hall, and obelisks, including the contemporary 'golden tower', a public work of art funded by the HCA's National Coalfield's Programme, which stands upon a hilltop (a country park created from a spoil heap at the Pooley Hall Colliery), serving as an eye-catcher, clearly visible from the windows of Dordon Hall. This is all missed in the LUC study.
- 1.10. The visual and historic connections between Dordon Hall and the obelisk on the site of St Leonard's Chapel (the old chapel of Hoo), are also missed in the LUC Strategic Heritage Assessment. (Roger De Grendon built the old chapel of Hoo in the twelfth century when he also owned Dordon, and the Chetwynds, baronets, and long-time owners of Dordon Hall, commissioned the erection of the obelisk. Sir Philip Chetwynd owned the Dordon Hall estate in 1445, and Sir Guy Chetwynd remained the owner of Dordon Hall until the 1930s). These historical and physical connections, missed in the LUC Strategic Heritage Assessment, add to the significance of both Dordon Hall and the obelisk.
- 1.11. The narrow country lane (St Helena Rd) that connects Dordon Hall with the obelisk has artistic and historic significance in its own right (again missed in the LUC Heritage Assessment). It includes a stone memorial marking the site of Little Jim's Cottage, which relates to the famous Victorian poem, 'Little Jim, The Collier's Dying Child', written by the poet and playwright, Edward (Ned) Farmer, of Tamworth. Farmer wrote the poem after sheltering from a violent storm in the cottage (the last surviving cottage from the village of Hoo), whilst on his way to Dordon. The poem was taught in schools during the late nineteenth century and reflects the growing national concern about the conditions of colliery workers and their families. The memorial stone might be considered to be an undesignated heritage asset.
- 1.12. The significance of all the heritage assets identified in, and adjacent to, allocation site POL/DOR1b (H7), but especially Dordon Hall, is enhanced by the attractive, wooded landscape that includes ancient woodland and hedgerows, vestiges of the Forest of Arden. The POL/DOR1b (H7) site largely escaped the ravages of opencast mining and intensive agriculture that scarred land south and west of Dordon.
- 1.13. It is recommended that not all areas of the site POL/DOR1b (H7) will have the same capacity to accommodate change without harm to the significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets. To preserve the significance of the grade II listed Dordon Hall, and the grade II listed obelisk on the site of St Leonard's Chapel (the old chapel of Hoo), their setting needs to be defined, and viewing points and viewing corridors across the landscape need to be established.
- 1.14. The LUC study does identify that the existing fields around Dordon Hall contain buried parkland and garden archaeology, and includes these within the category of non-designated heritage asset. The LUC study does not give consideration to the curtilage of Dordon Hall or to the fact that any curtilage buildings or structures pre-dating 1948 will be curtilage listed. In relation to the buried garden archaeology it should be noted that Historic England states;

*'Heritage assets that comprise only buried remains may not be readily appreciated by a casual observer. They nonetheless retain a presence in the landscape and, like other heritage assets, may have a setting.'* (*The Setting of Heritage Assets, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in*

## Conclusions

- 1.15. It is recommended that the existing fields around Dordon Hall, containing buried garden and parkland archaeology will need to be retained as open land stretching west as far as The Hollies ancient woodland.
- 1.16. The setting of the grade II listed obelisk, and the possible Iron Age fort, and the site of 'Little Jim's Cottage', should also be preserved by taking the whole of Hoo Hill out of the allocated site.
- 1.17. The open vista between Dordon Hall and the ancient woodland (The Hollies), and the open views between Dordon Hall and the grade II listed obelisk, and other views out of Dordon Hall, including towards churches erected by the Chetwynds, and the eye-catcher view of the 'golden tower' at the restored Pooley Hall Colliery, add positively to the significance of Dordon Hall because of their visual, historical, architectural, and artistic connections, and view-points and viewing corridors therefore need to be established.
- 1.18. The full extent of the setting of the heritage assets within, and adjacent to, allocation POL/DOR1b (H7) needs to be established, and the contribution of setting to their significance.
- 1.19. From Indigo's assessment of the sites, it is likely that substantial open areas of landscape will be needed to protect the setting of the heritage assets and it is therefore recommended that consideration be given to reducing the quantum of development within this site, and that an alternative site to the west of Dordon be considered, such as site DLP299, which contains no designated heritage assets, has less heritage significance, and has a greater capacity for change.

### **Lane West of Dordon, north of A5/Watling Street, site DLP299 (page 51 of the LUC assessment)**

- 1.20. The LUC Strategic Heritage Assessment correctly records that there are no designated heritage assets upon this site.
- 1.21. It is stated that the grade II listed Hall End Hall farmhouse is directly opposite the site (but the study omits to clarify that the busy A5 dual carriageway separates the listed building and site DLP299). The LUC study states that there is a high likelihood of setting change for the listed building due to closing off its remaining rural context, and its historical relationship with the (demolished) Hall End Hall, which previously stood on land to the north side of Watling Street.
- 1.22. Given the busy A5 dual carriageway stands between the listed building and the rural land within the site DLP299, the contribution of this rural land to the significance of the listed building is very slight. The inclusion of appropriate landscaping within DLP299 could actually enhance the setting of the listed building, and the entrance to the village of Dordon.
- 1.23. As well as there being a busy dual carriageway directly in front the listed building, it has a lorry park and logistics centre directly behind it, and to its sides, and the listed building was within the defined area of the Birch Coppice Colliery since the nineteenth century, and within the Hall End Business Park / Core 42 site in the late twentieth / twenty-first century, and a meaningful relationship with a rural setting was therefore lost many years ago.
- 1.24. The LUC Strategic Heritage Assessment identifies the existence of non-designated

archaeological remains within DLP299, associated with the demolished Hall End Hall (occupied by colliery management from the nineteenth century), and a possible manorial site, which are all stated to be, *'of at least local importance.'*

- 1.25. The presence of the undesignated buried remains may justify a more detailed desk-based assessment and field evaluation, (which would normally be covered by a planning condition) and the findings should influence the production of any masterplan for the redevelopment of the site, and provide opportunities for interpretation of the buried remains, but they should not preclude the site from being included for residential development.

## **Conclusions**

- 1.26. Site DLP299 (west of Dordon), contains no designated heritage assets, but it does include archaeological remains of at least local interest that should influence the production of any masterplan for the site. Site DLP299 has a greater capacity to accommodate change than allocation site POL/DOR1b (H7), (east of Dordon), which contains (and has adjacent to it) designated heritage assets upon visually prominent hilltop locations, set within an attractive wooded landscape, a vestige of the Forest of Arden.
- 1.27. To maximize the opportunity to preserve and enhance heritage significance, and to mitigate potential harm to the significance of heritage assets, consideration should be given to reducing the quantum of proposed development within allocation POL/DOR1b (H7) (east of Dordon), and to including some of this development within DLP299 (west of Dordon).

