

Planning Department
Teignbridge District Council
Forde House
Brunel Road
Newton Abbot
TQ12 4XX

Your ref 16/02062/FUL
Our ref E16/0967

31 October 2016

Dear Sirs

Erection of dwelling, land adjoining Oxton Mere Barn, Kenton

Thank you for consulting The Gardens trust on the above application which affects Oxton House, an historic designed landscape of national importance, which is included by Historic England on the *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest* at Grade II.

The Gardens Trust (formerly The Garden History Society) is the Statutory Consultee on development affecting all sites on the Historic England *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest*. The Devon Gardens Trust is a member of The Gardens Trust and responds on its behalf to consultations in the County of Devon.

We have visited Oxton House on several occasions. We have viewed the Historic England Register map and entry, and the planning application documents on your website. We would ask you consider the following comments:

Oxton House is a late C18 picturesque designed landscape of national importance developed by the Rev John Swete, the late C18 diarist, artist & traveller. Between 1789 and 1801 Swete undertook a series of tours through Devon and neighbouring counties, producing twenty volumes of diaries with over 600 watercolour illustrations of houses, antiquities and other features of picturesque interest, inspired by the Rev William Gilpin's Observations. The Rev Swete died at Oxton in 1821, and the following year (1822) the Lyson noted that 'Oxton is beautifully situated and the extensive pleasure grounds have been laid out with much taste'.

Oxton House was altered c1830, and when in 1848 the estate was offered for sale, the particulars described 'lawns, parterres, shrubberies and park-like grounds... refreshed by rivulets and fishpools uniting below the House into a small lake'. Romantic walks and rides through the pleasure grounds and plantations were noted, and in the early C19 F W Stockdale described the woodlands at Oxton as 'remarkably picturesque'.

Country houses such as Oxton House had consciously designed settings, intended to reflect the status of their owners by creating a deliberate aesthetic effect. The original late C18 design remains basically intact and unspoilt.

The proposal is to convert an existing agricultural building into a dwelling. The Landscape and Visual Appraisal states that *'there is an opportunity, however, to remove the screening vegetation, to expose the proposed dwelling.'* If this were to happen, views to and from the proposed dwelling from the wider landscape of Oxton House would be opened up. This is a matter of considerable concern as views of a conspicuous modern building from within the historic designed landscape would be seriously detrimental to its character and appearance.

The National Planning Policy Framework states a presumption in favour of sustainable development in both plan making and decision making, but recognises that there is a need to balance any adverse impacts against the benefits. We note that the applicant does not offer any 'conservation gain' or further mitigation measures which might have included a Conservation Management Plan with proposals to enhance the parkland of Oxton House.

Good conservation practice indicates that where a planning application affects the historic environment, the applicant must demonstrate a clear understanding of the significance of the affected heritage asset, and that the proposed development will not adversely affect its historic significance. We would suggest that the applicant has not satisfied this criteria. We consider that proposed development would not maintain or enhance the distinctive rural character and appearance of Oxton House.

However, if your Council is minded to approve the application, we suggest that, there should be a S106 Agreement requiring the applicant to implement a landscape scheme before the proposed dwelling is occupied; that a landscape buffer is planted and maintained in accordance with good horticultural and arboricultural practice in perpetuity; and that the site is secured against future development in perpetuity in order to prevent further damage to the historic designed landscape.

We note that details of external works such as garages, sheds, bin storage, clothes drying areas, etc. do not appear to have been submitted with the application. Such elements would be extremely damaging to the historic landscape and we advise that any such subsidiary development should be identified as an integral part of the planning application prior to its determination. We further suggest that it would be appropriate to impose a condition on the planning permission to remove the permitted development rights to control such subsidiary development in the future.

In conclusion, the proposed development would cause considerable harm to the significance of the heritage asset of Oxton House and therefore should not be permitted. We recommend that your authority should refuse consent for this proposal as it clearly conflicts with national planning policy with regard to the conservation of the historic environment, and with your local plan policies.

Yours faithfully
John Clark
Conservation Officer