

**Planning Committee:** 29 January 2019

**Item Number:** **11**

**Application No:** [W 18 / 2145](#)

**Town/Parish Council:** Offchurch

**Case Officer:** Helena Obremski

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**Registration Date:** 07/11/18

**Expiry Date:** 02/01/19

**Offa House, Village Street, Offchurch, Leamington Spa, CV33 9AP**

Refurbishment and restoration of the main property including internal alterations to provide a single residential dwelling (including change of use from retreat (Sui Generis to C3 residential), single storey extensions, window and door alterations, 2no. dormer windows, re-roofing and new roof lantern. Proposed creation of 2no. additional dwellings through detachment of the main property from later additions by demolishing the 1960's and 1980's extensions - the remaining wing will form one additional residential unit, with extensions, and the existing ancillary Coach House, with extensions, will form the second additional unit. Associated landscaping and gates. FOR Mrs L Hartog

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This application is being presented to Committee as the Parish Council supports the application and a petition of 65 signatures in support of the application has been received, and it is recommended for refusal.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Planning Committee is recommended to refuse planning permission for the reasons listed at the end of this report.

**DETAILS OF THE DEVELOPMENT**

The application seeks planning permission for the redevelopment of the application site. In summary the works are as follows:

- Refurbishment and restoration of the existing main property (Offa House) on the site, and change of use from a retreat (sui generis) to a single residential property, including internal alterations, single storey extensions, window and door alterations, two front facing dormer windows, re-roofing, new roof lantern and removal of modern extensions and fire escape. This would provide a 6 bedroom property, with formalised parking area in front of the site, and garden areas to the north, west and south.
- Proposed creation of an additional dwelling (referred to as the Johnson Wing) through detachment of Offa House from its later extensions by demolishing the 1960s and 1980s additions - the remaining wing would form the new dwelling, which would be extended to the west with two and single storey extensions, and the existing wing would be increased in height. The proposed dwelling would have a modern impression, with large areas of glazing, aluminium window and door frames and timber cladding. This would provide a three bedroom property with driveway parking to the north of the site, and

garden areas to the north and south. The dwelling would be accessed from the secondary access from Village Street.

- Proposed use of the existing ancillary Coach House as a further additional separate residential unit, including minor internal and external alterations and a two storey extension, with glazed link attaching to existing feature wall, with a half hipped roof and largely glazed gable feature. This would provide a three bedroom property, with study area and open plan living accommodation. Aluminium windows are proposed both to the existing Coach House and its extension. The dwelling would be accessed from the existing secondary access point, with an area of hard standing for parking proposed to the north of the property, and garden area to the south.
- Associated landscaping works to split the site into three residential planning units, including installation of hard surfacing from the secondary access to provide a driveway for the two proposed residential properties, removal of trees and installation of gates.

This is a resubmission of withdrawn application W/18/0881 and the following amendments to the proposal have been made since the previous submission:

- Reduction in proposed area of hardstanding.
- Alterations to boundary treatments.
- Removal of proposed detached garages for residential properties.
- Demolition of more of the "Johnson Wing" than previously proposed to increase separation between Offa House and new dwelling, and overall reduction in size.
- Proposed balcony and additional second floor doorway to Offa House removed from the plans.
- A Heritage Impact Assessment has been provided as part of the current scheme.

## **THE SITE AND ITS LOCATION**

Offa House is a former Diocesan retreat house situated within the village of Offchurch. The property is a Grade II listed building situated within the Offchurch Conservation Area. There is a Grade II listed ancillary coach house to the west of the site, with high level wall which attaches to the property. The site is within the Green Belt, with open countryside adjoining the site to the north and west. The Grade II\* listed St. Gregory's church is situated to the east of the site and the Lodge to Offa House is situated to the south in separate ownership. The next nearest dwellings are situated further to the south, on the opposite side of Village Street.

There is a vehicular access and driveway to the site from Village Street. This leads to a parking area to the front and side of the property. There is also an existing separate vehicular access from Village Street further to the west of the main access, which is not currently in use.

The premises was granted planning permission for short term refuge accommodation for refugees for a period of 5 years from November 2015 but this use was not implemented. Planning permission was granted in December 2017 for a change of use from the retreat to a single dwellinghouse, however, this permission has not yet been implemented. The site remains vacant

(although the applicants are carrying out repair works and clearance of the site), and therefore the lawful use remains as a retreat.

### **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

W/18/0881 & W/18/0882/LB - Refurbishment of main dwelling, including internal and external alterations, demolition and extensions; detachment of existing wing of main dwelling and extensions to create a separate dwelling; extensions and alterations to the existing coach house to provide additional new dwelling, and associated works including new access and landscaping - Withdrawn 14/08/2018

W/17/2104 - Change of use from retreat (Use Class Sui Generis) to dwelling (Use Class C3) - Granted 19/12/2017

W/17/0903 - Change of use from short term residential accommodation for refugees (for a temporary period of up to five years) - to permanent residential residence for private ownership – Withdrawn 09.06.2017

W/15/1738 - Change of use from Diocesan retreat house to short term residential accommodation for refugees (for a temporary period of up to five years) – Granted 16.11.2015

### **RELEVANT POLICIES**

- National Planning Policy Framework
- The Current Local Plan
- BE1 - Layout and Design (Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029)
- BE3 - Amenity (Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029)
- BE4 - Converting Rural Buildings (Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029)
- NE2 - Protecting Designated Biodiversity and Geodiversity Assets (Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029)
- NE5 - Protection of Natural Resources (Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029)
- HE1 - Protection of Statutory Heritage Assets (Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029)
- HE2 - Protection of Conservation Areas (Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029)
- HE4 - Archaeology (Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029)
- DS18 - Green Belt (Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029)
- H1 - Directing New Housing (Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029)
- H11 - Limited Village Infill Housing Development in the Green Belt (Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029)
- H14 - Extensions to Dwellings in the Open Countryside (Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029)
- TR1 - Access and Choice (Warwick District Local Plan - 2011-2029)
- TR3 - Parking (Warwick District Local Plan - 2011-2029)
- Guidance Documents
- Parking Standards (Supplementary Planning Document)
- Residential Design Guide (Supplementary Planning Document- May 2018)
- LES - Low Emission Strategy Guidance for Developers (April 2014)

## **SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS**

**Offchurch Parish Council:** Supports application, this is a positive development for Offa House, the Johnson Wing and Coach House. The building has decayed over many years and there would be few parties which would seek to attempt such a significant project.

**WCC Ecology:** No objection, subject to conditions.

**WCC Archaeology:** No objection, subject to conditions.

**WCC Highways:** No objection, subject to conditions.

**WCC Landscape:** Objection, the proposal is considered to be harmful to the openness of the Green Belt, Conservation Area and setting of the Grade II listed building and integrity of the historic garden itself. The proposal would result in a number of trees being removed from the historic Victorian garden associated with Offa House, without justification, creating a harmful impact on the setting of the listed building and Conservation Area.

**Conservation Area Forum:** Objection, the proposal has not addressed concerns raised by CAF and the Conservation Officer. The scheme still appears as very intrusive to the landscape and particular concern was noted in relation to the proposed conservatory on the west elevation. The proposal includes harmful extensions and alterations to the main dwelling, and development in the garden of the listed building which would harm its setting. The extensions to the Coach House are considered to be very harmful and the size of the new dwellings and quantity of hardstanding around them are considered to be harmful to the Conservation Area and setting of the listed buildings.

**Historic England:** The proposed extension to Offa House would be damaging to the significance of the building. The benefits to the listed building are not considered to outweigh the harm as a result of the proposed extension.

**Public Response:** One letter of support has been received on grounds that the owners will restore the building back to its origins as a Victorian family dwelling and provide an ongoing asset to the village and area. Further delays will lead to potential negative outcomes. In addition, a door to door survey conducted by the applicant in the village of Offchurch has been provided with 65 signatures which states that they support the development and asks that committee members approve the application.

## **ASSESSMENT**

The main issues relevant to the consideration of the assessment of this application are as follows:

- Principle of the Development
- Whether the proposal constitutes appropriate development in the Green Belt and, if not, whether there are any very special circumstances which would outweigh the harm by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm identified

- The Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area and Impact on Heritage Assets
- Archaeological Impact
- The impact on the living conditions of nearby dwellings and living conditions for the future occupiers of the site
- Car Parking and Highway Safety
- Drainage
- Ecological Impact
- Waste
- Other Matters

### Principle of the Development

Local Plan Policy H1 states that new housing in rural areas will be permitted in Growth and Limited Infill Villages as shown on the proposal maps. Offchurch is identified as a Limited Infill Village, where residential development is generally acceptable where it complies with certain criteria. This policy allows for the re-use of buildings in line with Green Belt policy. It should also be noted that Offa House already has permission for use as a residential property under planning permission ref: W/17/2104. The proposal for the use of Offa House and the Coach House as existing buildings, and the Johnson Wing essentially as an existing building also for use as residential is considered to be acceptable in principle in this identified sustainable location.

Whether the proposal constitutes appropriate development in the Green Belt and, if not, whether there are any very special circumstances which outweigh the harm by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm identified

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that the essential characteristics of Green Belt are openness and permanence. It sets out that inappropriate development within the Green Belt is harmful by definition. Exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt are listed within paragraph 145 of the NPPF.

In the Planning Statement provided, the agent states that the site will be split into three separate residential units via hedgerow and a metal 5-bar fencing. The secondary access will be opened up and hardstanding will be installed to access the Coach House and Johnson Wing. The agent contends that the proposed development would represent appropriate development within the Green Belt and would be in accordance with the NPPF because across the site as a whole, the proposal would *"represent the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building"* (exception "c" of paragraph 145 of the NPPF). The agent makes reference to the fact that Offa House was once attached to the Coach House (although they have not been for many years), and that together they currently measure 374.84sqm (footprint) and 4,141.16m<sup>3</sup> (volume). The agent confirms that once completed (demolition works and new extensions), the existing overall footprint will reduce by 119.44sq.m. The agent therefore contends that the proposed *"extensions and alterations"* of the building will not amount to *"disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building"*. The agent also confirms that following demolition of existing parts of Offa House and the extension of Offa House, the Johnson Wing conference room

and the Coach House, the volume across the site will increase by 50.95m<sup>3</sup>, which is 1.23% greater than the existing volume calculation.

However, the Council does not consider that the proposal should be assessed against exception "c" of paragraph 145 of the NPPF in relation to appropriate development in the Green Belt (*extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building*). This exception relates to alterations to an existing building and is more akin to assessing an extension to an existing dwelling in isolation for example, which would trigger the need for the Council to assess whether the extensions were disproportionate, against Local Plan Policy H14 which defines disproportionate additions as extensions which represent more than a 30% increase over the original floorspace. Whilst the agent contends the Coach House was once attached to Offa House, this is not the case now, and the application can only be considered based on the built form within the site boundaries as it stands today.

The applicant has specifically requested that the impact of the proposed development on the openness of the Green Belt should be assessed in terms of the site as a whole, which Officers agree with. The proposal comprises of a comprehensive redevelopment of the whole site, including a change of use, and separating it into three residential planning units. This therefore has to be considered against exception "g" of paragraph 145 of the NPPF, which would be *"the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development"*. The NPPF is clear that the limited infilling or partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land is *only acceptable if it would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt*. Openness in this sense is defined as an absence of built form. Currently the site benefits from the main property, Offa House, which is a substantial building that has been significantly extended. The main part of the property is three stories, with the more recent extensions being single storey. The ancillary Coach House, attaching to a high level wall to the west of the site has a footprint of just 35sqm. It is therefore considered that the majority of the existing built form is consolidated around the central part of the site as one main building, whilst the Coach House is read as a much smaller ancillary structure, positioned some distance away from the main property. The three storey element of Offa House has the most considerable impact on the openness of the Green Belt at present, although it is recognised that the extensions do also impact openness. The Coach House being so small at present is considered to have a limited impact on openness in its current form.

It is recognised that across the site as a whole, the volume of built form would only increase by 1.23%. However, looking at the volume calculations is only one means of assessing the impact on openness, which can be rather crude. The fact that the site will be split into three separate residential sites means that the hardstanding also has to be increased in parts to serve the Coach House and Johnson Wing. Furthermore, the associated domestic paraphernalia and structures which could be constructed without the need for permission will further intensify the site, spreading the built form across the site and harming openness. Most importantly though, it is considered that currently the built form is consolidated around one main large property within the central portion of the

site. However, the proposal would split up and increase the number of buildings on the site, spreading the built form from east to west across the site and significantly increasing the built form around the Coach House, where there previously was none. The proposed extensions to the Coach House would dwarf the existing very modest building and create a large detached dwelling, where there previously was only limited harm to openness. This is considered to diminish the openness of the Green Belt and create a sprawling form of development across the whole site, which would be exacerbated by the fact that the site would also be split into three separate residential curtilages, with the potential for increased harm to openness once the properties are occupied.

It is considered that the proposal would represent the complete redevelopment of previously developed land, but it cannot be considered that the proposal would not have a greater impact on openness. It is therefore necessary to consider whether any very special circumstances exist which would outweigh the harm by reason of inappropriateness and harm to openness. The proposal would provide three additional dwellings, which would contribute towards the Council's housing supply. However, as the Council has a 6.2 year housing land supply and the proposal would only provide 3 dwellings, the weight which can be afforded to this benefit is limited.

It is recognised that the proposed development would result in the removal of some harmful elements to the Grade II listed Offa House. This is obviously recognised as an important benefit to the scheme as a whole. However, as discussed in detail below, the proposed alterations to Offa House following on from the removal of the incongruous extensions and fire escape are considered to cause significant harm to the listed building. Furthermore, the Conservation Officer has also expressed significant concern regarding the proximity of the Johnson Wing to the existing listed building, and has substantial reservations regarding the proposed extension to the Coach House. Given the level of concern expressed by the Conservation Officer regarding the proposed development and detrimental impact which this would have on designated heritage assets, it cannot be considered that this would represent very special circumstances which would outweigh the harm caused to the openness of the Green Belt. It is noted that WCC Landscape and the CAF also consider that the proposal would be harmful to the openness of the Green Belt, Conservation Area and setting of the Grade II listed building and integrity of the historic garden itself.

The Planning Statement notes that the level of investment required to improve and repair Offa House is considerable, and without the proceeds from the sale of the proposed dwelling(s), the applicants will not be able to carry out the necessary works. However, no evidence has been presented by the agent to justify this claim. Although Officers are supportive of the fact that the applicant wishes to restore the listed building and are sympathetic to the applicant's financial constraints, this does not justify the significant harm to the heritage assets as a result of the proposed development. The Planning Statement also suggests that if the application is refused, Offa House could fall further into disrepair and states that the site has failed to sell or find another viable use on a number of occasions. Whilst this may be the case, Officers have suggested ways in which to amend the scheme so that it would potentially be acceptable in terms of the impact on heritage assets, however, the applicant has declined to make further amendments to the scheme. Officers wish to see a viable use for the site

which would secure the future of the building, however, the level of harm identified is not considered to outweigh the benefits of the scheme.

The applicant has drawn Officer's attention to application ref: W/15/1704 which was granted planning permission for the conversion of Haseley Manor into 13no. apartments, demolition of Saxon House and Rossmore House and erection of 9no. dwellings with associated parking, landscaping, access and tennis court, which they consider represents a precedent for the proposed development. However, Officers have compared the two schemes and have concluded that there were different circumstances in assessing this application, notably,

1. The Haseley Manor scheme included the reinstatement of the formal garden on the south side of the listed building. This was a key feature in the setting of the listed building that had been lost as a result of previous developments. This necessitated the replacement buildings being located further away and consequently spreading development further around the site than may otherwise have been desirable.
2. Planning permission ref: W/15/1704 was granted under the previous Local Plan. Haseley Manor was designated as a "Major Developed Site in the Green Belt" in the previous local plan whereby Local Plan Policy SSP2 allowed for appropriate limited infilling and redevelopment of major developed sites. This policy would not have applied to Offa House because it has never been designated as a major developed site in the Green Belt.
3. A formal and detailed Viability Assessment was submitted for Haseley Manor which demonstrated that the viability of the scheme was marginal. This was verified by the Council's independent consultants.
4. The Haseley Manor scheme was granted at a time when the Council was unable to demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land. Hence the housing supply benefits of the scheme carried a lot more weight at that time, and a greater number of dwellings were also being provided as part of the proposal.

Therefore, as the circumstances were significantly different between this previously identified scheme and the proposed development, this is not considered to represent a precedent to support the approval of the proposed scheme. Each case must be assessed on its merits.

The applicant has also stated that the level of support from both the Parish Council and local residents represents in part, very special circumstances and should be considered as a benefit to the proposal. It is important that local residents are in support of a significant redevelopment such as this in a small village such as Offchurch. However, it cannot be considered that local support for this proposal outweighs the harm caused to openness and therefore this does not amount to very special circumstances.

It is therefore considered that the proposed development would have a harmful impact on the openness of the Green Belt, and there are no very special circumstances identified which would outweigh the harm caused to openness or to the other harm identified. The proposal is considered to be contrary to Local Plan policy DS18 and the NPPF.



## The impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area and Impact on Heritage Assets

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) places significant weight on ensuring good design which is a key aspect of sustainable development and should positively contribute towards making places better for people. The NPPF states that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving character, the quality of an area and the way it functions. Furthermore, Local Plan policy BE1 reinforces the importance of good design stipulated by the NPPF as it requires all development to respect surrounding buildings in terms of scale, height, form and massing. The Local Plan calls for development to be constructed using the appropriate materials and seeks to ensure that the appearance of the development and its relationship with the surrounding built and natural environment does not detrimentally impact the character of the local area. Finally, the Residential Design Guide sets out steps which must be followed in order to achieve good design in terms of the impact on the local area; the importance of respecting existing important features; respecting the surrounding buildings and using the right materials.

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) 1990 imposes a duty when exercising planning functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character of a Conservation Area. Section 66 of the same Act imposes a duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting when considering whether to grant a planning permission which affects a listed building or its setting.

Paragraph 193 of the NPPF states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Paragraph 196 of the NPPF states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage assets, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

Policy HE1 of the Local Plan states that development will not be permitted if it would lead to substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset. Where the development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The explanatory text for HE1 clarifies that in considering applications relating to Conservation Areas, the Council will require that proposals do not have a detrimental effect upon the integrity and character of the building or its setting, or the Conservation Area. Local Plan Policy HE2 supports this and states that it is important that development both within and outside a conservation area, including to unlisted buildings, should not adversely affect its setting by impacting on important views and groups of buildings within and beyond the boundary.

Local Plan Policy BE4 states that the reuse of rural buildings is acceptable where the proposed use or adaptation can be accommodated without extensive rebuilding or alteration to the external appearance of the building, and the

proposal retains and respects the special qualities and features of listed and other traditional rural buildings.

The application site is an integral part of the village and is an important site. However, owing to its typography, there would only be glimpses of the proposed development from public vantage points. Furthermore, the Johnson Wing and Coach House would be set back substantially from the main highway, limiting the impact of the proposed development within the street scene. Officers identify a number of significant concerns regarding the proposal, which are as follows:

#### *Offa House*

There is no objection to the principle of restoring and making alterations to Offa House, such as the proposed internal restorative work, installation of dormers, removal of modern wings and removal of the intrusive fire escape. However, there are reservations regarding the proposed single storey side extension.

The proposed removal of the majority of an historic load bearing wall to the north elevation amounts to an unacceptable loss of historic fabric and adverse change in original plan form. It is claimed that this addition would symmetrically balance the principal elevation, however, an integral aspect of this elevation is the architecturally significant bowed wing, which also holds historic merit and value by association as the archaeology report highlights that it is in fact initialled HW (Henry Wise, the vicar of Offchurch between 1805 and 1850), adding greater weight to its significance; this is testament to the site's historic usage as a rectory and vicarage. The wing also includes impressive original Georgian windows which undoubtedly contributes towards the overall impression, dominance and architectural significance of the Listed building.

It is asserted in the independent HIA that an additional structure may have existed here historically due to patches of white and outline of a small archway on the external face. However, it is likely that the presence of an arch indicates an historic window and white markings may suggest the use of render. In addition, a previous extension here is not evidenced or substantiated in any historic maps, photographs, documentary evidence and, most importantly, a building here is not highlighted in the archaeological report. Furthermore, the retention of 'two short wall nibs' does not sufficiently reflect the historic plan form of the Listed building, which forms part of the site's special architectural and historic interest, indicating how the building was experienced historically and how it functioned. The need for a 'commodious family kitchen' and natural light does not outweigh the Council's statutory responsibility under Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to protect the special architectural and historic interest of Listed buildings and any elements that contribute towards its significance, reflected in HE1 of the Local Plan. Paragraph 193 of the NPPF also requires Council's to afford great weight to the heritage asset's conservation, irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. It is also identified that the one storey extension is recognised to cause some negative affect in the HIA's 'Development effect: score chart', seemingly contrary to the consultant's own claim in the same report that 'at worst these changes are neutral.

Officer's concerns are supported by the assessment made by Historic England following a site visit. Historic England note that the proposed extension in this location would be damaging to the significance of the building and that the benefits to Offa House offered by the proposal are unlikely to outweigh the harm caused by the proposed single storey side extension.

Officers also have concerns regarding the proposed single storey rear extension. The need to accommodate greater family usage, in what is already a substantial house, and 'natural light values' is not a material consideration in weighing up the public benefit against harm caused to the heritage asset. Whilst the removal of the existing fire escape and associated doors are welcomed, the proposed conservatory overall gives the north elevation an inappropriate emphasis and reduces the grandeur of the principal façade and its architectural value, particularly with this coming in line with the 1 storey addition. Dating from the C19, this elevation is still part of the building's historic evolution and arguably how the site grew in importance as a Rectory and Vicarage. A projecting conservatory here cannot be supported, nor can the addition of balconies which are not characteristic of this type of early C18 building (particular ones that encompass approximately half the width of a façade). It is noted that the reference to Fig. 2 (1919 property plan) does indeed show a historic extension here, but importantly this is marked as a store extension and likely comprised of a small one storey structure, accessible only from the garden (the plan does not seem to indicate this was accessible from the house itself) and it is disputed this is of a similar scale and footprint to the proposed conservatory. In addition, the plan evidences that the construction of the store did not result in the demolition of an external wall and a store building attached to this elevation suggests further the ancillary nature of this elevation.

### *The Johnson Wing*

Officers have concerns regarding the proposed Johnson Wing and proximity to the nearby listed building. Whilst it is noted, as it has been previously, that there are clear benefits in the removal of inappropriate modern additions to the rear of modern house leading to the offshoot, referred to as the 'Johnson wing', the creation of a two-storey structure, increasing the overall height and massing, close to the principal Listed building is considered to increase the sense of urbanisation on the site and impression of competing dwellings. The angled form of this does little to address the issue. Although the proposed use of sympathetic materials is welcomed, this again does not reduce the dominance and impression of the dwelling in the landscape. As stated on several occasions during pre-application discussion and during the course of the previous applications, what is essentially a replacement dwelling should remain modest in size and design, ideally single storey, to retain the wing's ancillary nature to Offa House. This element of the scheme is clearly contrary to Policy BE1 of the Local Plan, as the increase from one to two storeys does not respect the form of Offa House, and contravenes HE1 due to its overall detrimental impact on the principal Listed building and its setting. Negative impact is once more identified in the HIA's 'Development effect: score chart', but is not addressed in the HIA itself, although if mitigation measures were to include sympathetic materials and 'angling' the new dwelling, this would do little to reduce the overall sense of mass and bulk. The scheme put forward has also changed little to what was

proposed initially, despite communicating similar concerns which resulted in the withdrawal of the applications.

### *The Coach House*

Officers have concerns regarding the proposed extensions to the Coach House. The highest level of harm identified in the proposed scheme is undoubtedly the extension to the Coach House. Advice provided during a meeting at Riverside House on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2018 was to recommend the construction of a new dwelling in a private courtyard on a much smaller plot, away from the Coach House, as opposed to constructing a large overbearing structure adjacent to the curtilage of the listed building. However, what is proposed is similar to the original scheme in terms of overall footprint and massing, with the absence of 1 dormer and a lower roof ridge. In addition, a negative impact (two levels higher than the impact on the Johnson wing and extension to Offa House), is once more identified in the HIA's score chart and this is interpreted as a unanimous agreement that harm caused amounts to substantial. It is also conceded by the consultant that *'...the Coach House extension is unusually large and could thereby be deemed harmful in NPPF terms'*. It is nonetheless claimed that the proposed extension is an imaginative design with contemporary flavour. However, Officers do not consider the design to be outstanding or innovative, necessary to give the scheme greater weight under paragraph 131 of the NPPF. Moreover, it is considered that it would fail to assimilate into the overall form and layout of the surroundings, thereby also contravening Policy BE1 of the Local Plan (the extension is after all at the very least 4 x larger than the Coach House).

In addition, the scheme is considered contrary to Policy BE4 (Converting Rural Buildings), as the scheme would dramatically change the building's appearance, including its quintessential rural character and architectural and historic attributes as a well preserved surviving example of an agricultural structure. Furthermore, the notion that the extension would result in beneficial use and increased use of garden space does not demonstrate the substantial public benefit required to outweigh substantial harm caused, contrary to para. 195 of the NPPF. It is evidenced in the HIA that the Coach House historically formed part of a large agricultural courtyard, comprising of various outbuildings, 'used for the husbanding and processing of livestock' which in itself adds greater significance to its original purpose as an agricultural outbuilding. However there is no evidence indicating an outbuilding of a similar size to what is proposed currently. As noted above, Officers were not adverse to the construction of a new dwelling in a private courtyard which would arguably enhance the Coach House's agricultural character and setting. Officers conclude that the proposed extension to the Coach House would adversely change its character, appearance and special architectural and historical interest, and would thereby be contrary to Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. In addition, combined with the addition of a further storey to the Johnson wing, this again would create the impression of competing dwellings and urbanisation, reducing the overall dominance and grandeur of the principal Listed building.

## *General*

With regards to the splitting of the site, whilst it is recognised that there is evidence of historic hardstanding in the grounds, the consultant's claim that the site was physically divided in the C19 lacks any tangible evidence, as the archaeological report presents no evidence that substantiates this and the tithe map relates to the division of title/ land, as opposed to the marking physical boundaries associated with this division. Officers therefore dispute that this period saw the garden diminished via a 'tripartite freehold subdivision'. As explained before, dividing the site with masonry walls and estate railings further relegates the setting's contribution to Offa House, which requires a substantial open garden to protect its special historical interest and significance. A substantial garden with open views of the surrounding land and wider countryside is integral to Offa House's historic character, identity and status in the village. Historic England have reflected upon this previously, stating that the proposed subdivision would detract from the main house and would 'diminish the presence of a substantial house in extensive grounds'. Section 66 also requires to pay special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of Listed buildings and the contribution they make to their special architectural and historic interest.

It is considered that the proposed development would have a harmful impact on both heritage assets located within the site boundaries and that there are limited public benefits which do not outweigh the harm caused. The applicant states that the fact that their Heritage Consultant and Historic England raise no objection to the extensions to the Coach House and the Johnson Wing means that the development should be considered as acceptable and should be approved. However, Historic England were consulted in relation to the impact of the proposed development on the listed church which neighbours the site. Whilst their comments on the proposal have been taken into consideration, as stated within the comments from Historic England, it is the duty of the Council's Officers to weigh the balance of the scheme as a whole and come to a planning judgement based on all of the information provided.

The Council's Conservation Officer has provided a detailed and well-justified case in relation to the harm caused to heritage assets, and also identified anomalies and conflict in the details provided in the applicant's Heritage Assessment, which casts doubt on their assessment. From the information provided, Officers have not been presented with any additional information to justify a departure from Officers' professional views. Whilst Officers recognise the benefits offered by the proposal such as the removal of incongruous and harmful features to Offa House and securing the future of the listed buildings on the site, for the reasons detailed above it is considered the level of harm caused outweighs these benefits. CAF have also expressed significant concerns regarding the scheme, including the alterations to Offa House which they consider to be very harmful. CAF state that the splitting of the site would be harmful to the setting of the listed building and Conservation Area and that the alterations to the Coach House would also be very harmful to the buildings special significance.

Therefore, it is considered that when taking all of the above information into consideration, the proposed development would have a harmful impact on the listed buildings and their setting. The harm identified is considered to be less

than substantial, however, the public benefits, such as providing additional housing are considered to be limited owing to the fact that the Council has a 6.2 year housing land supply and are not considered to outweigh the significant harm identified above. The proposal is not considered to have a harmful impact on the Conservation Area. The development is therefore considered to be contrary to the NPPF and Local Plan policies BE1, BE4 and HE1.

#### Archaeological Impact

WCC Archaeology have assessed the application and note that the application site lies within an archaeologically sensitive area, within the probable extent of the medieval settlement of Offchurch and is adjacent to the Church of Saint Gregory a Grade II\* listed building, probably dating from the 11th or 12th century. There is a potential that the proposed development could disturb archaeological remains relating to the medieval occupation of Offchurch, such as structural remains, boundary features or rubbish pits. They therefore recommend that a condition is attached requiring the provision of a written scheme of investigation and an Archaeological Mitigation Strategy document. This is considered to be reasonable and the condition could be added if the application were being approved.

The proposal is therefore considered to be in accordance with Local Plan Policy HE4.

#### The impact on the living conditions of nearby dwellings and living conditions for the future occupiers of the site

Warwick District Local Plan Policy BE3 requires all development to have an acceptable impact on the amenity of nearby users or residents and to provide acceptable standards of amenity for future users or occupiers of the development. Development should not cause undue disturbance or intrusion for nearby users in the form of loss of privacy, loss of daylight, or create visual intrusion. The Residential Design Guide SPD provides a framework for Policy BE3, which stipulates the minimum requirements for distance separation between properties and that extensions should not breach a 45 degree line taken from a window of nearest front or rear facing habitable room of a neighbouring property.

#### *Impact on living conditions of nearby dwellings*

The nearest residential property to the application site is the Lodge to the south of the site. Offa House has an extant permission for use as a dwelling, and is already positioned to the north of the site. The Johnson Wing would be a considerable distance from the rear elevation and amenity area serving this property. There would be no conflict with the Council's adopted 45 degree guidance as a result of the proposed development

It is considered that the proposed development would cause no material harm to neighbouring residential amenity.

### *Living conditions for the future occupiers*

All of the proposed dwellings would provide adequate living conditions for their future occupiers and would provide adequately sized private amenity areas in accordance with the Council's adopted Residential Design Guide SPD.

The development is therefore considered to provide adequate living conditions for the future occupiers of the dwellings and would not have a harmful impact on neighbouring residential amenity. The proposed development is considered to be in accordance with the NPPF, adopted Local Plan Policy BE3 and the Council's adopted distance separation guidance.

### Car Parking and Highway Safety

The Highways Authority have been consulted regarding the proposals. The development proposals also include the creation of a new vehicular access. The Highway Authority initially raised an objection to the development proposals due to concerns with the proposed vehicular access, however, following discussions with the applicant, the concerns raised were addressed. A new vehicular access off Village Street will be created to serve the two new dwellings. The drawings submitted illustrate that the required level of visibility splays can be achieved at the proposed vehicular access. The Highways Authority consider that it is unlikely that the development proposals will have a detrimental impact on public highway safety, or have a detrimental impact on the operation or capacity of the local highway network. They have no objection on this basis, subject to a number of conditions which could be added if the application were being approved.

The proposed development would provide adequate parking in accordance with the Council's adopted Vehicle Parking Standards SPD and there is space within the site boundaries to store cycles.

The development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Local Plan policies TR1 and TR3 and the Vehicle Parking Standards SPD.

### Drainage

The application site lies within Flood Zone 1. Limited details have been submitted in relation to the drainage details for the site. However, the required information could be secured by condition if the application were being approved.

The development is therefore considered to be in accordance with the NPPF and Local Plan Policy FW2.

### Ecological Impact

The application site is a part of a large Ecosite (Offchurch Bury Park Ref. 41/36), which is a non-statutory site identified by the Warwickshire Biological Records Centre (WBRC) as having some ecological value and recorded history. WCC Ecology have assessed the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Bat Surveys which were provided in support of the application. They note that the reports

appear to have been carried out in accordance with appropriate methodology. WCC Ecology are satisfied with the details provided in relation to bats and recommend a condition to secure further detailed mitigation measures. They also recommend conditions requiring the provision of a lighting scheme, a Construction Management Plan in the interest of the protection of nesting birds, great crested newts, reptiles, and hedgehogs, a Tree Protection Plan and a combined ecological and landscaping scheme.

If the application were being approved, these conditions are considered to be reasonable and could be attached. The development is therefore considered to be in accordance with the NPPF and Local Plan Policy NE2.

### Waste

Adequate waste storage can be accommodated within the site boundaries and Waste Management have no objection to the proposed development.

### Other Matters

The anticipated vehicle use by residents of the new development is likely to cause an incremental increase in traffic in areas of poor air quality within the district. To offset this it is recommended that the developer is required to provide electric vehicle charging facilities for the new dwelling. A condition could be added to secure this. A condition could also be added to ensure compliance with Policy FW3, water efficiency.

## **CONCLUSION**

The proposed development is considered to constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt which is harmful by definition and by reason of harm to openness. It is also considered to cause harm to heritage assets. There are no public benefits or very special circumstances identified which would outweigh this harm. The development is therefore considered to be contrary to the NPPF and Local Plan policies DS18, BE1 and HE1, and is therefore recommended for refusal.

## **REFUSAL REASONS**

- 1 The proposed development comprises inappropriate development within the Green Belt which is harmful by definition and by reason of harm to openness. In the opinion of the LPA no very special circumstances have been demonstrated which are considered sufficient to outweigh the harm identified. The development is therefore considered to be contrary to the NPPF and Warwick District Local Plan Policy DS18.
- 2 Local Plan Policy BE1 reinforces the importance of good design stipulated by the NPPF as it requires all development to respect surrounding buildings in terms of scale, height, form and massing. The Local Plan requires development to be constructed using appropriate materials and seeks to ensure that the appearance of the development and its relationship with the surrounding built and natural environment does not detrimentally impact the character of the local area.



Policy HE1 of the Local Plan states that development will not be permitted if it would lead to substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset. Where the development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Local Plan Policy BE4 states that the re-use of rural buildings is acceptable where the proposed use or adaptation can be accommodated without extensive rebuilding or alteration to the external appearance of the building, and the proposal retains and respects the special qualities and features of listed and other traditional rural buildings

In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, the proposed development would result in substantial harm to designated heritage assets within the site boundaries, by virtue of a loss of original fabric with historic significance and reducing the grandeur of the principal façade of Offa House and its architectural value by introducing a large extension which is uncharacteristic of its time. Furthermore, the proposed Johnson Wing would dominate and detract from the nearby listed building and fails to respect the form of Offa House. The extension to the Coach House is not considered to be in keeping with the overall form and layout of its surroundings and would detract from the special rural and architectural character of the existing building. Furthermore, dividing the site is considered to detract from Offa House and diminish the presence of this substantial house in extensive grounds, which is integral to the historic character of the listed building, and identity and status of the property within the village.

The proposal is thereby considered to be contrary to the aforementioned policies.

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