

Ref 73 Historic England

To whom it may concern:

Thank you for consulting Historic England on the submission version of the Ashington Neighbourhood plan. Historic England is the government's advisor on planning for the historic environment, including advising on the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets and champion good design in historic places. As such we will comment only on those areas that fall within our remit and silence on other matters should not be treated as agreement or consent. We hope the following comments are of assistance to the examiner.

From Historic England's perspective the Ashington Neighbourhood Plan has been one of the most interesting to see come forward in the South East of England over the past few years. The Parish has relatively few defined heritage assets and as such might have been screened out for review, notably where it was initially determined that there were no direct impacts to designated heritage assets. Nevertheless, review of the regulation 14 version suggested there may have been some oversight in reviewing the potential site allocations and that possible impacts to the scheduled monument adjacent to Site 5 (Land at Church House Farm), in addition to impacts to the setting of the listed farmhouse and non-designated moated site surrounding it, had not received full consideration. Both the landowner and parish council have responded rapidly to our comments leading to a geophysical survey that, in combination with the results of surveys undertaken in 1999 and 2017, have demonstrated that a landscape of archaeological remains surrounds the scheduled monument. The Roman villa structure itself extends into the west of the site, further substantial masonry remains interpreted as a substantial detached bathhouse are located elsewhere in the site, along with other areas of potential remains and linear features (ditches) located within and crossing other parts. Following review we have confirmed that, with the present evidence, we consider this to be a site of national interest and therefore requiring application of the policy set out in Footnote 63 of the NPPF with regard to sites of archaeological interest of demonstrably equivalent significance to scheduled monuments.

Following discussion with representatives for the Parish Council, District Council and landowners, we have confirmed our agreement that without further, invasive investigation of the remains, we would not support the allocation of this land for housing development and that investigation might not lead to a position where development for housing would be acceptable (in our view). However, we agreed that where it would provide public open space within a wider development, allowing the introduction of a favourable management regime to reduce potential for damage through ploughing and enhanced public awareness and enjoyment of the heritage asset, we could see that the allocation would support delivery of public benefits through better use of the heritage asset, whilst also securing the setting of the listed building and non-designated moated site. As such we are pleased to support the updated Policy ASH11, although we would ask for your consideration of whether the area protected as future public open space to protect these remains through policy ASH11. V, vi and xx via the policy and accompanying mapping is sufficiently clearly defined to inform decision making.

We have considered that there is some potential for harm to the setting of the listed church and its churchyard through development of access roads to this development site. This might be reduced by requiring protection of the churchyard wall during the development phase and requirement for the design of highways and landscaping for the development to provide a suitably sensitive landscaped design, that also forms an attractive gateway to the development. Given the requirement of policy ASH11.xix and paragraph 8.17 we feel that this is appropriate to be managed at the planning application stage. We do not feel this would merit an in principle objection to the proposed allocation of the combined site.

We are pleased to have been consulted and involved in discussions that have found a meaningful and locally specific approach to the issues of the neighbourhood plan area and the opportunities to enhance the conservation and enjoyment of its surprisingly rich heritage, whilst supporting the delivery of sustainable development.

We hope these comments are of assistance to the examiner, but would be pleased to provide further information or answer any queries that may arise from them.

Yours faithfully



Historic England