

Conservation Consultation

Proposal: Creation of AstroTurf pitch with perimeter fencing, floodlighting, maintenance store associated hardstanding area and goal recess areas.		Location: One Leisure at Ramsey Abbey School.
DC Case Officer: Dallas Owen	Conservation Officer: Nick Armour	Application Ref. No: 18/02171/FUL

Background

This application is for the construction of an external 3G Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) including perimeter fencing, floodlighting, maintenance store and associated hardstanding areas located on a games pitch adjacent to Ramsey Abbey House, a Grade I listed building. The house lies within an associated scheduled monument and its garden is enclosed by Grade II listed walls. The proposed ATP would be located on the eastern side of Ramsey Abbey House and gardens within an area of grassed playing fields which currently provides an attractive open setting to the historic buildings. The area is enhanced by the addition of various specimen trees. There has already been some loss of the quality of the setting to the heritage assets through the piecemeal introduction of various 20th Century school buildings and adjacent tennis courts with associated fencing and flood lights.

Significance:

Ramsey Abbey House and scheduled monument are heritage assets of the highest significance and therefore changes within their setting must be fully justified with any harm identified and mitigated where possible. The scheduled monument protects the core of the abbey grounds where it is believed the most important abbey buildings were located. The listed building incorporates the last surviving built parts of the Ramsey Abbey inner precinct and was converted into a dwelling house by the Cromwell family at the dissolution of the monastery. Much of the building has been re-worked by the architects Soane and Blore in the Georgian period. Part of the latter's work was to create formal gardens to the south of the building and to enclose them within the now listed walls and balustrades.

The listed building and garden structures are also an important component of the conservation area and reflect the post-dissolution conversion of the abbey into a country house with formal gardens and parklands.

Potential Impact:

Under consideration are the potential impacts of the proposed scheme to the setting of the Grade I listed building, the scheduled monument, the Grade II listed garden walls and the direct impact of

the proposal on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Assessment:

The wider setting of the listed building is of great importance as it allows the best appreciation of the architect's realisation of an 'Elizabethan Revival' mansion presented within formal gardens bounded by matching walls and set within a soft landscaped parkland setting. Although the pristine quality of the planned setting has been compromised by modern school buildings and their associated paraphernalia that setting has not been undermined to an irretrievable degree. It is against this background that the proposal is assessed.

The proposed ATP would be located approximately 200m to the east of Ramsey Abbey House and would occupy a large area in views in that direction from the house and its formal gardens. The floodlights, surrounding wire fencing of the existing tennis courts have an adverse impact upon the setting of the building but they are relatively visually porous and still allow a wider sense of the green space of the playing fields beyond to be appreciated. The proposed ATP would completely negate this sense of space by adding further cumulative layers of fencing, floodlights and a maintenance store into this space. The wider setting of the Grade I listed building and its scheduled formal gardens would be all but eliminated to the east. Glimpsed views to Ramsey Abbey House across the playing fields from footpaths to the west of the abbey and its grounds would also be degraded through the introduction of additional layers of fencing and floodlights.

Conservation Area:

Ramsey Abbey House, its formal gardens and associated buildings are an important part of the conservation area, and within the school grounds views towards the house are good where the modern buildings are screened by trees. From some directions the visual quality of the conservation area has been reduced by the piecemeal development of the school prior to the designation of the area in 1975. Views of the house and its garden remain predominantly good from the playing fields and from the east where seen in glimpsed views through hedgerows from the footpaths and fields beyond. The addition of visual clutter from the fencing and floodlights of the ATP to the green space of the playing fields will not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area.

Harm:

The proposal shall be harmful to the setting of the listed building and scheduled monument; the visual impact of the lighting columns and fencing will be beyond the area of highest sensitivity, and therefore the harm will be less than substantial. However, because the heritage assets are of the highest significance, great weight must be given to their conservation and any justification of the scheme through public benefit must be considerable.

In the wider context of the Ramsey Conservation Area the harm can also be said to be less than substantial but it is considered that the proposed ATP would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area and should not therefore be supported.

Conclusion:

In accordance with NPPF para.196, the scheme would be harmful to the setting of designated heritage assets and directly to the significance of the conservation area and should therefore not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that the proposals would have considerable public benefit.

Conclusion: Objections raised.

Signed 

Date: 17th December 2018. Signed.....Date.....