

**19/03415/FUL**

### **Midford Castle**

Erection of agricultural building and associated landscaping and land modelling works (part retrospective).

### **OBJECT**

Midford Castle lies within the Green Belt, the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the indicative setting of the City of Bath World Heritage Site, and the landscape setting of Bath.

Midford Castle is Grade I listed and the Stables and Old Chapel immediately to the sites east are Grade II\* listed.

Given that Midford Castle is a Grade I listed building of the highest significance we would urge the LPA to encourage the conservation and care of this building through a conservation management plan. This should be a requirement of any further development on the site necessitating planning consent, and a Condition of any permission granted.

BPT has an in principal objection to the development because it has already had a major adverse impact on the heritage significance and setting of the listed building, and the local landscape character and this adverse impact would be further exacerbated by the construction of the proposed agricultural building.

Undertaking works to listed building without first obtaining the relevant permissions is unlawful. We take the disregard of planning regulations which exist to protect the unique value of heritage assets very seriously. We do not consider that retrospective permission should be granted and the LPA should take the necessary steps to remedy this breach and reverse the harm caused.

The fact that the work has been undertaken without permission has resulted in substantial harm to the special interest and significance of Midford Castle. The LPA should send out a strong message that this unlawful approach to heritage buildings is a contravention that can lead to prosecution, rather than allowing or indeed encouraging the applicant to continue to undertake work without due diligence.

We strongly object to this application and recommend that it is refused for the following reasons.

### **Landscaping work**

The positioning of the Castle in the landscape and its relationship with it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset. The Castle stands on an elevated platform, and the

sloping parkland and scrub falling away contributes to its colossal prominence in the landscape. The levelling and extension of the platform surrounding the Castle, and the creation of a domestic garden has compromised the appearance and elevated presence of the Castle in its romantic landscape setting, and contradicts its aesthetic interest.

The landscaping work undertaken therefore has a major adverse aesthetic impact on Midford Castle in its landscape setting.

### **Agricultural building**

Woodlands and trees in close proximity to the Castle have historically contributed to its romantic setting and make a positive contribution to the aesthetic significance of the listed building. Historic maps evidence the existence of trees that have been removed in the location of the proposed building.

The siting, size and appearance of the agricultural building and associated loss of woodland has the potential to detract from landscape character and harm the setting of the Castle.

The presence of a modern agricultural barn would not sit comfortably with the style and scale of other domestic stone buildings that form a group within this estate.

Furthermore the applicant has not demonstrated that the building is needed for agricultural reasons. The Castle and estate does not appear to be a working farm.

There is insufficient justification for the proposed agricultural building, which fails to bring any public benefit to outweigh harm. The siting, appearance and permanent loss of woodland in its location causes substantial harm to the setting, group value, and romantic landscape significance of Midford Castle.

### **In conclusion**

The harm caused would be substantial in its accumulated impact on this heritage asset. The NPPF paragraph requires that great weight is given to harm caused to heritage assets.

We do not consider that any planting or screening would mitigate against the harm already caused.

This application is therefore contrary to the NPPF, the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and Placemaking Plan, D2 (Local character and distinctiveness), HE1 (Historic Environment), NE2 (Conserving and enhancing the landscape and landscape character), and B4 (World Heritage) and should be refused.

**BATH PRESERVATION TRUST**

September 2019