



Country Land &
Business Association
RURAL ECONOMY IS OUR BUSINESS

Our Ref: 2511487/JT/ar

19 January 2009

Henry Lytton-Cobbold Esq
Lytton Enterprises Limited
The Estate Office
Knebworth House
KNEBWORTH
Herts SG3 6PY

Dear Mr Lytton Cobbold

Proposed extension of Old Knebworth Conservation Area boundaries

You have recently informed us of proposals to extend the Old Knebworth Conservation Area boundary to include Knebworth Park. You have sent us copies of relevant documents, and also letters of 6 November 2008 from the East of England Region of English Heritage, and of 12 September 2008 from North Hertfordshire District Council (both of which we understand the Estate has only just received).

I write as Heritage Adviser at the CLA, whose 36,000 members manage between a quarter and a third of all heritage in England and Wales (I am also, separately, a planning consultant specialising in heritage).

We know that the Estate has concerns about the proposals. Our comments are as follows:

The existing Conservation Area

1. Knebworth Village is what Conservation Areas were devised to protect (see 7 below): a grouping of buildings which together form a townscape (or village-scape). Its designation as a Conservation Area has public benefits, in particular that it is a material consideration in planning decisions, and that some activities which would otherwise be permitted development will require planning permission. We have little doubt that its significance justifies designation, and its designation should continue, within appropriate boundaries.

Extension of the existing Conservation Area

2. The proposed extension is firstly, in our view, asking the wrong question. It is not good practice to designate areas of wholly different character within a single Conservation Area (there are a number of good reasons for this, for example that Conservation Area Management Plans become confusing if they have to contain several different sets of policies for very different areas, and that residents find it more difficult to identify with and support a Conservation Area if it is big and contains areas very different in character to their own). To give just one example, the city of Canterbury has not one but some 15 Conservation Areas, many contiguous, but each of a different character.
3. A landscaped park and a village, even if they have historical factors in common, are clearly of entirely different character (to continue the analogy above, the difference is much greater than between any two Conservation Areas in Canterbury).

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4. In this specific case, moreover, there is a considerable degree of physical disconnection between the two. Access to the Park is from the north, from the A1(M) and Stevenage, while access to the Village is from the south and east. A further disconnection is use: the Park is a landscaped park and also has an unusual 40-year heritage of rock concerts and other events; the Village of course is residential.
5. We would not therefore think it appropriate to extend the existing Conservation Area to include an area of radically different character. *If Conservation Area designation is appropriate for Knebworth Park, it should be designated separately.*

The designation of parks as Conservation Areas

6. The key question is of course *whether* the Park should be so designated.
7. Conservation Area designation is primarily a tool to protect townscape (or city- or village-scape). It specifically protects buildings and their settings (and trees). It is not a tool to protect landscape. The national planning guidance PPG15 sets this out clearly (in paragraphs 4.1-4.7), and especially in 4.6 which particularly discourages designation of landscape within Conservation Areas. Of course many Conservation Areas include some land contiguous to villages or towns, to protect the settings of buildings. But beyond that few Conservation Areas cover rural land, and there are very few rural parks which are entirely or mostly in Conservation Areas.
8. PPG15 of course does not wholly preclude the designation of landscape, in that 4.6 adds that "Designation *may* (my italics) well, however, be suitable for historic parks and landscapes and other areas of historic landscape *containing structures that contribute to their special interest and that fall within the categories subject to conservation area controls* (my italics)".
9. This is clearly not an invitation to designate every historic park as a Conservation Area; it simply justifies some specific exceptions to the normal criteria, as for example in Swaledale, where there was a specific need to protect dispersed field barns which individually did not merit listing.
10. This does not apply in this case, because we understand that all the buildings within what would be a Park Conservation Area are listed, or in the curtilage of listed buildings, so they and their settings already enjoy a much higher level of protection than Conservation Area status would provide.
11. The heritage protection tool designed for parks is of course the Register of Parks and Gardens. Knebworth Park is already on the Register, at grade II*. This designation is a material consideration in planning decisions and gives the Park a high degree of protection. (Although it does not make the Park Article 1(5) land, as Conservation Area designation would, the protections against external cladding and the limitation of residential extension which this gives are irrelevant in this case, because such changes would as above require listed building consent).
12. The Park is also Green Belt, again giving it a high degree of protection from development.
13. If it is necessary to protect trees, a TPO would be a more proportionate means of achieving this.
14. We do not therefore consider that Conservation Area designation of the Park would bring any material public benefits.

Policy on the designation of parks and gardens

15. We have considered English Heritage (EH) policy, and specifically the letter from the East of England Region of EH dated 6 November 2008.
16. We would endorse the need (page 1 paragraph 4 of that letter) for Conservation Areas to have logical boundaries. The existing boundaries in some places appear arbitrary, because they include some parts of the Park and gardens and not others. But unless there is a reason to designate the Park which is both valid and convincing, which as above there is not, the logical solution is not to "move the boundary further out", as the letter puts it, almost trebling the size of the Conservation Area to no material public benefit, but to simply to redraw the boundary on a logical basis, around the village itself, following EH guidance.
17. While (page 1 paras 3 and 5) Conservation Area Appraisals can legitimately refer to views, Conservation Area designation does not provide any tools to protect these, other than through the planning system. The Registered Park designation already provides the LPA with adequate grounds to take effects on views into account in planning decisions, and Conservation Area designation again would add no material extra protection.
18. Page 2 paragraph 2 of the letter implies that all Grade I and II* Registered Parks (perhaps all Registered Parks) should, as a matter of course, be designated as Conservation Areas. This conflicts with both PPG15 and EH guidance, which (as above) says that this is inappropriate except in cases in which it is an appropriate way of protecting unlisted buildings.
19. It is certainly not the adopted policy of English Heritage that most or all Registered Parks and Gardens should become Conservation Areas. Such a policy would raise fundamental questions about the role and purpose of both Registered Parks and Gardens designation (which would become largely or wholly redundant) and of Conservation Area designation. (We doubt that English Heritage would wish to make this radical change, or that it could validly do so without extensive consultation with DCMS and DCLG and other stakeholders).
20. The arguments in the letter for the designation of the Park are therefore in conflict with both national planning policy, as set out in PPG15, and with EH policy on Conservation Area designation, which (see *Guidance on the management of conservation areas*, paragraphs 3.15 and 3.16), essentially repeats the national policy on this point set out in PPG15.

The disbenefits of Conservation Area designation

21. Our view as above is that designation would bring no material public benefits. If despite this the Park was designated, this would bring significant *disbenefits* both to the LPA and to the Estate in the form of higher costs, inflexibility, and delays. You have of course already put forward arguments on this point to North Hertfordshire District Council, and these have also been endorsed in letters from the HHA, Mr Norman Hudson, and East of England Tourism.

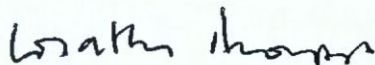
Conclusions

22. In our view, *if* it was appropriate to designate the Park as a Conservation Area, this should be done not as an extension but as a separate designation (see 2-5 above).
23. Either way, designation of the Park as a Conservation Area would be contrary to both national planning policy, as set out in PPG15, and EH policy on Conservation Area designation.

24. This national guidance makes it clear that Conservation Area designation was not designed as, and is not, a protection tool for landscape or parkland, and that it should only be considered in particular circumstances, where there are buildings which do not merit listing, and nevertheless deserve protection, and would be protected by Conservation Area designation. This is not the case here, because all the affected buildings are listed.
25. The correct designation tool is obviously the Register of Parks and Gardens, on which Knebworth Park already appears. Conservation Area designation would add no material public benefit. The disbenefits in terms of extra bureaucracy and workload for the Estate, and the LPA, would be significant.
26. Designation is on the other hand appropriate for Old Knebworth Village: a village is something Conservation Areas were designed to protect. The problem of arbitrary boundaries should be addressed by redrawing these around the Village as necessary, using the principles set out in the English Heritage guidance. This would clearly exclude some or most of the areas of the Park and gardens which are currently within the Conservation Area.

Please feel able to copy this letter to North Hertfordshire District Council if you wish.

Yours sincerely



Jonathan Thompson
Heritage Adviser
jonathan.thompson@cla.org.uk





Mark Simmons

From: Jim Pye [revpye@onetel.com]
Sent: 15 February 2011 15:19
To: Mark Simmons
Subject: Review of Old Knebworth Conservation Area
Attachments: revpye.vcf

Dear Mark,

Thank you for your letter of 4th February.

Following consultation with the St Alban's Diocesan Office & a meeting of our Parochial Church Council Standing Committee, I can inform you that there is no objection from us to the proposed boundary line, that includes St Mary's Church, graveyard, & car park within the Conservation Area.

Kind regards

Rev'd Jim Pye,

Rector of Knebworth.

15 St. Martin's Road,

Knebworth, Herts. SG3 6ER

01438 817396

Mark Simmons

From: Mark Simmons
Sent: 01 March 2011 16:01
To:
Subject: RE: Old Knebworth Conservation Area
Importance: High

Dear

Thank you for your email which I have just read having arrived back from annual leave.

Before answering your various concerns, I take the opportunity to clarify the situation with regards to the current public consultation, the main purpose of which is to seek further views from the public *principally* with regard to reducing the proposed extension to the conservation area to include the whole of the Historic Park and Gardens but still including Jubilee Park (directly opposite The Lytton Arms).

As you may be aware, NHDC appointed The Conservation Studio to review Old Knebworth Conservation Area and on 3 November 2007, the District Council carried out a 6-week public consultation which included changes to the existing boundary. During this consultation no concerns were raised with regard to the proposed inclusion of nos.188 and 190 Park Lane within the conservation area and no representations received to extend the conservation area further to the east.

As you may be aware, Old Knebworth Conservation Area was designated on 6 October 1969. At that time, the boundary was drawn excluding nos.1-44 (incl) and nos. 1-4 (incl.) Lodge Farm Cottages. On 14 January 1977, nos.3 and 4 Lodge Farm Cottages (now known as nos. 188 and 190 Park Lane) were listed grade II. This elevated the status of nos.188 and 190 as a pair of 1903 semis by Sir Edwin Lutyens for the Earl of Lytton to the extent that these dwellings are considered to make a positive contribution to the area and hence have been proposed for inclusion within the Old Knebworth Conservation Area. The same could not be said of the later properties directly to the east or opposite or the surrounding farmland, although it is noted that much further to the east, Lodge Farmhouse itself is grade II listed.

You have stated that *'It would appear that the whole of Old Knebworth should be considered before adding Nup End or both should be looked at at the same time'*.

Just to clarify the situation, it is not the case of adding Nup End as this was included as part of the original designation of Old Knebworth Conservation Area in 1969.

I note your comment regarding notification of the process. The decision was taken to notify owner/occupiers, Codicote and Knebworth Parish Councils, Knebworth Estates, Rev J Pye and Lord Cobbold. For those not directly affected by the conservation area (with proposed changes), the latest round of public consultation is set out on the Council's website and as you have seen, an article was placed in the Welwyn and Hatfield Times and Comet newspaper. As stated on the relevant web page (see below), there is a (significant) delay when opening the boundary plan which is not that helpful but unfortunately outside of my control. At this stage, NHDC are inviting comment on the proposed boundary only. The appraisal document will be amended in due course but the draft appraisal previously subject of public consultation remains on the same web page.

http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/environment_and_planning/planning/conservation_and_heritage/conservation_areas/old_k

I trust that this answers your concerns and that this helps you in making an informed choice on the matter. If, however, you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Mark Simmons
Conservation Officer, NHDC
Tel: 01462 474685

From:
Sent: 25 February 2011 09:56
To: Mark Simmons
Subject: Old Knebworth Conservation Area

Dear Mr. Simmons,

We were interested, as residents of Old Knebworth, to see the map of the proposed changes to the Old Knebworth Conservation Area.

Before we are able to make an informed choice on the matter, could you explain why all of the remaining houses in Park Lane, Old Knebworth (including old estate houses and farmland, circa 1918) have not been considered in the plans. Surely these have just as much merit to Old Knebworth as similar properties within the village, that are to be included.

It would appear that the whole of Old Knebworth should be considered before adding Nup End or both should be looked at at the same time.

As residents of Old Knebworth we have not recieved any notification of this scheme, but had to rely on the Welwyn and Hatfield Times for details. We feel all residents of Old Knebworth should have been included in this cosultation.

We await your response,

Y ours sincerely

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Mark Simmons

From:
Sent: 02 March 2011 11:26
To: Mark Simmons
Subject: RE: Old Knebworth Conservation Area

Mark,

Thank you for the information – I have now downloaded the most recent plan from your website.

Kind regards,

 Please consider the environment before printing this email

From: Mark Simmons [mailto:Mark.Simmons@north-herts.gov.uk]
Sent: 01 March 2011 10:30
To:
Subject: RE: Old Knebworth Conservation Area

Dear Emily,

Thank you for your email which I have just read having just arrived back from annual leave.

The plan currently out to public consultation can be viewed at the following link on the Council's website. As stated on the web page there is a (significant) delay when opening the plan which is not that helpful but unfortunately outside of my control. At this stage, NHDC are inviting comment on the proposed boundary only. The appraisal document will be amended in due course but the draft appraisal previously subject of public consultation remains on the same web page.

http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/environment_and_planning/planning/conservation_and_heritage/conservation_areas/old_kn

I can confirm that the plan printed in the Comet was not the correct plan as this indicated a previous situation where officers were recommending that the whole of the Historic Park and Gardens at Knebworth (Area A) is included in the Conservation Area. The area now proposed to be added to the conservation area is now significantly reduced but still includes Jubilee Park opposite The Lytton Arms.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Mark Simmons
Conservation Officer, NHDC
Tel: 01462 474685

From: [redacted]
Sent: 25 February 2011 11:46
To: Mark Simmons
Subject: Old Knebworth Conservation Area

Mark,

04/03/2011

I note that you have recently issued a consultation on the boundary changes to the Old Knebworth Conservation Area.

I wondered if you could forward details of the consultation, including the correct plan and appraisal work which accompany the consultation? I am having trouble finding the latest version on your webpage's, and I'm not sure if the plan printed in last weeks Comet was the correct one.

Many thanks,

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Mark Simmons

From: Mark Simmons
Sent: 02 March 2011 14:25
To: 'Knebworth House'
Cc: Mary Caldwell; Liz Marten
Subject: RE: Old Knebworth Conservation Area Consultation
Importance: High

Dear Henry,

Thank you for your email and I confirm receipt of your letter dated 14 February 2011 with various attachments. Thank you also to you and Martha for offering to meet to clarify your position on the two issues that most concern you.

At present, I am unable to say as to whether a further meeting will be necessary but hopefully matters will be much clearer by the time I am due to write my report mid to late next week.

Kind regards,

Mark Simmons
Conservation Officer, NHDC

From: Knebworth House [mailto:henry.cobbold@btinternet.com]
Sent: 01 March 2011 11:29
To: Mark Simmons
Cc: Martha Lytton Cobbold
Subject: Old Knebworth Conservation Area Consultation

Dear Mark,

As the end of the consultation approaches, I just want to confirm that you received my letter that was delivered by hand a couple of weeks ago; and to suggest again that - once you have had a chance to consider all the responses - it might be helpful if Martha and I had the chance to clarify our position on the two issues that most concern us, perhaps on site?

My very best wishes,

Henry

Henry Lytton Cobbold
Knebworth House
Knebworth
Herts SG3 6PY
01438 814150

C-COENGL

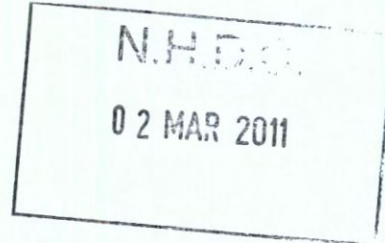
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Mr. Mark Simmons
Senior Conservation Officer
NHDC
Council Offices
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City
Hertfordshire SG6 3JF

28th February 2011

Re: Review of Old Knebworth Conservation Area

Dear Mr. Simmons,

Thank you for your letter of 4th February.

My son, Henry, has responded to you on this subject in his letter of 14th February.

I am writing to say that I am in full agreement with his letter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, which appears to read "Lord Cobbold".

Lord Cobbold

Mailing Address:
Park Gate House
Park Lane
Old Knebworth, Herts. SG3 6QD

Mark Simmons

From: Knebworth Parish Council [clerk.knebworth@btconnect.com]
Sent: 08 March 2011 11:30
To: Mark Simmons
Subject: Old Knebworth Conservation Area Review

Dear Mr Simmons

Old Knebworth Conservation Area Review

Knebworth Parish Council has no objections to the proposed conservation area for Old Knebworth.

Regards

Claire Graham
Clerk to Knebworth Parish Council

Tel No 01438 813795
9 Oakfields Road Knebworth Herts SG3 6NS

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