



PROPOSED REPAIRS AND CONSOLIDATION TO STAINBOROUGH CASTLE AT WENTWORTH CASTLE GARDENS

HERITAGE, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

BACKGROUND

Wentworth Castle Gardens is a Grade 1 listed landscape, the only one of its kind in South Yorkshire. There are over 26 individually listed buildings and structures in the grounds and parkland. The site consists of over 60 acres of formal gardens and 500 acres of wider parkland. The main house and some of the surrounding buildings are owned by Northern College, which provides residential and community education for adults.

The gardens, which were previously run by the Wentworth Castle and Stainborough Park Heritage Trust, closed in 2017 as they were unable to make the business financially viable. The National Trust have entered into a 25-year lease agreement with Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and have run the site since June 2019.

This application is specifically focused on works to Stainborough Castle, but there have been several applications already submitted and approved for pre-opening works across the site, to deal with backlog repairs and re-opening for visitors. These proposals form part of this programme of backlog repairs.

Stainborough Castle is a Grade II* gothic folly. Built between 1728-30 for Thomas Wentworth the 1st Earl of Strafford. It currently consists of a roughly circular curtain wall with 4 square towers positioned around the circle. There is a large gatehouse with an archway beneath. Only 2 of the 4 circular turrets of the gatehouse now remain in full. One turret has a metal staircase allowing visitors to climb to the very top. The other turret is closed off with only some of the stone steps remaining. Timber steps and handrails were introduced in the 2005 works to allow visitors access to the floor area above the gatehouse doors from inside the curtain walls.

PROPOSAL

Stainborough Castle forms part of the visitor attraction at Wentworth Castle Gardens. The Castle has been in various states of disrepair over the years. It last received extensive consolidation and repair in 2005. It currently has several areas of repointing, stone repairs/replacement, consolidation and vegetation removal needed to ensure its safety.

This application combines all these repair works around the all the Castle walls and gatehouse towers.

DESIGN

Repairs and consolidation will be to the architect's specification, using traditional materials, lime mortar and matching stone replacement. See attached documentation.

SITE ACCESS

Access to the Castle for contractors will be via the gates off Lowe Lane. The towers will be fully scaffolded, but the internals of the Castle will remain open to the public. There will be lots of opportunities for visitor engagement with the stone masons, and we will be arranging some school career days.

SETTING

The Castle is built on the hill that overlooked the 1st Earl's garden layout. The building was already in disrepair by 1755 when John Platt of Rotherham was engaged to rebuild part of the gatehouse. Two of the gatehouse towers were demolished in the 1980's due to health and safety concerns. Further repairs and consolidations were carried out in 2005 by the Wentworth Castle and Stainborough Park Trust.

Wentworth Castle Gardens was re-opened to the public in June 2019 after nearly 2 years of closure. We have welcomed over 80,000 visitors since opening with the Castle being one of the main attractions.

PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

National policy

The proposals will result in improved restoration of an existing listed structure.

There is a statutory requirement under Sections 71 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 – which requires the local planning authority to have '*special regard*' to the need to '*preserve or enhance*' the character, appearance and setting of conservation areas. Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires Local Planning Authorities, as decision makers, in considering whether to grant Planning Permission for development, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses

The impact of a proposed development on the significance of designated heritage assets is to be considered in line with advice through NPPF at Paras 193-196. This reinforces that '*great weight*' should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset '*the greater the*

weight should be'. The paragraphs also confirm that significance can be harmed or lost from development 'within its setting'. As heritage assets are irreplaceable 'any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification'.

Local policy

Barnsley's Local Plan was adopted on 3 January 2019 and the relevant policies have been considered below.

Wentworth Castle parkland is identified within Policy HE1 (The Historic Environment) as the only grade I Registered Park and Garden in South Yorkshire. In accordance with this policy proposals which conserve and enhance the significance and setting of the borough's heritage assets will be supported.

The site is located within the Wentworth Castle and Stainborough Park Conservation Area, there are a number of listed buildings on site including Wentworth Castle itself which is Grade I listed and it is within the Grade I listed registered park and garden. In accordance with Part C of Policy HE1 proposals that would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of a conservation area will be supported.

A Heritage Statement is included as part of this statement, in accordance with Policy HE2.

Policy HE3 (Developments affecting Historic Buildings) states that;

"Proposals involving additions or alterations to listed buildings or buildings of evident historic significance such as locally listed buildings (or their setting) should seek to conserve and where appropriate enhance that building's significance. In such circumstances proposals will be expected to:

- Respect historic precedents of scale, form, massing and architectural detail and the use of appropriate materials that contribute to the special interest of a building.
- Capitalise on opportunities to better reveal the significance of a building where elements exist that detract from its special interest."

The proposals seek repairs and consolidation to the architect's specification, using traditional materials, lime mortar and matching stone replacement. It is therefore considered that this complies with Policy HE3.

In accordance with Policy HE4 (Development affecting Historic Areas or Landscapes), the proposals which are within the Registered Park and Garden seek to respect historic precedents in terms of layout, density, forms, massing, architectural detail and materials that contribute to the special interest of an area.

The wider proposals at Wentworth Castle Gardens comply with **Policy E5** in that they promote tourism and will support the growth and development of cultural provision in the District.

In accordance with **Policy E6**, the wider proposals at Wentworth Castle Gardens seek to support a viable rural economy and the proposed development will support the growth of the business and is related to tourism and recreation.

Part of the site shares its boundary with the Stainborough Park Local Wildlife Site (LWS) which comprises a large part of the historical parkland and ornamental gardens of the Wentworth Castle estate. The LWS contains a number of important species and as such an Ecology Statement is included with the application which demonstrates there is no conflict with **Policy BIO1** on biodiversity. Further the proposals cause no damage to key ecological assets in accordance with Policy BIO1.

The proposals support the business functions of running the property and in turn this supports the heritage assets.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Assessing signification is a key principle for managing change to heritage assets and is embedded within current government policy, NPPF paragraphs 193-196. Paragraph 196 states that "where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use."

English Heritage issued Conservation Principles in 2008 to explain its philosophical approach to significance and managing change and identified four main aspects of significance: historic, aesthetic, evidential and communal. Within these categories, significance can be measured according to hierarchical levels; the most usual levels are, highest, high, medium, low, negative.

Historic – this building is of High significance being listed in its own right, II*, and the second oldest Gothic castle in England after Lord Bathurst's "King Alfred's Hall" in Oakley Wood, Cirencester.

Aesthetic – the Castle is considered to have high significance in aesthetic qualities, having been designed to be a romantic folly, however its current condition is poor in certain areas and at risk of further decay without repair works.

Evidential – there are several drawings and paintings of the castle throughout its history. Records of repair through the years are available and an understanding of its evolution to its current condition exist. It has high evidential significance.

Communal – the current use of the Castle as a visitor attraction has the highest significance. Since reopening the site to the public in Jun 2019 the National Trust has welcomed over 80,000 visitors. Events and community engagement days have taken place at the Castle. It is well loved by visitors, local residents and the Northern College staff and students.

Overall then the Castle is considered High significance due to its listing and above comments. It has however, had extensive repairs of varying degrees of success. Its current condition is considered poor in certain areas, with stones missing, pointing washed out and timber decay. There are no additions or alterations proposed to the layout or structure of the Castle.

The proposal to repair the castle towers and walls see its overall condition improve and ensure it is enjoyed by future generations and its high significance retained.

ECOLOGY

We have a licensed bat ecologist on site conducting survey work to establish the extent of bat usage during the winter and summer months. Existing survey work and previous method statements are being used to formulate our approach, with work in the summer months preferred by the ecologist. It is not envisaged at this stage that any of these works will require a NE licence. Any works that will require a licence will be postponed until one is received. The contractors will receive tool-box talks relating to bats prior to starting work and the ecologist will be on site regularly conducting inspections.

Tree protection measures to BS5837:2012 will be in place for the access road up from Lowe lane behind the castle to the edge of castle approach. Deliveries will be made through the double gates on Lowe Lane and then transported by a tractor and trailer or quad type machine to the castle approach along the existing track. This will include the use of Heras fencing and/or boarding where appropriate to protect tree trunks. It is not anticipated that the works will impact upon tree roots; no excavation is planned, and the access route which runs close to trees is an existing track currently utilised by vehicles without harm to tree roots.

ARCHAEOLOGY

The Castle has been fully surveyed and recorded, drawings produced, and a specification prepared for repair and consolidation. There are no below ground excavations proposed.

CONCLUSION

The proposed repair of Stainborough Castle, in traditional sympathetic methods and materials will ensure it is a safe place for our visitors to enjoy. The surviving features of the Castle will be preserved for years to

come and ensure its significance is maintained. The National Trust considers that this proposed development will have a positive impact upon this special heritage asset, both by conserving it for the future and by increasing its communal value by improving public engagement with the Castle through 'conservation in action' days during the works.