

LAND AT OAKLEY FARM, PRIORS ROAD, CHELTENHAM

HERITAGE SUMMARY

GAIL STOTEN

1. My name is Gail Stoten. I am an Executive Director at Pegasus Planning Group. I am a Member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (MCIfA). I have been elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London. I have a First Class Honours degree in Archaeology and I have been a heritage professional for 21 years. I am a Trustee of Painswick Rococo Gardens.
2. A careful consideration as been made of the significance of the heritage assets within and in the vicinity of the site, and any impacts and benefits that will result from the proposed scheme.
3. With regards to the Grade II Listed No. 1 and No. 2 Reservoirs, their significance is very largely derived from their physical form. Setting also contributes to their significance but to a lesser degree. The elements of the setting of the assets that make the greatest contribution to their significance through setting are the other elements of the reservoir complex; each other, the pavilion, gates, gatepiers and walls, No. 3 reservoir and the Stone Lodge. The escarpment where the springs which fed the reservoir rise also contribute. There are also views from the complex to the settlement of Cheltenham. These are incidental rather than designed views, as the reservoir was clearly sited to be at a workable elevation, but they do have some illustrative value in terms of understanding the function of the complex, supplying Cheltenham with water. Better views are possible from higher up on the escarpment. No. 2 Reservoir was sited to be part of the existing complex, and also to take advantage of the local geology to make the bricks it was constructed from.
4. The site lies to the north-west of the reservoir complex and the current and historic agricultural character of the site does not relate to any aspect of the historic function of the reservoirs. Water was collected on the other side of the complex from the site, and was piped on to Cheltenham along the verge of Harp Hill. There are view of the falling land of the site and to Cheltenham beyond from the tops of the reservoirs, but these are largely screened and not publicly accessible, and better views are possible form elsewhere. The reservoirs are not clearly visible from the site. The site makes a minimal contribution to the heritage significance of the reservoirs through setting.

5. The parameters of the proposed development include open space in the southern area of the site, and this will allow for an appreciation of the falling topography to Cheltenham, albeit reduced by built form and potentially planting. This change should be seen in the context of the development causing no harm to the physical forms of the reservoirs, and no harm occurring to the elements of the setting of the assets which make the greatest contribution to their significance. Nor will the proposed development remove views to Cheltenham and falling ground, but rather will reduce the extent of the views. As such, the harm cause will be less than substantial and at the very lowermost end of the spectrum.
6. With regards to the Grade II Listed pavilion, this appears to have been constructed as a valve house (looking at parallels at other reservoirs) but was latterly known to have been used as an office (albeit an unheated one), and is now unused. It was given a fine architectural treatment, which fits with the importance given to civil works of this period, celebrating the improvement works and being based on civil pride, rather than attempting to disguise the works. The treatment of the complex, which includes fine architectural detailing of the gate piers and portal to No. 1 Reservoir, was likely to have originated with the Cheltenham Waterworks Company's need to impress and reassure, not least because of their periodic need to raise capital publicly, and this is evidenced by the incorporation of their crest on the gatepiers and lodge.
7. As a valve house, the siting of the pavilion would have been functional, both within the complex as a whole (sited for its elevation) and with regards to specific siting, at the corners of two reservoirs. As such, the intrinsic character of the wider surrounds was largely incidental. The pavilion has extensive views, including back to the escarpment and over the complex, but also to falling ground and Cheltenham, in which the view to the spire of Cheltenham Minster is noticeable.
8. Again, the significance of the asset is largely embodied in its physical fabric, with setting contribution to a lesser degree. Those elements that make the greatest contribution are the remainder of the reservoir complex. Views to the escarpment and falling ground also contribute, as well as land in the vicinity that facilitates views to and from the asset, and is a backdrop to it. The asset is best appreciated from within the complex, and also from within the site, form where the architectural detailing can be appreciated.
9. The site contributes to the significance of the asset, as there are views to falling ground and Cheltenham beyond over it from the asset, and its open nature

facilitates views to the asset as well as contributing to the prominence of the asset in views form within the complex.

10. The proposed development includes open space to retain views to Cheltenham, including to the spire from the asset, as well as retaining the prominence of the asset in views from the complex, and retaining views to the asset from Harp Hill. The character of the open space will change, but the intrinsic character as agricultural land is not considered to contribute to the significance of the asset. The physical form of the asset will not be harmed, nor those elements that make the greatest contribution to the significance of the asset through setting. Nor will the proposed development remove views to Cheltenham and falling ground, but rather will reduce their extent. As such the harm cause would be less than substantial and at the very lowermost end of the spectrum.
11. The scheme will also deliver benefits to the heritage significance of the pavilion, through the opening up of publicly accessible close-range views and sequential views from Harp Hill, the better revealing of the perimeter walls and provision of interpretive material. These heritage benefits are considered to outweigh the heritage harm.
12. With regards to the Grade II Listed Gates, Gatepiers and Walls, these again were given architectural detailing to celebrate the Cheltenham Water Works complex. Again, their significance is principally embodied in their form, with the elements that make the greatest contribution to their significance being the other elements of the reservoir complex. The gates and gatepiers are best appreciated from Harp Hill. The vegetation currently present against the western side of the walls detracts from their significance.
13. The site lies adjacent to the walls, and vegetation within it detracts from their significance. The open character of the of the south-eastern area of the site allows views to the walls, and allows them to be viewed clearly from within the complex, albeit part of a mixed backdrop.
14. The proposed development has open space in the areas of the site that contribute to the significance of the asset, and no harm would be caused. The proposed development would offer benefits including the removal and management of vegetation, publicly accessible sequential views and interpretive material.
15. With regards to the Stone Lodge, this is considered to be curtilage Listed, but its intrinsic value is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset of moderate

value. Its significance is primarily embodied in its built form, with setting making a lesser contribution to its significance. Those elements that contribute the most are the other elements of the reservoir complex.

16. The elevation that faces the site is blank, and the site is screened at ground level from adjacent to the primary façade by the boundary wall. The proposed development includes open space at the south-eastern area of the site, that will give the asset breathing space. No harm is anticipated, and the scheme can deliver the better appreciation and understanding of the context of the asset.
17. With regards to No. 3 Reservoir, this is also considered to be curtilage Listed, but of intrinsic significance commensurate with a non designated heritage asset of low value. Some views to falling ground and Cheltenham will be reduced, but not removed, and public views to the asset would be opened up. Overall, the very minor harm to the asset would be outweighed by the heritage benefits.
18. With regards to ridge and furrow earthworks, these are considered to be part of a wider non-designated heritage asset of low significance. It is the earthworks within the township that is the asset on which impacts should be assessed and whilst this cannot currently be defined, taking into consideration that ridge and furrow earthworks will survive within the site within the open space following development, and that some of the ridge and furrow earthworks present in the vicinity are likely to have been part of the same township, the impact is considered to be relatively low.
19. The weighing of harm and benefits is carried out by Mr David Hutchison in his evidence.