

Steven,

I note with concern that the Updated Design and Access Statement July 2025 Part 9 makes extensive reference to Hillside Park an area incorporating a Play Slope, Street Furniture, Play scaping and play equipment.

5.6 HILLSIDE PARK

Hillside park is located within the upper centre of this development. This quieter park will service residents focused immediately north however is well connected through both cycle and footways to the rest of the development. An impressive topography gives an elevated view across the park and presents an opportunity for a viewpoint. Utilising the level changes the hillside park will provide an interesting playscape on the slope with a meandering footpath providing an accessible route through the park. Remainder of the park will include a new feature pond at the base of the slope providing both a focal point and natural drainage system. Furthermore this pond aims to connect into an existing stream network which will be accessed through a

1 Viewpoint

Utilising the topography of Hurst Farm the hillside park can provide a resting/viewpoint upon entrance to the park. An opportunity for a lightweight structure offers a vantage point both across the development and beyond.



2 Play Slope

The hillside park presents opportunities for an interesting playscape. The natural slopes of the landscape offers natural land forming for both climbing and slide activities, whilst providing a central, safe natural playground.



This is clearly contrary to the requirement that “an *open field of rural character*”, specifically **not** incorporating play structures or formal landscaping must be maintained in that location to protect the setting of the Grade II listed farmhouse.

Historic England required significant amendments in 2016/17 to the original plans to demonstrate that every effort had been taken to avoid or minimise conflict between the proposal and the conservation of heritage assets, in accordance with NPPF and Section 66(1) of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*.

Peter Kendall the Principal Inspector of Ancient Monuments wrote :

“In determining this application you should also bear in mind the statutory duty of section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

Open space of a rural character makes a critical contribution to understanding and experiencing the significance of the historic farmhouse and associated setting. Given the existing development to the north and west of the location the land to the south and East must be afforded maximum protection and be preserved as open space of rural character to prevent complete destruction of the setting.

The location and extent of the open space are two important elements in acting as a buffer between new development and the designated heritage assets, but in order for it to provide a setting that continues to contribute to their significance the character of any space has also to be carefully considered. The illustrative material indicates that the open space is to be used as a play area (LAP figure 12.1) and sculpted earth mounds, specimen trees and seasonal bulb planting are all proposed. This is a very different and clearly not a rural character which will be seen to relate to the new urban development rather than being one that relates to the former farmhouse.”

Since 2016 the NPPF (Dec 2024) was introduced which moved the paragraph to Chapter 16 paragraph 209 which “Requires applicants to avoid or minimise conflict between conservation and proposal design. “

And Paragraph 218 “Design should enhance or better reveal significance.”

Section 66(1) of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* is still fully in force and unchanged :

“In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”

The application was amended in 2017 accordingly to clearly include open space of rural character, and Historic England withdrew their strong objection on the basis this protection reduced the harm from *substantial* to *less than substantial*.

The newly amended proposal however destroys the historic setting of the farmhouse by associating the land reserved for its protection with the housing development and instead of the required open space of rural character to protect the heritage setting it is once again proposed to build a series of artificial surfaces, play structures and landscaping for the sole benefit of the new development. While this would be commendable play space in any other location its presence in this location causes substantial harm to the historic setting of the farmhouse.

I therefore trust that the plans will be amended again to provide open space of rural character. Failing that, the application must be refused as it is currently contrary to NPPF paragraphs 209, 210 and 218 (Dec 2024) and Section 66(1) of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* which afford strong protection to the setting of this significant heritage asset.

