

From: Christopher Reynolds <Christopher.Reynolds@surreycc.gov.uk>
Sent: 05 August 2025 17:38
To: Cliff Thurlow
Cc: Statutory
Subject: 2025/245 Land South Of Barrow Green Road, Oxted
Attachments: 2025'245 Land South of Barrow Green Road.docx

Dear Cliff,

Please find attached our comments on 2025/245 Land South Of Barrow Green Road, Oxted.

Kind regards,



Chris Reynolds

Senior Historic Buildings Officer

Historic Environment Planning, Surrey County Council, Victoria Gate, Chobham Road, Woking, GU21 6JD

Tel: [REDACTED]

**Please note, I have limited access to this phone so please email me in the first instance.*



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To: Planning Department of Tandridge District Council
From: Historic Environment Planning: Historic Buildings

Application Number: TA/2025/245

Date Consultation Received: 21/07/2025

Address: Land South Of Barrow Green Road, Oxted



Proposal: Outline application for a residential development of up to 190 dwellings (including affordable homes) (Use Class C3), an extra care facility with up to up 80 beds (Use Class C2), together with the formation of vehicular access, landscaping, parking, open space, green and blue infrastructure, and all other associated development works. All matters reserved except access.

Designation: ADJ Grade I (Church of St Mary the Virgin) and II (Court Farm House and Blunt House)

Comments:

Please note: As this scheme affects a Grade I listed building you will need to consult Historic England.

The header shows that the historic environment considerations are the character of the listed building as one of special architectural or historic interest. Special regard must be had to preserving the building or its setting in the determination of the application in accordance with section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

The applicant has provided a heritage statement in line with paragraph 207 of the NPPF. In line with paragraph 208, I have provided further comments below.

Significance

The application site is a set of fields located to the north-west of St Mary's Church, Oxted. There are three main listed buildings around the site which are considered by the heritage statement. These are St Mary's Church (Grade I), Court Farm House (Grade II) and Blunt House (Grade II). I do not consider there is any impact on Blunt House so I have not considered it any further. I have considered the remaining two heritage assets together for reasons which will become clear.

St Mary's Church is a Grade I listed building in Oxted, which puts it in the top 2.5% of listed buildings in the country. Oxted is referred to in the 1086 Domesday Book as containing one church and two mills and it is likely St Mary's Church is in the same location as the original building. The location of the church on raised ground which gives it a particularly imposing presence and reveals its character as an ancient building in the district.

The earliest part of the church is the tower, which dates to the mid-12th century. The chancel and aisles were built in the 13th century along with the upper storey of the tower. The aisles were subsequently raised in height in the 14th century and would have been rendered historically. Much of the fenestration is in a decorative Gothic style.

During the 15th century, the manor of Oxted was held by the Cobham family. At this time, the south porch was added to the church and the arcade columns were replaced. The porch has a good quality hoodmould with the Cobham arms in the spandrels. The columns are similar to those from St Peter

and St Paul's collegiate church in Lingfield, which was founded by the Cobham family in the 15th century. Both the porch and the arcade show the influence of manorial ownership during the 15th century and are important elements in understanding the development of medieval Oxted.

St Mary's Church is significant as a multi-phase medieval parish church built on an ancient manorial site in Oxted. It draws evidential significance from its early fabric and methods of construction and architectural significance from its form, scale, and construction methods which reveal its status as a parish church as well as window tracery and masonry which show the response changing architectural styles. The building is also of great historic significance not only as the medieval parish church of Oxted, but also as evidence of the patronage of the Cobham family in the mid-15th century, which shows its strong links to the area's manorial history.

Opposite the building is Court Farm (Grade II). This draws its name from the old manor house or grange which was located opposite the church. The present building has been dendrodated to 1613. The earliest phases of the building are the four in-line bays to the east. These were set around a substantial chimney with back-to-back hearths in the second bay with the kitchen likely in the western bays. The building has very high ceilings for a 17th century building which suggest it would have been quite a high status building when first constructed, possibly a replacement manor house.

The roof form is a relatively early staggered butt purlin, butt rafter, roof. The attic was floored when first constructed and mullions provide evidence that the windows were glazed. Throughout the building has lambs tongue stops. Again, this shows the building was high status when first constructed. In the mid-17th century, a further bay was constructed to the west. In 1861, the building was re-faced with brick, based on a date at the front of the building. The sash window forms likely date from this time as they are not in the 1822 Hassell painting of the building.

The significance of the building lies in its status as a high-status 17th century vernacular building which contains the most fashionable features of the time including decorative features, fenestration and method of heating. This is evident in its form and scale and also in its location close to St Mary's Church. The building also draws significance as a structure rebuilt on the site of an earlier manor house, although it is unknown for certain whether this function continued when the house was rebuilt. It is a very large and impressive vernacular house for the period.

The setting of both buildings is informed by the fact that neither were built as part of a village or urban settlement. Both buildings were located in rural, open and isolated surroundings, which continued until the late 19th century when the railway arrived. This is due to the early date of the church which pre-dated the nucleated development of Old Oxted and the desire to build on good quality agricultural land. The separation of the church and manor house from the village reflects their construction at a time when the parish consisted of small-scattered settlements rather than a planned market town development such as Bletchingley. This follows a similar pattern to other settlements in Tandridge, such as Limpsfield where the manor house and church are set at one end of the village and are isolated from many of the older buildings. As a result, where they survive the rural and open surroundings of both St Mary's Church and Court Farm are important as they reveal the early age of the site, which evolved at a time when the parish consisted of small-scattered settlements.

On the 1839 tithe map the only buildings around St Mary's Church are Court Farm and its associated farmstead. Within the tithe apportionment, the application site is referred to as arable land (plot 563) and a meadow/pasture (plot 566). A 'road' (plot 563a) is listed at the bottom of Stoneyfield, but this would only appear to have just led to the meadow. Richard Dartnell was the occupier of both Court Farm and the aforementioned fields. This shows the application site has a strong associative link with Court Farm.

Following the arrival of the railway in 1884, there was quite rapid development around St Mary's Church to the north, east and south. The only aspect of its rural setting which remained is the application site to the north-west of the church. Aerial photographs from the 1960s show there were quite significant views out to the application site until the later 20th century. At present, a bank of trees

sits between the church and the application site which mostly obscures the building in the summer. St Mary's Church remains highly visible from the application site in winter. There are no clear views of Court Farm from the application site in either winter or summer.

On the basis of the above analysis, I consider that the open, green and rural setting of the application site makes an important contribution to the significance of St Mary's Church. This reveals its historic significance as an early medieval parish church which pre-dates the creation of a single nucleated settlement in Oxted. It is highly important for showing the early medieval development of Oxted at a time when it consisted of scattered settlements through the parish. Court Farm also draws some significance from the application site, but to a lesser degree owing to the reduced intervisibility. Both buildings also draw significance through their close visual relationship with one another in showing the medieval manorial relationship between the two buildings and through the elevated position of St Mary's Church, which shows its importance as a medieval building. The view across Master Park gives some indication of the historic open surroundings of both buildings, although such an impact is limited by the urban surroundings.

The above advice is largely in line with that in the heritage statement by RPS. The only area of disagreement is whether Court Farm draws significance from the application site. The applicant argues the building has a Victorian appearance and has lost its farmstead buildings as well as any direct views of the application site. While I agree the contribution made by the application site is lower, I still consider it a material consideration. The steep pitched roof and chimney stack of Court Farm give a strong indication of its vernacular character and age. The outbuilding at no.8 St Mary's Close is a former farmstead structure which shows the former use of the site and makes a contribution to understanding the significance of the building. While the views are largely obscured, there is a strong kinetic appreciation of the rural surroundings as one moves from the application site to Court Farm. The wider views from the first and attic floors of the building also look on the countryside (albeit the application site is largely screened) and this makes an important contribution to its setting.

I note the applicant has provided pre-application advice from Historic England which comes to a different conclusion to both myself and the heritage consultant. I suspect Historic England were not privy to the *Extensive Urban Survey of Oxted* (2003) or the report by RPS as the conclusions are quite different and focus on views from Master Park. On the basis Historic England did not have access to all the available evidence, these comments are not in line with paragraph 208 of the NPPF and should not be considered formal advice on the application. As noted above, you will need to consult Historic England on this application if you have not already done so.

Impact of Scheme

The application is for an outline scheme for a residential development of up to 190 dwellings and an extra care facility with up to up 80 beds. All matters for the scheme are reserved except access.

I have quite significant concerns about the proposal. At present, the scheme will see the entire redevelopment of the last vestige of the rural setting of both St Mary's Church and Court Farm. While the impact on Court Farm will be lower, there will be quite a significant impact on St Mary's Church. This will be evident both in views from the western end of the church as well as in views from the application site, particularly in the winter months. In the summer months the impact will be lower, but this ultimately depends on the existing tree screening surviving and being retained. The potential impact from the scheme (bearing in mind it is indicative) can be seen from the VP04 in the viewpoint study which removes almost all view of the church from the footpath.

While the site and parameter plans provided by the applicants are indicative and the details are reserved matters, it does demonstrate the challenges of providing up to 190 dwellings and an extra care facility of 80 beds on this site. This shows that there will be roads, houses and boundaries all in proximity to St Mary's Church which will urbanise its setting. This will be evident not only in the built form, but also in the associated parking, lighting, noise and residential clutter from the development.

Owing to other constraints on the site, I am not of the opinion that it has been demonstrated that the density or scale of development proposed would be possible without quite a harmful impact on St Mary's Church.

I note the concept plan in the Design and Access Statement shows the original intention was for a much wider area of open space to the south-east of the application site. This was in line with my original comments on the EIA asking for a buffer zone with a clear view from the footpath. This would have been more effective at mitigating the impacts of development the site and would better have reflected the historic rural setting of the church. This appears to have been gradually whittled down as the scheme developed. I consider the resulting small parcel of land to be insufficient in properly mitigating against the urbanising impact of the scheme. Had more of an open space (as shown in the original concept plan) been retained and the building heights remained the same then the impact on St Mary's Church could have been lower. As noted above, I cannot see how this can be achieved without quite significantly reducing the number of units.

I have assessed the scheme in line with paragraphs 208 and 212 of the NPPF. I consider the harm to Court Farm as a Grade II listed building to be at the lower end of less than substantial harm. This is specifically from the impact on its rural setting owing to the loss of its associative link with its former farmland, glimpsed views of roofs from the upper floors of the building during the winter months and the loss of rural approaches to and from the listed building across the application site. In coming to this lower level of harm, I have taken into account the limited visibility of the building from the application site.

I consider the harm to St Mary's Church to be a moderate degree of less than substantial harm. This is specifically from the loss of the last vestige of its rural setting, which reveals its nature as an early medieval building constructed at a time when the parish had a widely dispersed settlement pattern with no nucleated centre. This will be evident from the buildings, roads, boundaries, vehicles, domestic paraphernalia, noise and lighting which will all be experienced from the church, as well as the impact on approaches to and from the building across the application site. In coming to this conclusion, I have taken into account the existing tree screening which is present during the summer months. The proposal will fully urbanise its surroundings and it will no longer be experienced as the rural parish church it has been since the 12th century.

Great weight will need to be applied to this harm in line with paragraph 212 of the NPPF and even greater weight applied owing to the greater importance of St Mary's Church as a Grade I listed building. As harm to a Grade I listed building is a serious consideration, I would consider this a strong reason for refusal. In line with paragraph 215 of the NPPF, you will need to weigh the benefits of the scheme against the harm to the heritage assets. As I am not aware of any specific heritage benefits from the scheme, you may wish to use this harm as a reason for refusal as part of a wider planning balance.

Signed: Christopher Reynolds, Historic Buildings Officer
File Ref: 32/10/Gen

Date: 05/08/2025