

# Gail Broom IHBC – Heritage

## Summary

1. I am a Principal Conservation Officer for Greater Cambridge Planning Service. I have several years' experience working as a Local Authority Conservation Officer.
2. I became involved in the case following the retirement of the original conservation officer Mr Jonathan Hurst. I was asked to review a response to the consultation comments from the applicant in July 2021. I reviewed the documents submitted as part of the application and the response to the comments and concluded that the issues highlighted by the previous Conservation Officer had not been fully answered and that his assessment and conclusions were still valid.
3. I have visited the site and have reviewed the documents submitted for this Inquiry by the Appellant and my assessment specifically considers the heritage significance of the existing Victorian villa and the harm caused by its proposed demolition.
4. In Section 4 of my proof, I have shown why the building is considered by the LPA to be a Non-designated Heritage Asset. The categorisation of this villa as an NDHA was first undertaken by Mr Hurst through the consultation process for this application. There are no published criteria for designating locally listed buildings in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan and there is no resulting local list. In forming the judgement that this building was a NDHA the Conservation Officer assessed it against the published criteria from the adjacent LPA Cambridge City Council. Those criteria are based on the criteria outlined in Historic England Advice Note 7: Local Heritage Listing Identifying and Conserving Local Heritage. The appeal site is adjacent to the City boundary and the application of those criteria here is not inappropriate. Since 2018 both Cambridge City and SCDC have been operating a shared planning service and so to that extent the appeal scheme falls within the remit of the Greater Shared Planning Service.
5. In section 7 of my proof, I have assessed the significance of the NDHA and shown how the building meets three of the Cambridge City Council criteria for Buildings of Local Interest: Architectural Quality; Architectural Style; Historic Interest.
6. The Hotel Felix was constructed in 1852 and the architectural quality of the building is evident especially to the rear or garden elevation. Good quality local gault brick has been used with stone quoins and decorative detailing to the chimneys. The architectural composition to the rear includes a distinctive central Dutch gable with a large finial and the two-storey large semi-circular bay with the original arched paired sash windows and pierced brickwork parapet.

7. The building merits an entry in Pevsner's Buildings of England – Cambridgeshire, by Simon Bradley and Nikolaus Pevsner 2014 and is noted as a building of a quality worth retaining by both the Victorian Society and the Ancient Monuments Society in their written objections to the application.
8. For a building to meet the criteria for architectural style it does not have to be a rare example but can be a high quality typical surviving example of a building type. The large Victorian villa is not a rare building type in Cambridge although it is not common in Girton itself. This villa is built of high quality gault brick which is a typical building material in Cambridge and surrounding area. The quality and form of the garden façade serves to highlight the architectural preferences of the professional man who had the house built and makes a positive contribution to the site and local area.
9. The house is associated with two notable past figures both of local and national interest and, as a County Centre and a hotel it has been part of the communal value of the area. The house was built for Charles Lesturgeon, a Fellow of St John's College, and surgeon at Addenbrookes Hospital from 1842-1879. He acted as Examiner of Surgery and as a member of the Board of Medical Studies. He was also Justice of the Peace for the Borough.
10. Later the house was occupied by lawyer and politician Sir John Eldon Gorst and his family. Gorst was elected MP for Cambridge in 1865. In 1885 he was made Solicitor General for England and Wales, (1885-1886) and knighted. In 1892 he was elected as member for Cambridge University and in 1895 he became Vice-President for the Committee of Education (1895-1902).
11. After many decades as a residential dwelling the house was sold to the County Council as a County Centre from the 1960s/70s until 2001. The County Centre is still remembered by the local community who worked or took courses there. In 2002 the building became a hotel which was, until the pandemic, well used by local residents for events such as wedding receptions or as an attractive venue for a coffee.
12. Mr Hurst considered the building to have a certain modest level of design and presence. Following my further assessment of the building as outlined above, I conclude that the building has a medium/moderate level of significance in both its design and historical association.
13. The Appellant's Heritage Statement states that a structural inspection of the building was undertaken in September 2019. The inspection noted that the main house has been effected by cracking and distortion indicative of foundation movement suggesting subsidence in the southern corner of the building. Some cracking and water ingress was also noted.

14. This 2019 structural report has not been included in the application document and no insurmountable structural issues have been put forward as a reason to demolish the building.
15. Paragraph 203 of the NPPF looks at the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated and in the weighing up of that effect a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
16. I have outlined in my proof of evidence that the original Hotel Felix building has the relevant heritage significance to be considered an NDHA as it meets three of the relevant criteria and in my view has a moderate heritage significance.
17. Given that the proposal will result in the total loss of a building which is a NDHA of moderate significance the heritage harm here would be significant.