



---

## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 November 2025

**by K Williams MTCP (Hons) MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6 January 2026

---

**Appeal Ref: APP/R0660/D/25/3374638**

**Sandings, Chelford Road, Knutsford, Cheshire East WA16 8QP**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
  - The appeal is made by Ms Eleanor Stubbs against the decision of Cheshire East Council.
  - The application Ref is 23/3606M.
  - The development proposed is described as “Relocation of existing driveway for safety reasons.”
- 

### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Main Issues

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, with particular regard to whether it would preserve or enhance the significance of the Conservation Area and the setting of the nearby Grade II Listed building.

### Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises the extensive grounds of the property called Sandings, it is located within the Knutsford Legh Road Conservation Area (the CA). The site is located on the corner of Chelford Road and Leycester Road. There is an established and wide access serving Sandings on Leycester Road, which is to remain. The proposal seeks to take access from an alternative position on Chelford Road in lieu of an existing narrower tarmacked access to the west. This smaller gated access, although appearing not well used, would be closed off. Other than this small gap created by the existing access on Chelford Road, mature informal vegetation including trees and shrubs, and unobtrusive low fencing line the site frontage, which is set behind a narrow overgrown verge.
4. The significance of the CA is derived from the historical and social development and the architectural quality of the predominantly large Victorian and Edwardian residential buildings, natural architecture and the physical and visual relationship between these elements. Although the immediate area is in part dominated by the busy Chelford Road, the vegetation and tree cover along the road provides significant softening of this busy feature and provides enclosure to larger grounds and buildings set within plots. The tree shrouded appearance of buildings and roads lined with vegetation are a key characteristic of the CA.
5. The proposed vehicle crossing would create an 11m engineered gap in the kerb line, requiring the removal of vegetation along the verge and within the site. Although the proposed access narrows as it extends towards the house, the

necessary visibility splays, required for the 30mph speed limit, would encompass the open, grassed setting of the Grade II listed Obelisk<sup>1</sup>.

6. The significance and special interest of the Grade II Obelisk is also derived from historical and social development of the area, with the listing description advising: “thought to have been erected as a memorial to the Legh family following the demolition of the original Norbury Booths Hall in 1745”. The stone Obelisk is a focal point set within an open area. The Obelisk is seen in the context of existing driveways, and Toft Cricket Club, with the tall and eye-catching wooden wickets opposite as well as surrounding trees and vegetation in the area.
7. Sandings is an impressive building and has large grounds. The appeal site frontage, which is lined with trees and hedgerows is publicly visible from users of the busy Chelford Road, the pedestrian footway and those using Toft Cricket Club. There are also glimpses of the property between the vegetation from the Obelisk as well as the site frontage.
8. I have considered my duties<sup>2</sup> with regards to the setting of the Obelisk, which is located a short distance from the proposed driveway, and the effect on the CA. Sandings is also noted as a Positive Building within *Fig 1* of the Knutsford Legh Road Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, January 2024 (the CAMP), and therefore a non-designated heritage asset. The appeal site makes a positive contribution to the setting of both the CA and the Grade II listed Obelisk and the appeal site exhibits the key sylvan and enigmatic characteristics identified in the CAMP.
9. Notwithstanding their quality the hedgerows and end trees provide screening and add to the sylvan character of the area. The tree works, and removal and reduction of the hedgerow would expose the access. I am of the view there would be increased opportunities to view Sandings from the public realm as a result, thus eroding the visual enclosure afforded by the vegetation and identified as an important characteristic of the CA which it is suggested was a device opted by landscape designers from the outset.
10. There would be visual changes arising from the loss of vegetation and alterations to landform to create an engineered access and the laying of a wide entranceway with porous hard surfacing materials. Although no gates are proposed, the plans before me show the erection of solid gate, visually replicating the existing gate at the nearby property Balgownie. The provision of gates and access, and the accompanying use of the garden area for the parking of a vehicle, with at times open gates, would either create a gap in the frontage, allowing for increased visibility of Sandings, parked vehicles or a solid feature at odds with the more natural and lower boundary treatments which the CAMP seeks to promote. Even if a lower gate were proposed, there is insufficient information regarding the layout of subsequent parking spaces within the site and planting within the grounds for me to be certain that additional meaningful planting or screening of Sandings or urbanising parking of vehicles, could be achieved.
11. The diminished front boundary treatments, and the related provision and visual appearance of any parking and gate, would harmfully erode the sylvan character

<sup>1</sup> List entry number, name and address: 1388314, Obelisk At NGR SJ 763 776, South West Of Booths Hall (Booths Hall Not Included), Chelford Road.

<sup>2</sup> Sections 66(1) and 72(1) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

along this section of the road. In this instance, due to the limited scale of the development, the harm would be relatively localised. However, it would be tangible and clearly evident and the prominent nature of the site means that this localised harm would also be harmful to the CA as a whole. The harm to the significance of the CA as a whole would be less than substantial within the meaning of paragraph 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

12. The Obelisk set within an open grassed area is defined by a low hedge concealing a long driveway to one side, the vegetation of Sandings to the other, and solid brick wall to the rear. Additional landscape features could be added within the site and outside visibility splays to reinforce the existing vegetation as the backdrop to the Obelisk and low hedgerow planting could be implemented which reflects the driveway on the opposing side of the Obelisk. Furthermore, the Obelisk is not the dominant feature within the area. There are large wooden cricket wickets opposite. Whilst kinetic view of the Obelisk could change, the introduction of the access would not make the Obelisk any less prominent and the proposal would not impinge on the space to view this asset.
13. Nevertheless given that I have found harm to the character and appearance of the CA, which is in the setting of the listed building, and the contribution that the arboreal character of the area makes to the setting and therefore part of the significance of the asset, it follows that there would be a very low level of harm to the setting of the listed building.
14. Paragraph 212 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that when considering the impact of a development on a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation irrespective of harm. Although the level of harm to designated heritage assets would be at the lower level nevertheless in accordance with the Framework, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
15. Framework paragraph 216 is also relevant which states that the effect of an application on a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account and a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of harm and its significance. For the reasons set out above, in the absence of sufficient information, I consider that the effects of the proposal identified above would detract from the contribution this part of the site makes the setting of Sandings. The significance of the non-designated heritage asset as part of the CA would be harmed. Again this would be a low level of harm.
16. The appellant asserts that the property requires improvements to the existing access for it to function more safely. Whilst the Council's Highway Officer, acknowledged that the existing access along Chelford Road has poor visibility I have not been provided with evidence of this or any records of accidents. Anecdotal evidence has been submitted that speeding occurs. However, from my site visit it was readily apparent that the existing vehicular access to the side of Sandings on Leycester Road enables good access to the appeal site, and that the proposal before me is not the only way for safer access to be achieved. The appellant's submission is lacking in the discussion of this existing access, and the location of vehicles within the site.
17. Although the proposal would satisfy the aspirations of the occupiers, in view of the above, this is largely of private benefit. There would be some economic benefit

from the construction of the proposal, but this would also be small. The proposal is unlikely to harm archaeology or neighbouring residential amenity; however, these elements do not weigh in favour of the proposal.

18. Whilst I accept some thinning of vegetation could be undertaken, there is no evidence that it is required for the health or longevity of existing landscape features. Such work in the absence of a wide access would not be as visibly harmful. Furthermore, there is no comprehensive tree survey before me. I cannot be certain, given the mixture and size of species I observed that the size of the trees/vegetation along the site frontage would not be subject to a Section 211 notice<sup>3</sup> and therefore unable to be removed or altered without prior consent. The proposal is also not merely a reconfiguration of the same existing access; it would be wider and in a different position.
19. I conclude that public benefits of the proposal do not provide clear and convincing justification, and the private benefits of the proposal should be afforded very little weight. Together, these do not outweigh the cumulative great weight to be given to all the assets' conservation. The proposed development would therefore fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area and would also fail to preserve the setting of a listed building and a non-designated heritage asset. This would not satisfy the requirements of the Act or the relevant aspects of the Framework.
20. The proposal would not accord with the Policies SE1, SD2 and SE7 Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy 2010-2030, July 2017, or Policies GEN1, HER3 and HER4 of The Cheshire East Local Plan Site Allocations and Development Policies Document, December 2022. Together, and insofar as they are relevant to the proposal, these seek to ensure design solutions achieve a sense of place by protecting and enhancing the quality, distinctiveness and character of settlements, sensitivity of design in proximity to designated and local heritage assets and their settings and to reinforce green infrastructure and ensure proposals that cause harm to heritage assets provide clear and convincing justification.
21. The proposal would also conflict with the Knutsford Neighbourhood Plan Referendum Version 2010 – 2030, January 2019 Policies D1, D2 and HE3. These Policies requires development to protect character and defining characteristic of the CA.

## **Conclusion**

22. The material considerations do not indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

*K Williams*

INSPECTOR

---

<sup>3</sup> Of The Town and Country Planning Act 1990.