

Dear Luci Turner and Wiltshire Council

Change of use of Hazelbury Manor (Grade I listed), Dower House (Grade I listed) and The Granary (Grade II listed) from mixed used, residential (C3) and agricultural, to hotel use (C1) with ancillary parking. PL/2026/00168

The Historic Hazelbury Estate can be described as Heritage and Nature on the doorstep of the village of Box, and its Parish. It is located within the Cotswold National Landscape, has nationally important buildings, a registered Historic Park and Garden ,areas of archaeological significance, historic public rights of way, and other features of interest.

I welcome proposals in principle for a new use that will secure the future and appropriate management of the entire historic estate but remain concerned about the following aspects of the Planning Application.

Planning Application without a Listed Building Consent

The submission of a planning application without a listed building consent. The full impact of proposals cannot be assessed. If approved, it will be important to emphasise that LBC is still required.

The Planning Statement . Vision for the estate

The Planning Statement makes the case that the development proposed will aid the vision for the estate, but the vision is unclear, as well as how this will be implemented. It states the following :-

Para 1.5 “....the applicant has proactively engaged with Historic England prior to submitting this application. This early dialogue reflects the applicant’s commitment to best practice in heritage management”

Para 1.6” ...During this visit, the applicant’s vision, and aspirations for the future stewardship of Hazelbury Manor were discussed in detail , with particular emphasis on the sensitive management and enhancement of the estates historic character ...”

Para 1.7 “The applicant is fully committed to ensuring that the historic significance of Hazelbury Manor is not only safeguarded but actively enhanced through any future development proposals. This approach will underpin all aspects of the project, ensuring the estates unique character and contribution to the nations heritage are , recognised , respected, and celebrated

But what is the estates historic character and what aspects of it contributes to the nations heritage? In this respect items of Local interest as well as national should be recognised .What is best management practice ?

A Conservation Management Plan is required with this application to establish how the development will aid the vision of the estate .To clarify what features of historic interest will be recognised, respected and celebrated, how they are to be cared for enhanced and protected.

Registered Historic Parks and Gardens do not offer statutory protection in themselves, but it is understood were originally put forward by English Heritage to highlight the significance of Historic Park and Gardens and encourage best practice in their management . How will features of interest in the registered garden and important surrounding landscape be protected, taken care of and enhanced. Is there a need for example for Tree Preservation Orders?

There are some significant specimen trees in the registered garden and close to it such as the tall and impressive Sequoia ,which can be clearly seen from a public right of way, located near the existing historic farm complex .When was this planted , it may be of historic interest as well.

The Registered Historic Park and Garden may merit consideration for extending to now include areas in the surrounding landscape designed by Ian Pollard ?

The Registered Historic Park and Garden, areas of the surrounding landscape designed by Ian Pollard , Ancient Woodland and the historic Wadswick /Hazelbury Common, all linked by historic rights of way, may merit consideration for Conservation Area status . There are other of Historic Parks and Gardens in Wiltshire included in Conservation Areas . Has Hazelbury been considered for this designation ?

The Conservation Management Plan should include reference to nature and proposals for areas such as woodland. Ancient Woodland , on the estate are noted on the MAGIC map <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/> (Mulit -Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside)

Two areas are identified on the above map :-

(1) Ancient and Semi Natural. An area which lies close to the historic sheep wash pool in Box Bottom and rights of way Bridleway Box 55, Box Footpath 59, and 60.Privets Wood

(2) Ancient/ Replanted. White Wood, which lies south of the Devizes Road. A wood in joint ownership but it appears may have lied all within the ownership of Hazelbury Estate in the past? This also has public rights of way and footpaths which cross through it.

The Woodland Trust notes “ Ancient Woodland has grown and adapted with native wildlife , yet what remains only covers 2.5 percent of the UK”

The Government have recently responded to a review of protection of important trees noting that, “ Ancient and veteran trees and ancient woodlands are

irreplaceable habitats in national planning policies. Tree Preservation Orders also prevent some trees from being felled or significantly modified....”

“Actions to protect important trees will be published in the Trees Action Plan 2026”

“ Since January 2024, councils must consult the MHCLG Secretary of State if they are considering developments that might impact ancient woodland. Local Authorities have the power to place Tree Preservation Orders, which prevent trees from being felled or significantly modified.” Does the SOS need to be consulting on this application in view of its proximity to Ancient Woodlands ?

There appears to be at least one Veteran Ash tree in area 1, when viewed from the public right of way, and Notable trees in the woodland, not identified as ancient wood in the MAGIC map ,Thorn Wood . What Ancient, Veteran and Notable trees are there in the historic woodlands on the estate How will the woodlands and such trees be cared for ,enhanced and protected ?

How do others area of habitat and nature importance such as Wadswick/Hazelbury Common, and the numerous ponds and water courses that continue down from the Manor to Box Bottom and the Ley (we have lost a large number of ponds in the UK since 1900 and it is good to see some still surviving) relate to assessment of their historic significance. How are these features in terms of their biodiversity to be protected and enhanced ?

The Estates Historic Character

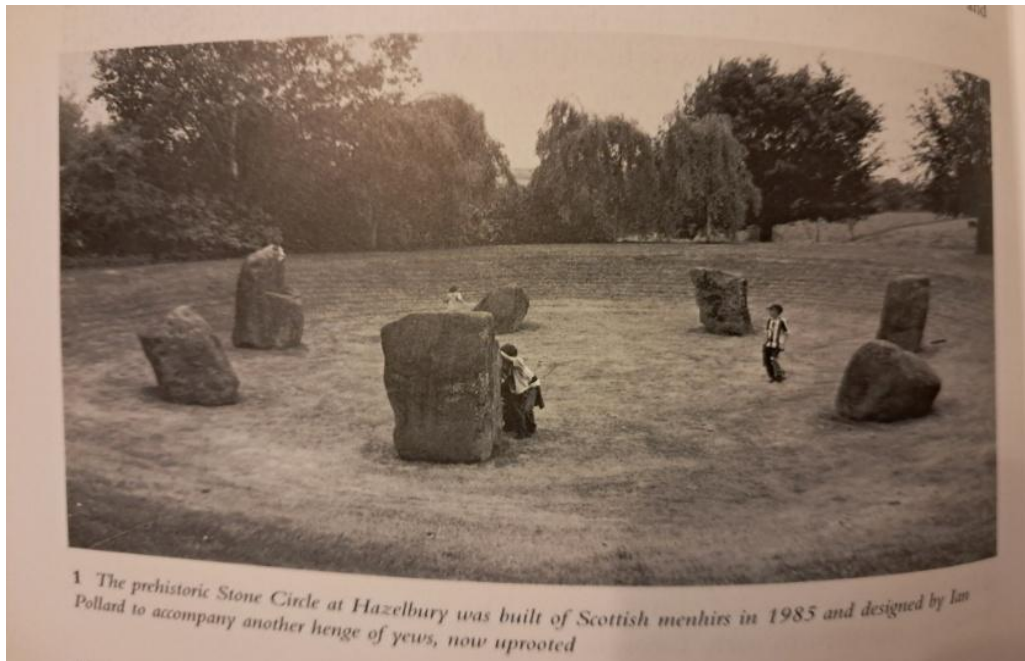
What is the historic character of the estate ?

Reference is made below to some features on the estate, not located within the Registered Historic Park and Garden, but associated within Ian Pollard, architect, and landscape architect. I suggest they are of historic interest and should be considered in a Conservation Management Plan.

Historic England Officers are aware of the site, due to their pre - application site visit, and are providing guidance to the owner as noted in the Planning Statement . Hopefully, they will be able to comment further on their significance, protection, care , enhancement, and the need for a Conservation Management Plan.

1.Stone Circle

This Stone Circle (see photograph below) lies within the garden of Hazelbury Manor, outside the registered historic park and garden. The stone circle does not appear to have been recognised in the Heritage Statement ? However, reference is made to other features created by Ian Pollard.



Stone circle photograph courtesy of Timothy Mowl.

The importance of the Stone Circle is noted in, 'Historic Gardens of Wiltshire' 2004 by Timothy Mowl and 'Gardens to visit in the Southwest' 1993 by James Belsey.

Timothy Mowl states, "Prehistory has run like a theme through Wiltshire Gardens Stonehenge and Avebury have cast their shadows: Stourhead, Wiltonto the massive reproduction of Avebury's sinister rocks at Hazelbury in the recent lively Pollard occupancy of that great , but little noticed garden"

James Belsy notes, "Like some mogul emperor he decreed a grandiose gardenHe called for a mini – Avebury of megaliths careful aligned in a stone circle to echo the prehistoric ruins not far away on the Wiltshire Downs." Regarding the garden at Hazelbury, "I hope it effects linger ...it is a spectacular example of intensive late twentieth century country house gardening and no visitors leaves it without being astonished at its luxury "

2 Water features

Water Features can often be a major landscape design feature on historic estates .Their survives at Hazelbury a series of ponds and watercourses fed from natural springs in the valley, underground pipes/ drains from the main drive and pond, near the stable. The ponds and water courses then flow down the valley, near the historic rights of way, to the sheep wash pool at Box Bottom .The ponds and water courses appear to have several associated structures/buildings that merit further investigation to establish their historic significance

The photograph below refers to one of the ponds. It is taken from the historic public right of way which crosses the causeway, looking north, after the recent rainfall we have had. The pond appears in the same location as that noted on a 17th century map of the estate.(Please refer to Appendix 1 Letter to Wiltshire Historic Environment Records, and Allens Historic Map 1620)



Until relatively recently the ponds and their watercourses were almost hidden from view from the public rights of ways due to vegetation growth. Areas had become very muddy, due in part to run off from the ponds and watercourses. One section of right of way over the causeway and between two ponds(the causeway is noted in the photograph above) regrettably, was impassable at times . Walkers resorted to climbing onto the stone wall to the causeway and walking along it to avoid deep mud.

The present owner has agreed that the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens can help in helping to clear the rights of way, for walkers and horse riders, and work towards resolving the sources of water running onto them, which are making them hard to navigate .

Due to clearances and investigations by the CVW the watercourses and ponds have become more open to view from the rights of way .They have attracted attention of residents and the public using them. This interest is reflected in the comments found on local Facebook sites. A hidden heritage asset has started to be revealed. .

The area has now attracted the name , ' The Lost Gardens of Heligan ' .Residents have memories of when Ian Pollard was the owner and the waters clear and features such as the waterfalls, he had installed, working . The absence of fences and vegetation during his ownership gave rise to a more open landscape when seen from the public rights of way.

Freedom of access was granted at that time by Ian Pollard for the public to visit the area around surrounding the sheep wash pool, from the existing right of way.(see photograph below)



Above. Box Bottom, during Ian Pollards time at Hazelbury. The woodland in view is classified as Ancient Woodland on the MAGIC map . The sheep wash pool was restored by Ian Pollard. In the foreground is the line of the existing bridleway. Box Bottom is one of the most attractive areas on the historic estate and in the Parish of Box .

Water features in the valley leading down to Box Bottom from the Manor , as previously identified, are noted in Allens Map of 1620 .This map also shows , a conduit, conduit house ? In the 19th century we see the appearance of the sheep wash pool in Box Bottom, and the sheep wash .The sheep wash is in extremely poor condition and recorded in HER STN W530 . Not far from sheep wash there appears to be an early 20th century structure ,near the public right of way, a former hydraulic pump house? In the later years of the 20th century, we then have Ian Pollards intervention on the water courses and pools which survived.

His works in this part of the estate may be argued to be one of his most ambitious and creative in terms of landscape design. Works that can still be appreciated by the public as they pass close to them on public rights of way. Open to view by not only walkers but horse riders.

These water features provide an important picture of how water was used on a historic estate from the 17th , 19th century , to the 20th century. They are an integral part of the historic environment . What the water features ponds , weirs , were used for in the 17th century is still open to debate. Further research is required to identify their level of significance and what they were originally used for .

These features, at the very least, are of local significance ,non- designated heritage assets , and should be added to a local list .However, Wiltshire Council does not

operate a local list of non- designated heritage assets, relying on HER records to capture buildings of historic interest.

The recording of the stone circle and ponds/ watercourses may be recognised in the future by Wiltshire on their HER, as I have recently submitted both for consideration by them (see Appendix 1) Hopefully, if added ,their degree of significance will also then be investigated further .

I suggest Ian Pollard wished to make the surrounding landscape to the Manor and its garden as equally astonishing to see and experience

The Heritage Statement shows photographs of the historic rights of way that pass by the ponds and watercourses and refers to historic maps which show some of the water features, but it appears to make no direct reference in the text to their significance ?

The ponds and watercourse are shown in part on the Environment Agency Flood Map in the Flood Risk Assessment provided in the application. However, the assessment of flood risk centres on the area where development is proposed

If the search area identified is widened (The E.A.F.M link is <https://check-long-term-flood-risk.service.gov.uk/map>) the water framework at Hazelbury can be traced to flow down and onto the Ley, then under Box Market Place ,where the historic buildings of Box Brewery still survive, under the A4 ,across the recreation ground, gifted to the Parish 100 years ago this year, diverted then in the 19th century by Brunel's GWR railway embankment, and finally continuing through an area once called Lovar Water Gardens , now Lovar Gardens, established in the 20th Century. Designed by Grants Associates Environment Planning of Bath, now regarded as a pioneering international landscape practice, before entering the By Brook.

The water framework at Hazelbury, with the joining of the stream from Washwells within the estate , and its route to the By Brook forms a tributary of historic interest. A tributary of importance to the water quality of the By Brook and biodiversity on the historic estate .

3. The Yew Henge

A photograph of the avenue which leads up to the Ian Pollard Yew Henge is noted on page 62 of the Heritage Statement, under the photograph it is noted that the hedge is punctuated by a few gates. However, it fails to acknowledge the trees that remain are a start of avenue which led to the Yew Henge also constructed by Ian Pollard ,or that the landscape features in the field are identified on Wiltshire HER MW16572 .

The HER refers to possibly an earlier 17th century planted feature but I suggest the description should be considered for amendment, and refer to one of Ian Pollard's imaginative , creativity , sense of fun landscape features, The Yew Henge .

Such features in the surrounding landscape are likely to have resulted from Ian Pollards wider vision to have a pleasure garden that broke out from the confines of the walled garden at the Manor, into the surrounding countryside .

The hedge planted to the north of the Yew Henge , between it and the Prospect Mound, I have been informed, was planted after Ian Pollard left Hazelbury to move to Abbey House, in Malmesbury .The hedge has now grown in height considerably . Ian Pollards original intention appears therefore to have been to have more of a visual relationship between the Yew Henge and the Prospect Mound in the adjacent field?

Views from Wadswick / Hazelbury Common, northward, towards the Manor would no doubt have also been more open without this hedge.

The Prospect Mound ,in the field adjacent, had a further avenue of trees planted leading up to it .This avenue it appears was also intended to access the main drive. Remains of the avenue can be seen on a satellite view of the landscape from Google maps .From the above mound it appears you could have once walked down ,via an existing opening in the stone wall, to the adjacent historic public way, which then takes you up to the Common, or down to the ponds and water courses in the valley below. There are remains of a timber stairs leading down to the public right of way from the opening in the stone wall.

4. Prospect Mounds .There is nothing like a good view .

There are two prospect mounds at Hazelbury, and they are noted on Wiltshire HER MW144964

The Heritage Statement acknowledges the prospect mounds in photographs but does not appear to refer to their recording on the HER ? The historic and landscape significance of both, when viewed with Ian Pollards overall landscape plans for Hazelbury Manor and the entire estate, should not be underestimated and requires further consideration.

No 360-degree views appear to have provided from the top of mounds . No interpretation appears to have been included in the Heritage Statement of how they were accessed from the surrounding area, or how they may have fitted into the overall landscape design works that Ian Pollard constructed on the estate

When the mound north of the present public right of way Box 51 was constructed, it is understood there were no fences either side it as it crossed the field , to the west of the Manor , as there are today. Perhaps the public were allowed to walk up to it ?Was this intended by Ian Pollard its creator ?

The views from the above public right of way over to the Manor ,and features such as its historic surrounding walls, are more open in the winter and when the trees are not in leave. It also provides for good views over the valley to the southeast and the other Prospect Mound in the winter months .

The openness and views across to the two mounds and over the estate , and onto the other Prospect Mound , and onto the Hazelbury Manor and its stone walls and

corner bastion , from the public right way and across the open fields is an important feature of the estate. Any future proposals for this area , and when viewed from the summits of the prospect mounds, should recognise this.

I have been informed that some resident's call this field the Conigre which apparently refers use of the area as a Warren. An extract from a 1630 survey showing 'Haiselburie' ,on page 9 of the Heritage Statement ,notes an extensive area round Hazelbury Manor as a Warren

The prospect mounds were constructed in the 20th century, but this should not detract from their importance in the consideration of Ian Pollards overall landscape proposals for the estate or their wider setting . It appears they were constructed from the spoil taken from on-site developments at Hazelbury, during his time there.

The idea of changing landscape to create views appears an old one . I note from research on historic mounds that they sometimes resulted from general building work i.e. digging of moats, fishponds cellars of rubbish pits, lots of debris of earth had to be put somewhere .Terraces built against walls may have been one solution, so why not a viewing mound. Ian Pollard was aware of the history of garden design and architecture, with the construction of the mounds he can be seen to be carrying on a tradition of landscape design established much earlier, whilst also introducing some more fun into the historic estate as you walked around it.

How will these be protected , enhanced, and cared for in the future ?

Timothy Mowl in his book Historic Gardens of Wiltshire 2004 , notes the following about one of the prospect mounds, “ One of the weaknesses of this garden is the siting of the house so far back from the edge of the valley that none of the impressive views down the Avon to Bath can be enjoyed .To remedy this, Ian Pollard built a high viewing mound, which has yet to be assimilated into the grounds, and indeed may never, be enclosed under the more moderate regime .Tony Venison reports that in one Pollard experiment hay bales were rotted down on a slope in the richer soil and to pick out a head and the eye of a dragon in red and gold . A seat was prepared from which the spectacle could be enjoyed.....”Tony Venison wrote a report in the magazine Country Life ,March 7,1991 ,called ‘ Laughter over the Hedge ‘after a visit to the estate and it provides a fascinating account with photographs of his visit to Hazelbury . This article is also referred to in Appendix 1.

Ian Pollard was determined to bring a smile to your face wherever you were on his estate.

Archaeology

Artefacts dating back to Roman ,Viking and Saxon period have been found in a field west of the main drive leading up to the Manor ,a small part now proposed in the planning application to be a car park.

I went to talk on these finds at Box Library, which I think had to be delivered twice due to the demand of people to be there . A map was shown which showed this field

dotted with areas where it had been explored with a metal detector and finds found . To see, and then hold artefacts discovered was awesome, a tangible link to the past . What more lies underneath the topsoil , how significant is this site in archaeological terms? We have so far only touched the surface, with a metal detector .

A Conservation Management Plan for the entire historic estate would recognise the potential for further finds on this field

Summer as opposed to Winter Months . Heritage Statement undertaken in the summer months.

Unfortunately, the unique character of the historic estate has not been assessed during the winter months. It has been assumed what can be seen when the trees are not in leave.

One of the best times to visit Hazelbury is in the winter months and then viewed from one of its many historic rights of way. During the winter with no leaves on the trees more can be seen of the buildings, the structure of trees, areas, and distance views ,no doubt even more from the summit of the Prospect Mounds with a 360-degree view

On page 77 the Heritage Statement provides a brief assessment of a view along the right of way which crosses the Conigre noted above. However, it is only in the summer and does not show a 360-degree view from this location and from various locations along its route . For example, a crenellated bastion on the listed wall, that in part surrounds the Manor, can be seen from the public right of way more clearly in the winter months with leaves not on the trees. This view is important.

It is rare to obtain views of the listed wall and crenellated bastions from the surrounding landscape today, but this was not always the case . In the past the historic walls and bastions had a more open relationship with its surrounding landscape. Please refer to historic maps, photograph below from a Country Life Article published in February 1926 and the aerial photograph on page 25 of the Heritage Statement.



Courtesy of Country Life “ A compact upland Manor contained within a wall...”

Timothy Mowl in his Book 'Historic Gardens of Wiltshire' notes, on page 156, ". Hazelbury is quite one of the most rewarding gardens in the County as its high walls and defensive bastions conceal only the inner grounds. But the best walking times are when the trees are leafless. " As a resident, who walks the rights of way often, I sympathise with his view.

Location of the red line on the site plan

The red line normally marks where the development is to occur on a Planning Application. In this case it relates to a change of use to the main buildings in the historic complex and the proposed car park area .However, the red line extends from the main buildings to cover the traditional historic farm outbuildings and the modern farm buildings . Should the red line be amended to include only the buildings proposed for change of use, and the proposed car park, for the avoidance of doubt?

Concerns over how the historic estate will be farmed and maintained in the future

It is not clear from the vision in the Planning Statement, and from the proposals submitted ,what plans the owner has for farming the estate in the future. What are the enhancements, noted in the Heritage Statement , which are proposed to the modern farm buildings on site ? Does this mean their change of use to hotel accommodation, with external alterations, or new build associated with a hotel use ?

If this is part of the owner's vision? If so, where will the new replacement farm buildings be located, to help care for and maintain the wider historic estate ?

It is assumed that approval would have been required for the modern farm buildings , or at least the local authority consulted, prior to their erection. Before they were erected consideration appears to have been given to the importance of siting them in order to reduce their visual impact on the surrounding landscape, and to keep them in an area of the estate where farm buildings were traditionally found.

We have already faced a scheme, relatively recently ,that sought planning permission to construct new farm buildings in land that formed part of the historic estate, but in different ownership and in a more visible location .This rightly raised concern by various parties interested in the heritage, and the high landscape qualities of the area. As far as I am aware the application was not taken forward

On balance, in terms of enhancements to the setting of the Manor, garden and other historic buildings I suggest replacement of the modern corrugated roof on the existing historic barn. A traditional pitched roof ,with traditional roofing materials, would be a welcomed enhancement ,

Discharge of Sewage

The application states that sewage will be dispersed to the mains sewer, but I note permission was granted in 1996 for Amendment to N94/00361/Ful -landscaping new boundary wall walls /gates /new sewage treatment plant .

In view of the above reference to a sewage plant at Hazelbury can the discharge of sewage at Hazelbury Manor please be clarified .

Public Access.

What vision does the owner in general have for public access to the estate, and not only for customers past the door into the Hotel, but also to the Manor, the Gardens, and the wider surrounding historic estate ?

Central Government has produced a consultation document recently seeking views on encouraging wider access to the countryside ‘ Outside For All Recommendations to Government on Access to Nature September 2025’

In relation to encouraging wider access to the countryside the removal of existing timber stiles and gates across rights of way on the historic estate, which are no longer required for stock control, would improve navigation for walkers, horse riders and the less mobile using the footpaths. Where livestock is present appropriate gates should be installed, instead of any timber stiles present, to aid public access

Are there historic footpath routes which are recorded on historic maps which need to be revisited again for re use and new links suggested, permissive or otherwise.

Historic footpaths and their enhancements should also form part of a Conservation Management Plan for the estate due to their historic interest

Conclusion /Summary

Hazelbury Manor Historic Estate represents History and Nature on the doorstep of the village of Box and its Parish, as well as having nationally important buildings.

It benefits from a network of historic public rights of way, which requires, care, maintenance and protection. This enables the public at close hand to see and appreciate and enjoy the assets on the estate

Although in principle the change of use for the Manor is acceptable, concerns remain regarding several aspects relating to the application, including the vision for the wider historic estate and the absence of a Conservation Management Plan.

It is important that conservation planning covers the whole historic estate and does not just focus on this application. A Conservation Plan for the Historic Park and Garden and the wider historic estate will help us better understand our heritage and its potential.

Many historic features on the wider estate are linked with important natural features Natural features such as Commons , Woodland, Ponds and Watercourses, also need to be recognised and planned for in future proposals for the estate . Wiltshire Council has recently produced a Local Nature Recovery Plan which should

be borne in mind in guiding future works as should the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan.

This application presents the opportunity to step back and consider the future of not only the Manor but the wider Hazelbury Manor Historic Estate, and it should not be lost.

Yours Faithfully

Mr V Tye. Dip TP. Dip Arch Build Con. Retired member I.H.B.C, former member R.T.P.I

