



Helen Garside
Wiltshire Council
Economic Development and Planning
Bythesea Road
Trowbridge, Wiltshire
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Our Ref: L10003059
25 September 2026

Dear Helen Garside

**Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2021 & Planning
(Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990**

TOTTENHAM HOUSE, SAVERNAKE, MARLBOROUGH, SN8 3BE, ENGLAND
Application No. PL/2026/04921

Thank you for your letter of 11 September 2026 regarding further information on the above application for listed building consent. On the basis of this information, we offer the following advice.

Historic England Advice

Proposals

This application relates to the proposed infill of two wells and a brick chamber located in the 18th century walled garden at Tottenham House. One of the wells is an unlined shaft of unknown but likely 20th century date (Chamber 1), while the other is historic and brick lined and has a historic brick chamber over it that is accessed via a stepped brick entrance (Chamber 2).

The well shafts would be infilled with pea shingle and capped with bentonite, and the brick chamber would be lined with a polythene membrane and filled with foamed concrete.

The submitted information explains that the works to the historic brick-lined well and chamber are proposed to stabilise the structures and prevent the risk of sudden failure either during or after the approved construction works in the walled garden.

Significance



The significance of Tottenham House and the Grade I Tottenham House and Grade II* Severnake Forest Registered Park and Garden (RPG) are described in our previous response to this proposal so are not repeated here.

The walled kitchen garden, which is included in the RPG, moved to its current location as part of the Lancelot 'Capability' Brown re-landscaping in the mid to late-C18 and is interesting due to its size and two-part design. It provides evidence of the Estate's changing function and fortunes over time.

In our previous response to this proposal we requested an assessment of significance for the two wells and chamber in the walled garden but this has not been provided. The submitted information notes that Chamber 2 is of historic significance and that the unlined well has no surviving built fabric or heritage structural elements. As per our previous advice, the submitted photographs suggest that the brick-lined well could date from the 18th or 19th century and that the chamber is of later construction, but further analysis is required to confirm this.

Impact

As per our previous advice, the unlined well (Chamber 1) appears to be of later construction and low significance and its proposed infill would therefore likely have a neutral impact on the significance of the walled garden and Grade II* Registered Park and Garden.

Additional information is required to fully understand the significance of Chamber 2, in accordance with policy HE5:1 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and the impact on this significance. Infilling the historic brick-lined well and chamber would result in some harm to the significance of the walled garden by removing legibility of an earlier (potentially 18th century origin) structure that contributed towards the historic use and function of the walled garden. This harm needs to be justified in accordance with policy HE6(4) of the NPPF.

The proposed buildings in the walled garden will be close to, but not directly over, the chamber and wells. It is therefore unclear why Chamber 2 needs to be infilled, rather than secured via an alternative less intrusive method, and why the construction work could not be managed around the structure to ensure site safety.

The infill of the wells with pea shingle is proposed as a reversible solution that would preserve any potential deeper archaeological deposits. The proposed foamed concrete in the chamber is also described as a reversible infill solution, but it is unlikely that the concrete would ever be removed once installed so the asset would effectively be lost due to its inaccessibility.

Chamber No.2 is included on planning drawings submitted in 2017 so has been known about for an extended period. It is unclear why, given its significance, temporary works in the form of centering and propping to the vault and shoring at high level to the walls with nominal clearances (to avoid loading the temporary works except when the capacity of the masonry is exceeded) could not be installed, combined with temporary road plates over the structure to assist with redistribution of load. Such propping would allow for temporary loading on the vault and walls of Chamber No. 2 during construction of the adjacent building. The vault could then be appraised following completion of the adjacent works and sympathetic repair, renewal and strengthening of the historic asset could be undertaken as necessary or restrictions could be placed on loading the vaulted ceiling.

Position

We accept that infilling the unlined Chamber 1 with pea shingle would not result in harm to the significance of the RPG and have no concerns regarding this proposal. The need to secure Chamber 2 is understood, but foamed concrete is unlikely to be removed once installed and would therefore remove legibility of the historic asset. It is also unclear why the brick well in Chamber 2 could not be secured with a metal grate rather than infilled with pea shingle.

No structural appraisal of the condition of Chamber No. 2 is given within the report beyond the fact that in its current condition there is a risk of *'damage, or sudden failure, during the works, and this risk remains after completion of the current works in the walled garden.'* The report goes on to state *'in addition, unless action is taken now to stabilize the structures, then given their proximity to the finished ground levels, there would also be an unacceptable risk of structural collapse to the potentially weakened structures, resulting in injury or worse to the owner, or those that work in the walled garden.'* In figure 4, 6, 13 and 14 of BDLA's report the structure of Chamber 2 seems in reasonable condition, with some distortion of the vaulted ceiling, most clearly visible in figure 6 together with tree roots above that have presumably caused the distortion.

A structural appraisal of Chamber 2 should therefore be undertaken. A vaulted roof with little or no earth cover is vulnerable to point loads, for example vehicular loading. Figure 2 of BDLA's report suggests that the chamber is located adjacent to a ramped path. If it were possible to move the ramp further north, this would increase cover to the vault. No assessment has been provided in BDLA's report as to what loading is anticipated at the location of Chamber 2 following completion of the works. If the adjacent path would be trafficked by vehicles then, if needed, a sheet piled retaining wall could be installed between Chamber 2 and the path to avoid surcharging Chamber 2.

Recommendation



Historic England advises that your Council should seek additional information from the applicant to understand the significance Chamber 2, and that insufficient justification has been provided for infilling Chamber 2 with foamed concrete. For the reasons outlined above we recommend that a structural appraisal of Chamber 2 is undertaken and that alternatives to backfilling are explored.

If in its current condition it is felt Chamber 2 would be at risk during the proposed works, temporary propping and shoring should be installed. These should have nominal clearances so that they are only used if the capacity of the masonry is exceeded. It would also be beneficial to consider installing temporary road plates over the structure to assist with spreading construction load.

Following completion of the adjacent works, the loads that Chamber 2 is likely to experience during its 'design life' should be better understood. A sympathetic repair, renewal and strengthening of the historic asset could then be undertaken as necessary, or restrictions placed on loading the vault.

If there are any material changes to the proposals beyond those we have suggested, please contact us. If you propose to determine the application in its current form, please inform us of the date of the committee and send us a copy of your report at the earliest opportunity. Please also advise us of the decision in due course.

Yours sincerely

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