DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: …Mark Simmons……

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
18/00358/LBC	Repairs and refurbishment of the Watchman's Tower and the screen wall adjacent to the Water Tower, in conjunction with, internal and external alterations to Watchman's Tower to facilitate visitor access including viewing platform at roof level.	Knebworth Park Estate Knebworth Park Old Knebworth Hertfordshire SG3 6PY

Submitted Plan Nos
100 03 103 03 042 00 040 01 020 00 030 00 031 00 032 00 034 00 035 00 037 00 038 00 150 03 041 00

1.0 Policies

LP19	Historic Parks and Gardens
SECT12	Conserving and enhancing historic enviro
XHE1	Designated Heritage Assets
XHE2	Heritage at Risk

2.0 **Site History**

2.1 **17/04109/PRE** - Watchman's Tower and screen walls repair, refurbishment of Watchman's Tower to reinstate floors, roof and provide public access viewpoint.
Letter sent dated 24/01/2018

3.0 **Representations**

3.1 **Knebworth Parish Council** – *Supports.*

Historic England – *On the basis of the information available to date, we do not wish to offer any comments. We suggest that you seek the views of your specialist conservation adviser.*

It is not necessary for us to be consulted on this application again, unless there are material changes to the proposals. However, if you would like detailed advice from us, please contact us to explain your request.

The Gardens Trust – No comment received.

Press & site notices – No representations received.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 Site and Surroundings

4.1.1 The 'Watchman's Tower' and screen walls form part of the list entry for Knebworth House (grade II*) as follows (my emphasis in bold):

"Country House. Home of the Lytton family since 1492 ….. Tracerie Octagonal turrets with ogee domes. Wall right of porch has 3 tall pointed-arch windows. Other windows are 2 liqhts with Tudor hood moulds. Late C19 3- window projection on left, joining with screen wall at right angles. This has massive gateway tower and round terminal tower. Garden elevation is more richly detailed. Continuous traceried frieze below battlements, interrupted by finials and slender octagonal turrets…."

4.2 **Proposal**

4.2.1 See description above.

4.3 **Key Issues**

4.3.1 The key issues are to assess the impact of the proposal upon i) the building's special character; ii) the character & appearance of the Old Knebworth Conservation Area; and iii) the registered parkland setting to Knebworth House. Apart from consideration of Section 12 of the NPPF and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (Proposed Submission, October 2016), the proposal is also to be considered in terms of Sections 16 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

4.3.2 According to Historic England's website:

"Knebworth House comprises one wing of a C16 courtyard house remodelled in lavish neo- Tudor style in the mid C19. This later external work was in very poor condition for many years, and despite a major campaign of work some years ago with English Heritage grant aid, much remains to be repaired. The current major project is the repair of the 'Watchman's Tower' range, for which an application for an Historic England Heritage at Risk grant was made in summer 2017".

4.3.3 The submitted Design and Access Statement (DAS) sets out the statutory constraints, the history and significance of the site and describes the proposed development and matters relating to access. Appendix D supporting the DAS states that the 2001 Conservation Plan sets out the objectives for the curtilage buildings of Knebworth House as:

"… To maintain and enhance the outbuildings and other structures within the curtilage of Knebworth House, whether listed buildings or not and to secure a new long term use

for those buildings that are no longer needed for their original use or are in very poor condition or derelict".

4.3.4 The current condition of i) the Watchman's Tower (particularly the fact that it is roofless), ii) screen wall and iii) massive gateway tower, is of concern and Knebworth House is a Priority Category B building on Historic England's Buildings at Risk Register (Previous Priority Category D) and is described as being at *"Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric; solution agreed but not yet implemented".*

4.3.5 Policy HE2 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031 (Proposed Submission, October 2016) states the following:

Planning permission will be granted for proposals that seek to restore or provide new uses for designated heritage assets identified on the national register, or the local risk register maintained by the Council, that are justified and appropriate to the significance of the asset to return a heritage asset to beneficial use.

Proposals that harm the significance of heritage assets included on national and local registers will be resisted unless the need for, and the benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh that harm, taking account of the assets significance and importance, and all feasible solutions to avoid and mitigate that harm have been fully implemented.

The repair of the Watchman's Tower and screen walls is positively encouraged and whilst not specifically requiring listed building consent, for completeness, the repairs are included within this application for listed building consent and includes the extent of repair to the battlements.

4.3.6 It is noted that *"visitors will be encouraged, a few at a time and with supervision, to climb to a viewing platform at roof level from which a panorama of the house and parkland can be enjoyed"*. To achieve this, floors are intended to be reinstated to the 3 lower levels and the intention is to use these levels to house interpretive displays. A key consideration is the relationship between the spiral staircase and the various external openings. This relationship would have been less of an issue with an alternative option for a companionway ladder, submitted as part of the pre-application proposal but this was recognised as a less comfortable form of ascent and descent.

4.3.7 No objection is raised to the glazed roof enclosure which will not only assist with natural light levels within the Watchman's Tower but will also enable a more complete appreciation of the battlements at the Roof Level Viewing Platform. The viewing platform will allow a panorama of the house and views of the grade II* registered parkland to be enjoyed.

4.4 **Conclusion**

4.4.1 The aspiration that the Watchman's Tower refurbishment would present the circular tower interior as it may have been when in use by the Watchman from 1885 to the early 20C appears to be a worthy objective for a structure with a limited use. It is, therefore, considered that the reinstatement of floors and roof and providing a public access viewpoint are acceptable in principle and would not harm the building's special character or harm the character or appearance of the Knebworth Conservation Area or the Registered Parkland setting to Knebworth House. The proposal has been appropriately detailed, for instance, the internal wall/balustrade details and the interface between the new staircase ad existing openings are regarded, on balance, as being acceptable. The proposal will satisfy Sections 16 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and as supported by the aims of Sections

12 of the NPPF and will also satisfy saved Policy LP19 of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No.2 with Alterations and Policies HE1 a.) & HE2 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031 (Proposed Submission, October 2016). The proposal is, therefore, considered to be **UNOBJECTIONABLE.**

5.0 **Recommendation**

5.1 That listed building consent be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. The work to which this consent relates shall be begun by not later than the expiration of the period of 3 years from the date of this notice.Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. Notwithstanding the approved plans, the works hereby consented shall be carried out in accordance with the details contained within the document entitled 'Specification Part 2 extract; C41 repair of masonry Part 3 Schedule of Work' at Appendix D of the Design and Access Statement submitted with this application unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Reason: To safeguard the listed building's special character.

Signed  Tom Rea Determining Officer	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Date: 12 April 2018	