

West Bridgford Article 4

Recommended By James Bate

Date

Location Grafton House and Welbeck House (Loughborough Road); and 1A Patrick Road, West Bridgford

Proposal Article 4 Direction (Without Notice Mechanism) relevant to revoking PD Rights for Demolition

Parish N/A

Ward Trent Bridge

OFFICERS REPORT

SITE DESCRIPTION & PROPOSAL

Grafton House (67 Loughborough Road) and Welbeck House (69 Loughborough Road) are two substantial high Victorian properties dating to the 1890's. Whilst different in detail the two properties have similarities in terms of form, scale and architectural character and sit at a prominent location at the junction of Melton Road, Loughborough Road and Melton Lane.

The two buildings are accompanied by a similar building immediately to their south (2A Patrick Road) which has similar qualities of scale and architectural character such that it forms a group with Grafton and Welbeck houses at the prominent road junction.

There are similar buildings further north along Loughborough Road but separated from this group by intervening modern development and they lack the prominent position along a key highway junction, similarly there are further houses to the south however these are largely of lesser scale and marginally lesser architectural quality as well as being in less prominent positions.

The buildings are amongst the largest and best detailed examples of buildings of a type and period typical of the late Victorian expansion of West Bridgford.

RECENT SITE HISTORY AND THREATS TO BUILDINGS

An application was received in July of 2024 (24/01261/FUL) which proposed the demolition of Grafton House and Welbeck House and their replacement with a substantial building to house 32 residential apartments.

The application was refused in February of 2025 on a number of grounds, summarised as:

- Substantial harmful effect on the significance of Grafton House and Welbeck house as Non- Designated Heritage Assets including harm to their group value.

Remaining reasons related to the replacement proposals rather than the loss of the existing:

- The proposed building by virtue of its scale, massing, height, layout, and design would result in a dominant, overbearing development that would result in harm to the visual amenities of the street scene. The scale and footprint of the scheme would fill a large

proportion of the site, resulting in a significant loss of the current open character and appearing at odds with the pattern and grain of the surrounding built environment.

- The proposal would result in a cramped and over-intensive development as indicated by the substantial footprint of the building, very limited space for landscaping and amenity areas, and limited provision for service vehicles such as refuse collections and delivery vehicles within the site.
- The proposed development by virtue of its height, scale, massing, siting, layout and proximity to Nos. 1a and 1b Patrick Road would result in a harmful overbearing and overshadowing impact on these neighbours. The windows in the east and north elevations would result in a loss of privacy to Nos. 1a-1b and the facing habitable room windows at Cambridge Court.
- The Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) does not comply with the requirements for a site specific flood risk assessment. It has not therefore been adequately demonstrated that the development would not result in flood risk to future occupants and to property.

A copy of the decision notice is appended to this report and provides fuller reasons for refusal including references to local and national planning policy.

Following this refusal of planning permission for the demolition of these buildings and the redevelopment of the site a prior approval application for the demolition of the buildings has been submitted.

Whilst there is no immediate threat to 2A Patrick Road the property does form part of a prominent group with Welbeck and Grafton House such that impact on group value was highlighted in part of the reason for refusal on 24/01261/FUL. As such the proposed Article 4 direction is recommended to extend to 2A Patrick Road for completeness.

FEEDBACK ON 24/01261/FUL

The application for demolition which was previously approved attracted much attention during public consultation.

The local ward councillor objected to the loss of Grafton and Welbeck Houses, stating “The destruction of these handsome Victorian buildings will have a detrimental effect on the street scene”.

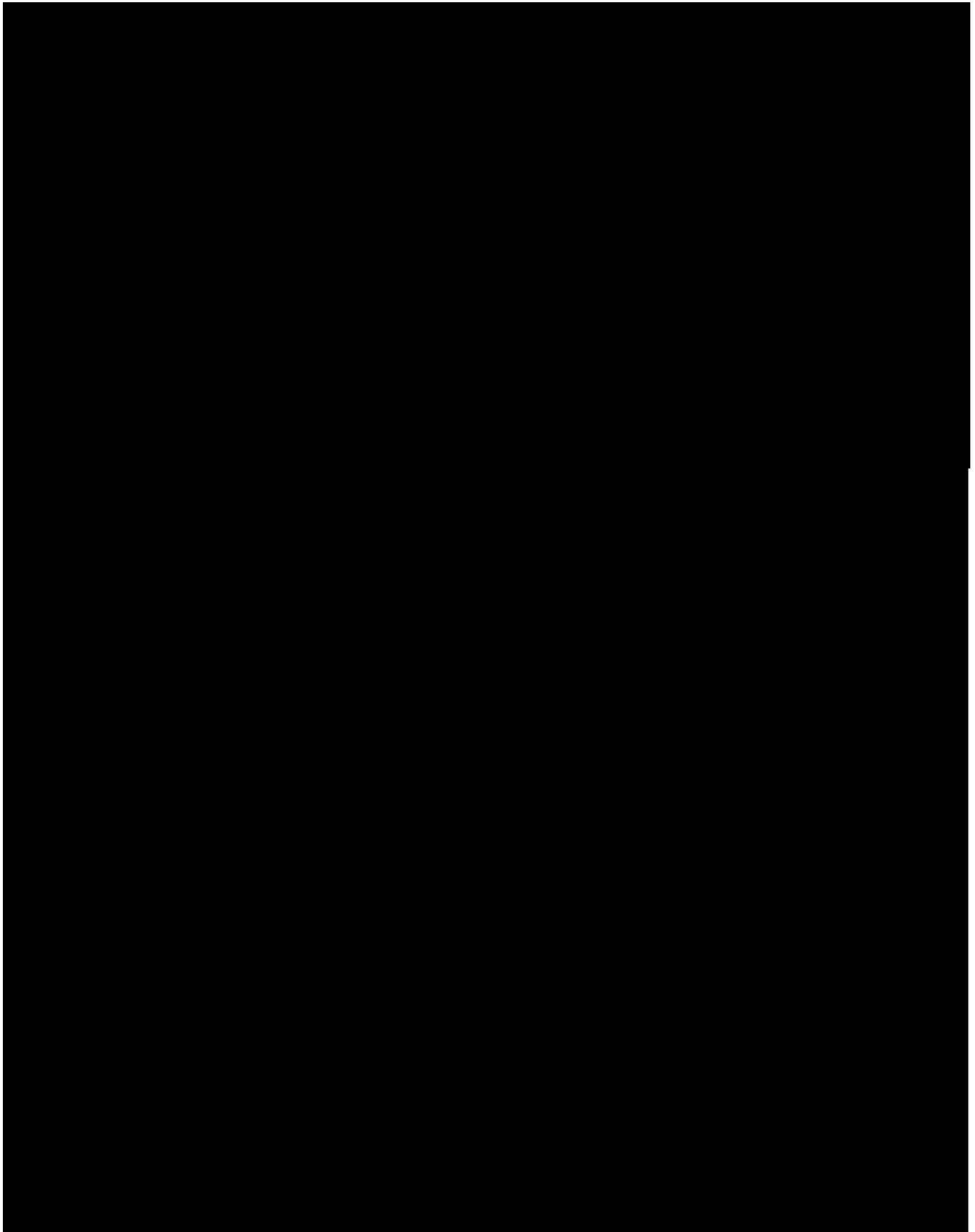
Nottinghamshire County Council objected, stating *“the proposed demolition of Grafton and Welbeck Houses is considered clearly harmful to the built character and historic interest of this part of West Bridgford. The Heritage Impact Assessment and addendum are considered overly dismissive of the group value of these buildings and the individual contributions that they make”*

The Borough Conservation Officer objected, stating *“it is considered that the proposal would have a harmful impact on the significance of Grafton House and Welbeck House arising from their total loss. The level of harm would be substantial. Their loss would cause harm to the group value of the late 19C detached and villa-style dwellings of a similar architectural style and siting along Loughborough Road”*

124 Objections were received from members of the public (together with 1 comment in support), these objections included references to loss of character buildings, traditional architecture and heritage as well as suggestions that the existing buildings should be reused. Local media also picked up on the proposals to demolish the buildings; including headlines such as “Outrage in West Bridgford over Victorian buildings set to be knocked down for 32 new flats” (Nottingham Post 28.8.24); “Objections grow on plans to demolish two West Bridgford Victorian buildings” (West Bridgford Wire 23.08.24) and “West Bridgford Victorian buildings saved as council refuses demolition plans” (West Bridgford Wire 04.03.25).

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are limited financial implications in the making of an Article 4 direction beyond the costs of officer time, postage for notifications and a fee for the requisite press notice.





INTERNAL CONSULTATION

Alongside the drafting of this report discussions have taken place with both the Planning Portfolio Holder (Cllr Upton) and the Leader of the Council (Cllr Clarke) both of whom have indicated that they would support the Council making a direction under Article 4 to prevent the demolition of the building.

ASSESSMENT

The currently pending prior approval submission for the demolition of Grafton and Welbeck Houses is linked to permitted development demolition works under Schedule 2 Part 11 Class B of the General Permitted Development Order 2015 (as amended). Whilst it is possible to impose controls and conditions on demolition via the prior approval process options for refusing such submissions are limited, and the fact that the demolition affects a non-designated heritage asset would not represent a reason for refusal, despite the National Planning Policy Framework advocating at Paragraph 217:

“Local planning authorities should not permit the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred”

The prior approval demolition route does not secure permission for any replacement development, and as such there would be no opportunity to take steps to ensure that appropriate replacement development will be proposed less still that it would proceed.

Given that 2A Patrick Road is of similar architectural character and occupies a similarly prominent position of the major road junction it is considered that the three properties have an element of group value in forming the architectural character of the locality. Whilst only 2 of the 3 properties are currently under active threat of demolition their inter-relationship is such that the loss of any one would diminish the sense of place that they bring to the location.

Much of the architectural character, contribution to local amenity and character that these buildings make relate to their Loughborough/Melton Road fronting elevations at the major road junction. They are amongst the best examples of a phase of expansion of the settlement of West Bridgford which has a large number of surviving buildings to represent it. This is perhaps well illustrated by buildings further south along Melton Road from the 3 buildings subject to the proposed Article 4 Direction. Those are of similar period and architectural character, with some of the same types of architectural embellishment, but these further buildings are smaller and whilst collectively they feature a range of architectural embellishment as seen on Grafton, Welbeck and 1A Patrick Road none individually have the same degree of architectural embellishment.

As such these 3 buildings are considered to be the best and most prominent examples of a wider type and period of property which is characteristic of West Bridgford.

Whilst there are potential financial implications in terms of compensation around making the recommended direction the value attributed to the buildings as non-designated heritage assets

is such that their loss, particularly with no approved scheme for their replacement with anything that might make a comparable contribution to local architectural character, is something that cannot reasonably be considered, and which would conflict with the stipulation within the NPPF at paragraph 217. Under the circumstances the only way that the Council can prevent the loss of the buildings and ensure that their importance as non-designated heritage assets remains a consideration on any applications for their replacement is to make a direction under Article 4 to revoke permitted development rights applicable for their demolition.

As such it is considered reasonable and necessary to revoke, via the use of an Article 4 Direction, the permitted development right for demolition, subject to prior approval. This would ensure that demolition of the buildings only takes place in accordance with an appropriate approved scheme for the redevelopment of the site, in line with NPPF Paragraph 217. The granting of such a planning permission would allow proper consideration of the proposed redevelopment scheme and ensure that the demolition is appropriate and necessary to allow the delivery of such a scheme within an appropriate timeframe.

Without taking this step it will be difficult, if possible, to avoid granting permission for the pending prior approval application, and any subsequent redevelopment proposals would come forward in the context of a large vacant plot in a prominent location which, for understandable reasons, it may be unpalatable to allow to lay vacant for a protracted period.

The refusal of planning application 24/01261/FUL is still open to appeal (until 28th August 2025), but at the time of this report no appeal has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate. If the buildings were demolished before any appeal could be considered clearly reasons for refusal relating to the significance and value of the existing buildings would fall away, and could no longer be defended at appeal.

The buildings have attracted a significant degree of public and media attention and it is clear that the local community values the buildings for their historic architectural significance and the contribution they make to sense of place and amenity.

RECOMMENDATION

Make a Direction Under Article 4 of the Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) via the 'without notice' mechanism in Schedule 3(2) of that Order, to remove permitted development rights for demolition under Schedule 2, Part 11, Class B of that Order for a period of 6 months pending confirmation.

This would allow time for consultation on the matter with the owners of the buildings and other key stakeholders before a decision on whether the direction should be confirmed is taken.

Following consultation a report will be produced either recommending that the direction be confirmed and made permanent (with or without amendments), or that the direction should be withdrawn / allowed to expire. The decision on confirming, or otherwise, the direction would be taken by Cabinet.

Decision Approved by
Authorised Officer on behalf of Rushcliffe Borough Council



Date: 19 May 2025

