

Rule 6 Party

Statement of Evidence of Effect on the Setting of Danson Park

Site: 2, 4, 6 And 8 Danson Road, Bexleyheath, Kent, DA6 8HB

Proposal: Demolition of the existing dwellings and erection of a part 1/2/3 storey building to provide a 70-bedroom nursing home, with associated access alterations, car and cycle parking, landscaping and amenity space.

PINS Ref: APP/D5120/W/22/3293225

LBB Ref: 19/03072/FULM

Prepared by Sarah Witney

## 1. Introduction

1.1. This Statement sets out the Rule 6 Party evidence regarding the effect on the setting of Danson Park with the proposed nursing home development, relating to the appeal against the Council's refusal of planning application ref: 19/03072/FULM for proposals at 2-8 Danson Road, Bexleyheath, involving:

*Demolition of the existing dwellings and erection of a part 1/2/3 storey building to provide a 70 bedroom nursing home, with associated access alterations, car and cycle parking, landscaping and amenity space.*

1.2. The Statement of Evidence of Need is structured as follows:

- Section 2 – Summary
- Section 3 – Supporting Evidence
- Section 4 – Witness Background
- Section 5 – Summary History of Danson
- Section 6 – Amenity Value of the Park
- Section 7 – The importance of the park to the borough and society
- Section 8 – Gates to the main entrance
- Section 9 – Impact of the Development on the setting of Danson Park

1.3. This statement has been prepared by:

Name: Sarah Witney

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> November 2022

On Behalf of the Rule 6 Party

## Summary

Notwithstanding the screening opinion by the Inspectorate, Bexley Civic Society are of the opinion that the proposed development has a detrimental impact on the local street scene and on the setting and openness of views in to and out of the Grade II listed park (Metropolitan Open Land).

Information supporting this opinion is supplied below, including a brief history of the park and house and relevant photographs.

## Supporting Evidence

1. English Heritage listing of the park <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000211?section=official-list-entry>
2. English Heritage draft document “The House and Park at Danson London Borough of Bexley The anatomy of a Georgian suburban estate”  
<https://historicengland.org.uk/research/results/reports/103-2000>
3. Local Authority web pages <https://www.bexley.gov.uk/discover-bexley/visitor-attractions/danson-house-and-park/house>
4. Scanned extract “ Bexley Civic Society The First Thirty Years”
5. Bexley magazine [https://issuu.com/bexley/docs/bexley\\_magazine\\_-\\_summer\\_2018/21](https://issuu.com/bexley/docs/bexley_magazine_-_summer_2018/21)
6. London plan section 7.17 – Openness of MOL <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/past-versions-and-alterations-london-plan/london-plan-2016/london-plan-chapter-seven-londons-living-spac-19>
7. Photographs taken by the author of this report and included in this document

## Witness - background

Mrs Sarah Witney, Chair of Bexley Civic Society Planning, Conservation and Environment Committee

- Appointed as Committee Chair 2019
- Committee member since 2015
- Resident of Bexley for 33 years
- Regular visitor to Danson Park since childhood

## Summary History of Danson

Danson House (Grade I listed) was re-built as a Palladian manor in 1768 for John Boyd by architect Sir Robert Taylor, a leading architect of his day who also designed the Bank of England. John Boyd was a successful merchant and director of the East India Company.

There had been a house on the site prior to this, situated in the valley of a small river, the Danson Stream. This was demolished and the new house situated on an East/ West ridge and surrounding land acquired to the extent of 600 acres.

The location of the house was carefully selected as part of a substantial English Landscape Garden design. The stream was damned to become a blunt ended serpentine lake with the original house being submerged. The garden design was for many years attributed to Lancelot “Capability” Brown, however further investigations attributed it to a former apprentice of his, Nathaniel Richmond, who became a notable garden designer in his own right.

Much of the newly acquired land was sold off for housing just prior to the park being purchased by the local authority in 1924.



*Engraving 1794*

### **Amenity value of the park**

The park contains the Grade I listed house which is the official Register Office of the Borough of Bexley and a popular wedding venue. The house also contains a busy café with views of the lake and is open to the public.

The Grade II listed stables are home to a thriving restaurant on a number of levels. In summer months it is generally fully booked.

There is an extremely popular children's play area and splash park, an outdoor exercise trail and paths used by walkers and running groups.

The lake attracts a variety of water-based activities such as kayaking, canoeing and sailing for individuals and youth groups.

These attractions coupled with the fine listed buildings and clearly visible English Landscape Garden design attract many hundreds of visitors each day.

Car parking is shared with the Red House, a Grade I listed National Trust property nearby.

### **The importance of the park to the borough and society**

Danson Park is of great significance to Bexley Borough in a number of ways.

The Charter Oak, an ancient oak tree stands within the park. The oak takes its name from Bexley's Charter to become a Municipal Borough, which was presented by Lord Cornwallis underneath the Oak in 1937. It is the most iconic tree within the borough and features on London Borough of Bexley's coat of Arms.





*The Charter Oak*

Danson is also intrinsically linked to Bexley Civic Society. The Society was formed predominantly in response to the dire need for renovation of the Grade I listed house and Grade II listed stable buildings within the park. The re-opening of the house was attended by Queen Elizabeth II as well as many Civic Society members.

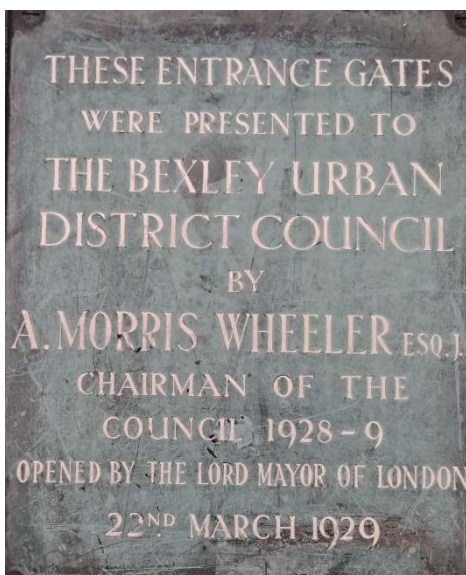
(See evidence attachment 4. extract from Bexley Civic Society The First Ten Years)

An image of the Danson stables forms the Civic Society logo.



### **Gates to the main entrance**

The transfer of the Estate to the Council was marked by the installation of ornate wrought iron gates in 1929 bearing the arms of Bexley UDC and the formation of a new avenue entrance to the park. The gates are mentioned specifically in the Heritage England listing.



The gates were donated by Cllr Alfred Morris Wheeler, Chairman of the Council.



## Impact of the Development on the setting of Danson Park

The proposed development is adjacent to the Alfred Wheeler gates. It will have a detrimental impact on the setting of the gates and on views into and out of the historic park.

Currently the gates sit in a street scene of 1920's and 1930's houses, contemporaneous in age to the gates themselves. The scale and openness of the current modest houses and large gardens compliment the scale and appearance of the gates. They will lose impact and stature once viewed against a closer, solid structure.

The Northern boundary of the proposed development is adjacent to the park. The building line will almost touch this boundary. No responsibility or space has been considered by the applicant in respect of screening this intrusive structure from view. This will result in a setting entirely unlike the current one, altering the street scene and being visually intrusive to the North Eastern corner of the park when approaching and from within it.



*Gates today – the residential properties in the background do not dominate*

Currently the view from within the North East corner of the park are very open. The London Plan 7.17 states that development near Metropolitan Open Land should not significantly damage the openness, a condition which will not be met in this case. This is illustrated in the photographs below.



*Open view on entering the park which will be particularly impacted by a new building close to boundary line*





*Open views when exiting the park – current houses almost invisible*



*Final section of exit view which will suffer serious harm to openness from the proposed development*