
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 31 January 2017

by Debbie Moore BSc (HONS) MCD MRTPI PGDip

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 10th February 2017.

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3940/W/16/3152042

Southside Court, Green Lane, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6DD

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Rod Coppock of Bodywise Pilates Ltd against the decision of Wiltshire Council.
 - The application Ref 16/02069/FUL, dated 1 March 2016, was refused by notice dated 5 May 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as "construction of a pilates studio, following demolition of unused squash courts".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The Council advises that it has also received an outline planning application for re-development at Old Sarum Airfield,¹ which includes the appeal site. I note the concerns raised by interested people that the appeal proposal may be premature. Nevertheless, I am obliged to determine the appeal before me on the basis of its own site-specific merits.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the development on: (i) heritage assets in the vicinity; (ii) the character and appearance of the area, in particular, the Old Sarum Airfield Conservation Area and; (iii) aircraft safety and the future operation of the airfield.

Reasons

Heritage Assets

4. The Council advises that the significance of the Conservation Area can be attributed to its historic interest as one of the country's best preserved airfields of the First World War period. It is explained that the appeal building, which was constructed as squash courts, formed part of the first phase of the airfield's development as a training facility. Due to its associations with the airfield, the appeal building is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset. Also, the Council advises that the site has potential for below ground archaeological remains.

¹ Ref 15/04004/OUT

5. The development would involve the demolition of the building and its replacement with a new two storey building and car parking area.
6. Paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that, in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of the heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The information submitted in support of the planning application and the appeal is limited in this respect. The detail is not adequate to enable a proper assessment of the historic importance of the Conservation Area, the appeal building or the likelihood that any archaeological remains are present.
7. Whilst the level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance, the Framework states that, as a minimum, the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. There is no evidence that an appropriate assessment of the significance of the heritage assets has taken place. Consequently, it is not possible for me to assess the historic value of the appeal building as a non-designated heritage asset. In the absence of any justification for the total loss of the building, I am obliged to take a precautionary approach and find the development would be likely to result in harm to the significance of the non-designated heritage asset.
8. Similarly, the Framework advises where a site has potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment. I am not satisfied that the information submitted by the appellant is sufficient to confirm that archaeological remains are unlikely.
9. Moreover, the appeal building forms part of suite of buildings associated with the historic airfield and as such, it makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area. On the basis of the evidence before me, I am unable to find that the demolition of the building would not be harmful to the historic value and the significance of the Conservation Area, which is a designated heritage asset.
10. I conclude on this issue that it has not been demonstrated that the development would not have an adverse effect on the significance of heritage assets in the vicinity. The development would, therefore, be contrary to Policy 58 of the Core Strategy.²

Character and Appearance

11. The appellant advises that the proposed building would be modern in design and construction, and would be designed to minimise energy consumption. The asymmetric roof form of the building would reflect an aircraft wing to acknowledge the building's setting on the edge of an airfield.
12. However, no landscape visual assessment has been submitted. The development would have a greater mass than the existing building and it is likely that it would be more visible in the wider landscape. From the information submitted it is not possible for me to make an informed judgement about the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the

² Wiltshire Local Development Framework: Core Strategy (adopted January 2015)

area, its effect on long distance views or how it would complement the Conservation Area and integrate with its historic setting.

13. I appreciate that the proposed design and construction materials would not be without merit, and the removal of the storage containers would improve the appearance of the site. However, there is little information that justifies the demolition of a historic building and its replacement with a modern substitute. The information submitted by the appellant is largely based on the opinion that the former squash courts have fallen into disrepair and have become an eyesore. Although the building is in need of remedial works, there is no clear explanation which proves that the building could not be re-used with sensitive modification to bring it up to modern day standards.
14. The appellant states that the design has been influenced by the airfield's development plans. This proposal is not before me and I am unable to judge whether or not the appeal proposal would be in keeping with that proposal. In any event, it has not been demonstrated that the proposal would preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and that it would not have a harmful impact upon landscape character. Consequently, the development would be contrary to Policies CP58 and CP51 of the Core Strategy.
15. Policy CP25 relates specifically to Old Sarum Airfield and seeks to secure an integrated development strategy to enable sympathetic new development on the airfield perimeter. The development fails to comply with CP25 due to the lack of information, such as the landscape character appraisal and heritage statement, which are necessary to show how the development would integrate with the site.

Aircraft Strategy and Future Operation of Airfield

16. The building would be located close to the runway and the Council advises that the development may have an impact on aircraft safety and aircraft may have an impact on users and the operation of the proposed building.
17. Due to the height and the location of the proposed building, it may pose a risk to aviation. Consequently, it is important to establish whether the relevant aerodrome operator has any concerns. I note that the appellant has sought to do this and I have considered the email, dated 23 August 2016, from the Technical Operations Manager at Old Sarum Airfield. The advice provided is that there will be no perceived risk to the operation of Old Sarum Airfield.
18. The airfield is highly likely to generate a level of noise and disturbance that may affect the future users of the development. However, the use of the building as a pilates studio would be less sensitive than residential use, as the majority of the users would only be present for relatively short periods of time. Consequently, the noise and disturbance to future users is unlikely to be material.
19. On the basis of the evidence before me, I conclude on this issue that the development would not affect the aircraft strategy and future operation of the airfield. However, this does not overcome the other concerns set out above.

Other Matters

20. The appellant and another interested party consider that the application was not given a fair hearing. It is not for me, in the context of this planning appeal, to consider whether or not the Council or Parish Council acted improperly. I have, therefore, given this consideration little weight.
21. I note that the pre-application response from the Council, dated 22 May 2015, states that the removal of the building is unlikely to receive any objections from the local planning authority. However, the letter is clear in that the advice was given without prejudice to any decision the Council may make on any subsequent formal planning application.

Conclusion

22. I have considered the economic, social and environmental benefits described by the appellant, and the letters of support for the development. I appreciate that there appears to be local demand for the facility. However, these benefits do not outweigh the harm described above.
23. Overall, I conclude that the development would lead to harm. Whilst, the harm to the significance of the designated heritage assets would be relatively localised, and therefore less than substantial in terms of the national policy, I give great weight to the preservation of the Conservation Area. There are limited clear public benefits that would outweigh the harm in this instance.
24. For the reasons set out above, the appeal should be dismissed.

Debbie Moore

Inspector