

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 January 2017

by Helen Hockenhull BA(Hons) B.PI MRTPI

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

Decision date: 10 February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3940/W/16/3158921

Glenafon, High Street, Ramsbury, Wiltshire, SN8 2QN

- 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 The Hon. Mr and Mrs Mark Palmer against the decision of Wiltshire Council.
 - The application Ref 16/00161/FUL, dated 17 December 2015, was refused by notice dated 15 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is a replacement dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this case are whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Ramsbury Conservation Area and the effect of the proposal on the setting of No. 59 High Street, a Grade II Listed Building.

Reasons

Conservation Area

3. The appeal site is located in the village of Ramsbury to the south of the High Street. It forms an 'L' shaped site lying behind Nos 57-59 High Street and comprises a bungalow with a number of outbuildings. The buildings on the site maintain a linear form, orientated north-south with a lawned garden lying to the western side of the plot. The southern site boundary lies adjacent to the River Kennet Stream and beyond that is an area of water meadow. The site is located within the Ramsbury Conservation Area and also within the North Wessex Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There are a number of listed buildings in the village, the one most relevant in this appeal being No. 59 High Street which lies to the north of the site.
 4. The conservation area is characterised by many building styles and finishes. There are larger manor houses to the east and west of the village and more traditional closely knit terraced property in the centre. Development along the southern side of the High Street is in the main characterised by long linear plots that lead down to the River Kennet. Dwellings front the High Street and there are ancillary outbuildings such as former coach houses and storage buildings located behind the principal dwellings. These historic linear plots
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contribute to the historic interest of the conservation area. An exception to this is the appeal site which lies to the rear of 57 and 59 High Street and extends across the rear of both plots. Historic maps provided by the appellant illustrate that this layout at least pre dates 1886 and possibly earlier.

5. A unifying characteristic of the conservation area is the building style, detailing and use of materials. There are examples of brick, render and timber framed buildings with plain clay tile roofs or thatch. These features contribute to the architectural interest of the conservation area.
6. The appeal proposes the replacement of the existing bungalow with a part two storey/part single storey dwelling of classical design. Taking advantage of the 'L'shaped plot, the main dwelling would be sited centrally with a single storey projection to the west providing a family room and a single storey wing to the north providing a granny annex. This northern wing would occupy part of the footprint of the existing outbuildings on the site.
7. It is accepted that the existing bungalow is of little architectural or historic interest and does not contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area. Its removal is therefore acceptable. The Council have argued that the proposed dwelling would cut across the historic linear plot boundaries which form an important element of the character of the conservation area. I have already established above that the appeal plot forms an exception to this linear plot character and whilst the appeal site may historically have been part of linear plots to the rear of Nos 57 and 59, the area has evolved over time so that this is no longer evident. Accordingly I consider that it is now difficult to argue that the appeal property would cut across these historic linear boundaries and cause harm to the historic layout of plots in the conservation area.
8. It is also evident from historic maps and also from the existing buildings to the rear of dwellings on the High Street, that the established pattern of development in this area is for buildings to have a north-south orientation. The appeal development would extend across the plot in an east-west direction. It would therefore not conform to this existing pattern of built form and would be out of character with existing development in the area.
9. The current bungalow on the site and other outbuildings to the rear of properties on the High Street are generally simply designed so that they do not detract or compete with the principal buildings on the High Street. The proposed dwelling however would have a classical Georgian style design and be constructed in Bath stone with the annexe being constructed in brick with timber boarding. The proposal would clearly be of a more complex design and would not be in keeping with the more modest and secondary buildings to the south of dwellings on the High Street.
10. Furthermore the proposed classical design would introduce an architectural style which is not found within the conservation area. It would therefore appear incongruous and out of character. Whilst I accept that the use of Bath stone may be typical of the region, it is not a traditional material in Ramsbury. The introduction of stone would be at odds with the local vernacular found within the conservation area.
11. The appeal site can be viewed from the water meadow to the south and other public footpaths on Spring Hill beyond. Due to the open generally flat

landscape, the appeal site is in a prominent position on the edge of the village and the conservation area. When viewed from the south, the design, scale, orientation and materials of the proposed dwelling, would result in a visually dominant structure. The use of stone would in particular contrast sharply with the materials of buildings on the High Street thereby increasing its prominence. This would result in a discordant feature which would not sit harmoniously with the setting and appearance of the conservation area.

12. The Council have commented that at night, lights in the proposed dwelling would contribute to light pollution in this rural location and adversely affect the character of the area. Historically there is little residential development near to the river, the existing bungalow being an exception. I am mindful that the existing bungalow on the site is sited closer to the river than the appeal proposal. Light from the windows of the bungalow would have been visible at night. I am also aware that planning permission has been granted for a differently designed replacement dwelling on the site which the appellant advises would have a similar amount of glazing on the elevation facing the river. The appeal proposal would therefore be unlikely to create any material increase in light pollution over and above the approved dwelling.
13. The appellant has brought my attention to a replacement dwelling within the conservation area at 14 Burdett Street. He argues that this scheme provides an example of a modern interpretation of the local vernacular set amongst small scale brick houses. I viewed this development on my site visit. This property is located north of the High Street in a different context to the appeal site. It is located within the village and not at the edge and is constructed of render which complements neighbouring dwellings. I consider that this property is not comparable to the appeal proposal before me, which I have considered on its individual planning merits.
14. Bringing all the above points together, I consider that the appeal proposal, as a result of its orientation, design and use of materials would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Ramsbury Conservation Area.
15. There is a statutory duty set down in section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas when considering development proposals. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) in paragraph 132 considers the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a heritage asset and gives great weight to its conservation. In paragraphs 133 and 134 a distinction is drawn between substantial harm and less than substantial harm to such an asset. The guidance advises that any harm must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
16. Given the scale of the development and its effect on the more extensive conservation area as a whole, I consider that the harm to the significance of the heritage asset would be less than substantial. The appellant has argued that there is significant public benefit from the proposal because in replacing the existing bungalow on the site and when compared to the approved alternative scheme, it would provide a more sympathetic and sensitive development. It would also secure the optimum viable use of the site. Whilst I agree that the existing bungalow is of little if any architectural merit I have found that the appeal scheme would cause harm to the character and

appearance of the conservation area. The benefits outlined by the appellant would not in my view outweigh the harm of the proposal to the significance of the heritage asset.

17. Accordingly I consider that the appeal proposal would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Ramsbury Conservation Area. The proposal would conflict with Core Policies 57 and 58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy 2015 which aim to conserve the historic environment. It would also fail to comply with Section 12 and paragraphs 17 and 56 of the Framework which have similar objectives.

Setting of Listed Building

18. There are a number of listed buildings in the village the closest to the appeal site being No.59 High Street. This Grade II listed building dates from the 17th Century and the rear garden backs onto the appeal site. The front elevation of the building forms a flint and painted brickwork in chequerboard pattern. I am advised by the appellant that the Listing Description refers only to the street façade and interior features.
19. The appeal site shares only a very short stretch of the rear boundary to No. 59. The Council raises concern that the appeal development would cross historic plot boundaries and in so doing would adversely affect the setting of the listed building. I have already discussed the historic plot boundaries in this area and concluded that it appears the appeal site has extended across the rear of Nos 57-59 certainly from the late nineteenth century and possibly earlier. The proposal therefore causes no harm in this respect.
20. The Framework in Annex 2 describes the setting of a heritage asset as the surroundings in which the asset is experienced and that its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings change. In terms of No. 59, I noted on my site visit that rear views of the listed building are partially obscured by an existing single storey outbuilding and this building affects its setting. The part of the appeal proposal closest to the building would be single storey and extend only a limited distance to the rear. I consider that as a result, the proposed development would not materially harm the setting of the neighbouring listed building.
21. The appeal proposal would therefore in this regard comply with Core Policies 57 and 58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy 2015 which aim to conserve historic buildings and landscapes. The development would also accord with national planning policy to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Other matters

22. The site lies within the North Wessex Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Paragraph 115 of the Framework advises that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB's). I note the Council's view that whilst the proposal forms an incongruent development on the edge of the village the degree of harm to the AONB is not of such weight to warrant a reason for refusal. I have no reason to disagree with this view.

Conclusion

23. I have found that the appeal proposal would not cause harm to the setting of the neighbouring listed building. However I have also concluded that the scheme would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Ramsbury Conservation Area. I consider that the harm I have identified would not be outweighed by the positive benefits of the proposal.
24. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, I dismiss this appeal.

Helen Hockenhull

INSPECTOR