



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 August 2017

by Rory Cridland LLB (Hons), Solicitor

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

Decision date: 30 August 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3940/W/17/3172007

Croft Farm, Plough Lane, Marston, SN10 5SR

- 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 & Mrs Milton against the decision of Wiltshire Council.
 - The application Ref 16/05020/FUL, dated 21 May 2016, was refused by notice dated 21 September 2016.
 - The development proposed is demolition of redundant farm buildings and replacement with one residential dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - (i) whether the appeal site offers a suitable location for the proposed development; and
 - (ii) the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and the setting of nearby heritage assets including Croft Farmhouse and the Marston Conservation Area ("the CA").

Reasons

Location

3. The appeal site forms part of what was formerly Croft Farm, an agricultural holding situated just outside the built-up area of Marston. It consists of a number of farm buildings of little architectural merit including a large hay barn, a pole barn, a stores and former dairy parlour. The Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) (CS) classifies Marston as a Small Village due to its low level of services facilities and employment opportunities.
4. Core Policy 1 of the CS sets out the settlement strategy for Wiltshire and directs development towards the area's main settlements. Furthermore, Core Policy 2 of the CS requires development to be delivered in the most sustainable manner. Proposals for development at the Small Villages will be supported where they seek to meet the housing needs of settlements or provide employment, services and facilities. Even then, new development in Small Villages will be limited to infill within the existing built area.

5. There is no evidence to indicate that the proposal would help meet an identified housing need or would result in any material improvement to employment opportunities, services or facilities. In the absence of such, even if I were to conclude that the proposal would constitute infill within the built up area, it would nevertheless be contrary to Core Policies 1 & 2 in this respect.
6. While I note the appellants' references to Core Policy 48, which allows for the conversion and re-use of rural buildings, the present proposal is for the demolition of the agricultural buildings and the erection of a 3 bedroom dwelling. This would neither constitute conversion nor re-use. Core Policy 48 does not, therefore, provide support for the development proposed.
7. Accordingly, I conclude that that the proposal would be contrary to Core Policies 1 & 2.

Character and appearance

8. The appeal site is located at the end of Plough Lane, directly adjacent to the CA boundary. The site itself forms part of the former Croft Farm and is in close proximity to the nearby Grade II listed Croft Farmhouse, a red brick early mid-18th Century farmhouse in English bond, stone dressings and slate roof. Its significance is, in part, derived from its rural and agricultural origins. It is surrounded by agricultural buildings most of which appear in a poor state of repair. Further south along Plough Lane there are a number of residential dwellings of traditional appearance which positively contribute to the character of the CA.
9. The Council accepts that the existing agricultural buildings on the site are of limited architectural value and does not object to their demolition. However, it raises concerns that their replacement with a new residential dwelling would negatively impact on the character and appearance of the CA and the nearby listed farmhouse.
10. These concerns are well founded. Although the existing buildings are unattractive, the introduction of a modern residential dwelling in this location would appear in stark contrast to the more rural setting. It would alter centuries of use from agricultural to domestic, eroding the setting of the nearby Grade II listed farmhouse and negatively impacting on its significance.
11. Furthermore, while I note that the appellant has indicated that the proposed dwelling has been designed to be reflective of the now lost agricultural use and would act as a bridge between this and the nearby residential development, in my view it would fail to integrate well with either. The footprint and mass of the proposed dwelling would be far greater than that of the other nearby properties. Its increased gable span and length would be clearly apparent and would appear at odds with the more modest form of development which is characteristic of this part of the adjoining CA.
12. Likewise, its modern domestic appearance would appear in stark contrast to the more rural character of the site itself and would fail to respect its agricultural origins. This would fail to enhance local distinctiveness and would be harmful to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It would also impact negatively on the nearby CA.
13. Accordingly, I find that the proposal would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the surrounding area and would negatively impact on the setting

of the adjoining CA as well as that of nearby Croft Farmhouse. This would be contrary to Core Policies 57 & 58 of the CS. These policies, amongst other things, seek to ensure that new development is of a high standard of design which enhances local distinctiveness and protects, conserves and, where possible, enhances the historic environment

Balancing Exercise

14. I have found above that the proposal would impact negatively on the setting of both the CA and Croft Farmhouse. I consider this harm would be less than substantial. The Framework advises that in such circumstances, the resultant harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme.
15. The appellant has indicated that the proposal would result in substantial public benefits by enhancing views from within the CA and nearby footpaths. However, I consider any benefit that would be derived from the removal of the existing buildings would be outweighed by the erection of the proposed dwelling on the site. I therefore afford this little weight.
16. Heritage assets, however, are an irreplaceable resource and the Framework indicates that *great* weight should be afforded to conserving them. As such, I do not consider the benefits of the proposal are sufficient to outweigh the harms identified above.

Other Matters

17. The Council has also raised concerns regarding the impact of the proposal on the landscape character of the surroundings and, in particular, on the rural setting of the village. However, while I accept that it would erode the site's rural character, in longer distance views the proposed dwelling would be seen within the context of other residential development and there is nothing before me to indicate that it would be prominent or harmful to the wider landscape. As such, I find no harm in this respect. Accordingly, I find no conflict with Core Policy 51 which seeks to prevent such harm.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Rory Cridland

INSPECTOR