
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 August 2019

by M Allen BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 September 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/P0119/W/19/3230256

Angers Farm, Oldfields Lane, Alveston BS35 3TD

- 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 Andrew Hendy against the decision of South Gloucestershire Council.
 - The application Ref PT18/4344/F, dated 20 September 2018, was refused by notice dated 12 April 2019.
 - The development proposed is a multi-purpose agricultural building.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The site is located within the Green Belt. Neither of the main parties have argued that the development would be inappropriate development. As the scheme comprises a building for agriculture, as set out in the exceptions in paragraph 145 of the National Planning Policy Framework, I have no reason to disagree.

Main Issues

3. The main issues raised in this case are the effect of the proposal on:
 - i) The character and appearance of the area, and
 - ii) The setting of Angers Farmhouse, a Grade II listed building.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal site is located to the north of the existing complex of buildings associated with Angers Farm and comprises the corner of a field. The surrounding area is characterised by agricultural fields, enclosed predominantly by low hedges. As a consequence, there are extensive views in the area of the surrounding landscape.
5. The site lies within the Earthcott Vale Landscape Character Area as set out in the South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment – Supplementary Planning Document (2014) (the SPD). This sets out that the area is a gently undulating agricultural area, divided by a complex network of hedgerows, trees

and lanes. The SPD identifies that settlement is limited, with traditional scattered farms, houses and hamlets.

6. The scheme would result in the introduction of an isolated building into the landscape which would be highly visible from public roads as well as a footpath that runs in close proximity to the site. The building would be a strident and imposing feature in what is otherwise a generally open and uncluttered landscape. Whilst I note the presence of other buildings in the wider area, these are generally sited in small complexes or in less obtrusive locations.
7. The building would be visible from public vantage points in the area and would appear unrelated to any existing structure or building and thus would have the appearance of a solitary and isolated incursion into the countryside. I note that the scheme includes details of areas of new planting which are intended to help screen the development and assist in its integration into the landscape. However, this would do little to ameliorate the appearance of the building as an isolated feature. Furthermore, whilst the additional planting may help to screen the development within some views, it would not diminish the impact of the building from all viewpoints, particularly the adjacent public right of way.
8. The SPD advocates that any built development in the northern and western parts of the character area should, amongst other things, pay careful attention to form and massing to ensure the nature of the locality is protected and that there should be consideration of views from elevated ground to the west. The scale and massing of the proposal would accentuate its isolated and obtrusive appearance and it would likely be particularly visible from viewpoints to the west of the site.
9. The appellant has stated a willingness to alter the external materials of the proposed building from box profile steel cladding to timber cladding. This would not however overcome my concerns as outlined above.
10. Thus, the scheme would appear as an overly prominent and discordant element in an otherwise open and expansive landscape. Consequently, the scheme would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area and would conflict with Policies CS1, CS9 and CS34 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan – Core Strategy (2006-2027) (the Core Strategy) and Policy PSP2 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan – Policies, Sites and Places Plan (2017) (the Policies Plan). Together, and amongst other things, these policies seek to ensure existing features of landscape are safeguarded, that the character and quality of the landscape is conserved, that the rural areas' distinctive character is protected and that development proposals conserve the quality of the landscape. The scheme would also be contrary to the guidance of the SPD.

Setting of listed building

11. Within the existing farm complex lies Angers Farmhouse, a Grade II listed building. The significance of this designated heritage asset lies, in part, due to it being an example of a 17th Century farmhouse, with a later 17th Century rear wing and 18th Century attached stable. The farmhouse has a close relationship with the existing buildings within the surrounding complex, which are substantial features of its immediate setting. To the north and east, there is a more open setting comprised of agricultural fields, but there are also trees and hedges which are visible as features. The expansive views of the surrounding

landscape contribute to the significance of the building, as an example of a historic farmhouse.

12. The proposed building would be located to the north of Angers Farmhouse and would introduce a new built element into the wider setting of the listed building. Whilst, the proposed building would be located some distance away from the listed building, it would nonetheless introduce a substantial built element into the open landscape that is appreciable from it. The distance to some extent would diminish the impact of the building, however it would remain a negative element in views. This would have a minor negative effect on the setting of the listed building and its significance as a designated heritage asset.
13. In locating the building some distance from the listed building, I recognise that traffic movements within its immediate vicinity would be reduced. However, it has not been demonstrated that the buildings of the existing farm complex are in such proximity to the listed building as to result in harm to it. In any event, I note that there is reference to a new farm track which will likely result in the reduction of farm traffic passing the listed building.
14. Accordingly, the scheme would conflict with Policies CS1 and CS9 of the Core Strategy and Policy PSP17 of the Policies Plan. Together, and amongst other things, these policies seek to ensure existing features of heritage value are safeguarded, that heritage assets are conserved, and that development protects the significance of heritage assets.
15. In failing to preserve the setting of the listed building, I find that the scheme would result in less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset. As required by paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), I have had regard to the limited public benefits of the proposed development, which the Council has identified would include a contribution towards food production generally. However, any such benefit is not sufficient to outweigh the harm that I have identified.

Other Matters

16. I note that there is reference within the documents to the lack of alternative sites being suggested by the Council. However, I must determine the appeal on the basis of the scheme that is before me which, as I have found above, would result in harm to both the character and appearance of the area and a designated heritage asset. As such, this is not a matter that assists my reasoning.
17. I have noted that benefits have been put forward which include the planting of trees that would create additional habitats for wildlife. Whilst I acknowledge this, in my view, it is not sufficient to outweigh the harm that I have identified above. In any event, these areas of additional planting appear to be outside of the defined application site. I have also had regard to the reduction of farm traffic needing to use Oldfields Lane. There is no evidence to suggest the current situation is unacceptable and as such this has little bearing on my decision.
18. The appellant also references that the building is needed for the continuing farm business, including for security of equipment. This is noted, however the need for the building does not outweigh the harm that I have identified.

19. A number of instances of other agricultural buildings have been cited. However, I do not have the full details of these or the circumstances that led to their approval. However, from the details provided it appears that these are in proximity to existing buildings and at less obtrusive locations. In any event, I have judged the appeal scheme before me on its merits and found harm sufficient to dismiss the appeal.
20. There is reference to the scheme forming part of a comprehensive re-development of the farm complex. However, whilst I recognise this intention, I have assessed the scheme before me on its merits, as a scheme for a single building in the absence of a definitive redevelopment scheme having been secured.

Conclusion

21. For the reasons given above and having regard to all matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Martin Allen

INSPECTOR