



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 July 2019

by S Edwards MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 September 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3940/W/18/3216407

Normanton House, West Amesbury, Salisbury SP4 7BJ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs S Connolly against the decision of Wiltshire Council.
 - The application Ref 18/02945/FUL, dated 22 March 2018, was refused by notice dated 22 May 2018.
 - The development proposed is Outbuilding Conversion to Home Office/Studio.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which was revised in July 2018, was subsequently updated on 19 February 2019. References to the Framework within this decision relate to the latest version published in 2019.

Application for costs

3. An application for costs was made by Mr and Mrs S Connolly against Wiltshire Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Main Issues

4. The site lies within an area of Archaeological Significance and the Stonehenge World Heritage Site. No concerns have been raised by the Council in these particular regards, and there is no reason for me to take a different view.
5. The main issues are:
 - Whether the appeal site constitutes an acceptable location for the proposed development, having regard to local and national planning policy;
 - Whether the existing building is capable of conversion without major rebuilding; and
 - The effect of the proposal on the rural character and appearance of the site and the visual amenities of the area.

Reasons

Location

6. Core Policies 1 and 2 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy – Adopted January 2015 (WCS) outline the settlement and delivery strategies for Wiltshire, by seeking to direct development towards defined settlements. Outside these defined boundaries, development is restricted to a limited number of circumstances specifically permitted by other policies. Core Policy 4 of the WCS reiterates the Council’s spatial strategy, but focuses on the Amesbury Community Area. The appeal site lies within the open countryside, outside the defined limits of Principal Settlements, Market Towns, Local Services Centres, Large Villages and outside the existing built areas of Small Villages.
7. Core Policy 48 of the WCS supports development in the countryside, notably when it involves the conversion and re-use of rural buildings for employment, tourism, cultural and community uses, and subject to a number of criteria. Whilst the appeal building lies outside the residential curtilage of Normanton House, it remains closely associated with the main property, and therefore I accept that the conversion and re-use for employment, tourist, cultural or community purposes, as envisaged by Core Policy 48, would not constitute practical propositions.
8. Provided that it remains incidental to the main dwellinghouse, the proposed home office would negate or at least reduce the need to travel for the occupiers of Normanton House for employment purposes. It would therefore accord with the objectives of the Council’s spatial strategy and the Framework, which seek to encourage sustainable forms of development, notably by reducing the reliance on the use of private motor vehicles. Additionally, I note that the appeal building is served by adequate access and infrastructure, in connection with Normanton House.
9. For these reasons, I consider that, having regard to the particular circumstances of this case, the site would constitute an appropriate location for the proposed home office/studio, and therefore find no conflict with Core Policies 1,2, 4 and 48iii and iv of the WCS or the Framework.

Building works

10. The evidence presented by the appellant indicates that, prior to the submission of the planning application, the assessment carried out by a structural engineer concluded that the building was structurally sound. It was however highlighted that some repairs would be required as part of the ongoing maintenance of the structure, to ensure that it remains in a reasonable condition for its current function. The photographic evidence submitted by the Council as part of their appeal statement clearly show that the building has been subject to a number of maintenance and repair works over the last few years.
11. Whilst I accept that no structural alterations would be required to enable the conversion of the existing building, it would nevertheless require the front elevation to be infilled with glazing and oak cladding, as well as the erection of internal partitions and insulation works. Setting the repairs which have already been undertaken aside, I consider that the building would not be capable of conversion without major rebuilding, by reason of the extent of the works required as part of the proposal. The proposal would therefore conflict with the requirements of Core Policy 48i of the WCS.

Character and appearance

12. As noted above, the appeal site is located within an area of rural character. The appeal site comprises a Grade II Listed property known as Normanton House, set within spacious grounds and surrounded by fields. According to the listing description, Normanton House dates from the late 17th and early 18th centuries, and is characterised by its rich architectural detailing. From the evidence before me, the significance of this designated heritage asset does not solely derive from its architectural and historic interest, but also from the spaciousness of the grounds in which the building is experienced.
13. Normanton House is formally enclosed by a cob wall, which is also listed. There are a number of other structures situated within the appeal site, which notably include a greenhouse, converted stables and barns. Situated within the setting of Normanton House, the appeal building is a more modest open fronted cart shed which, according to the Council, dates from the early 19th century. As the building pre-dates 1948 and lies within the curtilage of Normanton House, the appeal building is regarded by the Council as being curtilage listed. Despite not being mentioned within the listing description, I consider that, the appeal building has to be considered as curtilage listed, not only by reason of its age, but having also regard to the physical layout of Normanton House and the barn, as well as the function of the relevant buildings.
14. The main external changes relate to the front elevation of the building, which would be formally enclosed. This wall would be set behind the timber frame of the building which, as noted by the Council's Conservation Officer, would leave the origins of the structure discernible. This, together with the use of timber cladding would ensure that the conversion is carried out sensitively. No concerns have been raised by the Council in respect of the effect of the proposal on the setting of Normanton House, which lies some distance away from the appeal building, and I concur with this assessment. The proposed development would have a neutral effect and therefore would preserve the setting of this Grade II Listed Building.
15. However, despite its association with Normanton House, it is clear that the appeal building lies outside the residential curtilage of this property, which is clearly defined by the historic cob wall surrounding the gardens. It currently forms an essential part of the rural setting which characterises the surrounding area. Therefore, the proposed use would create an incidental link to the main property, thus resulting in an extension of the residential curtilage which, over time, would alter the rural character of this part of the site, compared with the existing use of the building.
16. Whilst views of the development would remain relatively limited from public vantage points, the conversion would become, through the introduction of more domestic features and associated paraphernalia, more perceptible, particularly during winter months. The proposal would therefore have a detrimental effect on this rural part of the site and the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. I accept that suitable conditions could be imposed to prevent the effects of the proposal to some extent, but it would not be possible or reasonable to entirely control the increased domestication of the site, which would inevitably occur as a result of the conversion.
17. I therefore consider that the effect of the proposal on the rural character and appearance of the site and the visual amenities of the area would not be

acceptable. It would consequently conflict with Core Policy 48ii, which seeks to protect the character and appearance of the landscape, but also the design aims of Core Policy 57 of the WCS and the Framework.

Other Matters

18. I have noted the concerns raised by the Council in respect of whether the works that appear to have been undertaken could have been carried out using permitted development rights. However, these fall outside the scope of the Section 78 appeal before me, which I am required to assess on its individual merits. For this reason, the appeal proposal is not considered contrary to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).

Conclusion

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

S Edwards

INSPECTOR