



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 January 2020

by Adrian Hunter BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2nd March 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3940/W/19/3240152

Land at Church Farm, Cuckoos Knob North C267 To Forest Road, Wootton Rivers, Wiltshire SN8 4NH

- 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 Mrs E Light against the decision of Wiltshire Council.
 - The application Ref 19/03278/FUL, dated 22 March 2019, was refused by notice dated 30 August 2019.
 - The development proposed is for the erection of a 5 bed, two storey dwelling (alterations to part of an existing consent for a 5 bedroom, one and half storey dwelling under applications 16/11051/FUL and 17/03881/LBC formerly known as Plot 3, now renamed as Plot 7).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. For the purposes of clarity and precision, the description of development given above is taken from the decision notice.

Main Issues

3. The main issue is:
 - Whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Wootton Rivers Conservation Area (WRCA) and affect the setting of the Grade II listed Church Farm.

Reasons

4. The appeal site forms part of the former farmyard complex associated with Church Farm and lies partly within the WRCA. The surrounding area is a typically, English rural village, comprising a number of old historic buildings, interspersed with a few relatively modern developments. The historic pattern and nature of the village is still prevalent, with the form, scale, materials and detailing of these historical buildings being defining features of the WRCA.
5. One of the WRCA appraisal's key characteristics is the degree to which historic farmsteads are still in evidence within the village. There are also references to the diminishing hierarchy within these farmsteads, where the functionality of the buildings becomes more prevalent the further they are from the road/farmhouse. The significance of the WRCA is therefore derived from the

- underlying building pattern, which is reflective of the social and agricultural development of the village, historic fabric and vernacular details.
6. I note that the Wootton Rivers Neighbourhood Plan specifically identifies Church Farm and its associated farmyard to be *'the only such buildings to survive within the conservation area. Other former farmyards, historic farms and activity have mostly been erased through re-development and alteration. Its setting within the village is a significant reminder of the villages agricultural past'*. On the basis of my visit, I see no reason to disagree with this assessment.
 7. The appeal site itself is occupied by a large agricultural barn, with an extant planning permission (16/11051/FUL) for the redevelopment of the farm complex. Church Farm is a Grade II Listed Building and therefore an important historical asset within the village. The proposed scheme would be for a farmhouse style detached dwelling, which would be located towards the rear of the farmyard. The design of the farmyard takes its lead not only from the surrounding built fabric but also from its traditional layout and association with past historical farming practices. Due its size and bulk, the proposed building would be more urban in its design and appearance, which would overly dominate the historic farm. Whilst the proposed design has sought to take its reference from other buildings and developments in the village, it results in a design that would fail to respond to the historical significance of its immediate locality.
 8. I note that the accompanying Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment recognises that the site forms part of setting of the farmhouse. Due to the underlying typology/hierarchy of the originally proposed building, I disagree with appellant that a building of the proposed scale and design would improve on the fallback scheme. The design of the building is less suited to the rural, village setting of the appeal site and would have a negative effect upon the character and appearance of the WRCA.
 9. There are disagreements between the parties on the overall size of the amended dwelling and the approved scheme, both with regards to floorspace and the overall height of the new building. However, regardless of this, I find that the overall design of the proposed amended scheme fails to adequately respond to the sensitivity of its location.
 10. I therefore conclude the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Wootton Rivers Conservation Area and Church Farm and would cause less than substantial harm to their significance as designated assets. Paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) requires such harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
 11. The appellant has not advanced any arguments in relation to the development's public benefits. Consequently, the development would conflict with Policies 57 and 58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the guidance in The Framework. Amongst other things, these policies seek to conserve the local character and historic environment and protect the setting of listed buildings. The proposed development would also conflict with the aims of The Framework as it would fail to sustain the significance of the designated heritage asset where the public benefits would not outweigh the harm. Moreover, the development would also diminish the setting of the listed Church Farm,

contrary to Section 66(1) of the Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This also carries considerable weight and reinforces my reasoning.

Other Matters

12. The appeal site lies with the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), with the development plan and the Framework requiring proposals to conserve, and where possible enhance, the natural beauty of the AONB and to deliver the highest quality design which respects the area's natural beauty. Given the extant permission on the site, I do not consider the proposal would cause significant harm to the AONB and would agree with the Council that this is not determinative in this case.
13. I note that a particular reason for the change in the design of the scheme is to allow for a more flexible layout of the ground floor accommodation to provide bedroom and bathroom facilities at ground floor level. Although I understand the need for this, these represent largely private benefits that would accrue from the appeal development. Whilst the harm to the significance of the Conservation Area is less than substantial, these benefits are not sufficient to outweigh that harm.

Conclusion

14. I conclude, for the reasons outlined above, that the appeal should be dismissed.

Adrian Hunter

INSPECTOR