
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 May 2020

by M Allen BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 June 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/C1625/W/20/3245668

Maidenhill House, Horsemarling Lane, Standish, Stonehouse GL10 3BZ

- 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 G Winchle against the decision of Stroud District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/2007/FUL, dated 18 September 2019, was refused by notice dated 19 November 2019.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a replacement dwelling, garage and associated works (demolition of the Coach House).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The applicant named on the planning application form is Mr G Winchle, yet the appeal form cited Mr Jack Winchle as the appellant. The agent has confirmed in writing that the appellant is Mr G Winchle, with Mr Jack Winchle acting as agent.
3. Whilst not included within the description of development, it is clear from the submitted plans that both the Coach House and the stable building are intended to be demolished. I have dealt with the appeal on this basis.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - i) the effect on the character and appearance of the area, bearing in mind the heritage significance of the property, Maidenhill House, and the location within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and
 - ii) whether the loss of The Coach House, a non-designated heritage asset, has been sufficiently justified.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. Maidenhill House is an imposing Victorian property set at an elevated position, affording expansive views of the surrounding countryside and towards the nearby settlement of Stonehouse. The Council highlight that it is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset, however little information is provided in respect of its significance. I observed that the house was a striking and attractive example of Victorian architecture. The use of multi-pitched roofs, as well as the sprawling

views over the countryside, positively contribute to the sense of grandeur of the property. This grandeur is further underlined by the range of nearby, subservient buildings which are sited to the rear of the property.

6. Immediately adjoining the property is a Coach House, which has partially been converted to a residential use, as well as a stable building. Adjacent to these is a further substantial building comprising a pool house. These buildings form a close-knit group within the site. Set apart from, but within close proximity to, this group is an additional garage building. Both the Coach House and the stables have a traditional appearance, echoing that of the main house. They are attractive features within the site and their proximity to the main house positively contributes to its overall appearance. The pool house, whilst not replicating the Victorian essences of the other buildings, exhibits a subservience to the remainder of the buildings and a design which complements its setting. Similarly, the garage building, despite being set apart from the main group, is viewed as a subservient and secondary structure within the site. The buildings form a tightly confined assemblage of built development which, notwithstanding the location of the garage building slightly apart from the main cluster, sits appropriately within the confines of the site.
7. Policy CP15 of the Stroud District Local Plan (adopted 2015) (the Local Plan) sets out that, amongst other things, in order to protect the quality of the countryside that development proposals outside of settlement development limits will only be permitted in the cases of certain stated exceptions. One of these is that it is for a replacement dwelling. In all cases, the policy requires that the proposal does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from original buildings.
8. I acknowledge that the proposed dwelling would be located on the site of, and would replace, the existing garage building. However, in addition to the main two-storey body of the building, there would be a large single storey projection from the rear elevation. This would extend away from the remainder of the buildings at the site and would protrude into an area that is currently undeveloped. There is no definition of what is considered to be an excessive encroachment or expansion provided and this would vary depending on each individual case. It is my view that in the case before me, the form of the proposed building, particularly in light of the extent of the sizeable rear projecting element, is such that notwithstanding the use of a green roof, it would result in an excessive encroachment and expansion of development away from the existing buildings and into an undeveloped area.
9. The site lies within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the AONB) and falls within the "Escarpment" landscape character type, as defined within the Stroud Landscape Assessment Supplementary Planning Guidance document (the SPG). The SPG identifies that a key characteristic of this landscape type is the large scale, semi-natural exposed and elevated scarp slope. It also outlines that a key priority for action is the exercising of development control in order to limit the impact of new development.
10. The existing garage building appears as a single storey structure, albeit that some accommodation is provided within the roof space. As a consequence, it has the appearance of a subservient, ancillary structure notwithstanding a reasonably large roof profile. The proposed structure would significantly increase the visual appearance of the bulk and massing of built development that is present. The eaves height of the proposal would sit just below the overall height of the current garage, and the appearance of the full two-storey elevations of the dwelling would be substantially more imposing than the existing building. In this regard, it would

be at odds with the prevailing character of development present at the site, which comprises the focal main house and associated subservient buildings.

11. Given the elevated position of the site, there are views of it from the surrounding area, including nearby roads and properties within the area. I also observed that there is a Public Right of Way to the north of the site, partly along the vehicular access. Whilst many of the views of the site would be distance views and there would be some screening by vegetation, including some mature Holly trees, the increased scale and massing over and above that of the current garage would be visible and noticeable. The proposal would appear as an overly assertive element at the site and one which would compete with the main house, in terms of scale and massing. In this context, the proposed dwelling would be a discordant addition to the site, would visually compete with the main house, diminishing its significance, and would fail to conserve the scenic beauty of the AONB at this location.
12. I acknowledge that the appellant contends that the scheme would result in a reduction in both footprint and floor area of built development, given that the Coach House and stables would also be demolished. However, even if this were the case, this does not overcome my concern in respect of the scale, massing and appearance of the proposed building. The appellant makes reference to there having been no consultation by the Council with the 'Cotswold conservation board'. This does not however diminish the harm that I have found above.
13. Thus, I find that the scheme would result in a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area, bearing in mind the heritage significance of the property, Maidenhill House, and the location within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. For the reasons set out above, the proposal conflicts with policy CP15. There would also be conflict with policies ES7, ES10, CP14 and HC5 of the Local Plan, insofar as these policies seek to ensure that development conserves or enhances the special features and diversity of different landscape character types, that the heritage significance of heritage assets is protected, that development has an appropriate design and appearance, as well as that the design of replacement dwellings does not detract from the character and appearance of the area.

Loss of non-designated heritage asset

14. The Council identify the Coach House as a non-designated heritage asset but, again, provide little information in respect of its significance. I observed that the Coach House is an attractive, traditional building closely related to the main Victorian house at the site. Its interest would therefore predominantly comprise its aesthetic appeal and association with the house as a subservient building. In this context, and based on the evidence that is before me, the significance of the asset is limited. However, I am conscious that the proposal would result in the total loss of the asset.
15. The appellant refers to a number of benefits of the proposal, including its design to 'Lifetime Homes' standard and adherence to Document M of the Building Regulations, whereas the permitted residential unit within the Coach House and stables fails to meet such standards. There are also contended to be environmental benefits proposed including the use of high environmental credential building materials and methods. I also acknowledge that materials from the demolition of the existing buildings would be re-used. Collectively, I accord these benefits limited weight.
16. However, I am conscious that planning permission has previously been granted for the conversion of the Coach House and stables into a dwelling. Whilst I note that

the appellant maintains that the relationship between the converted buildings and the main house is unacceptable, I observed nothing at the time of my site visit that would lead me to agree with this. As the Council highlight, this was considered by the Inspector when considering a previous appeal at the site for a different scheme, where it was found that there were no particular issues that would make the co-existence of the two dwellings unduly difficult. I too am not persuaded that the two units could not satisfactorily co-exist. This, coupled with that I found that the proposed scheme would result in harm to the character and appearance of the area, including the significance of the main house and to the AONB, leads me to find that the proposed replacement dwelling would not be a worthy replacement for the Coach House. Thus, taken collectively the benefits that have been identified are insufficient to outweigh the totality of the harms that I have identified, consequently the total loss of this non-designated heritage asset would not be warranted in this case.

17. As such, I find that the loss of the non-designated heritage asset has not been sufficiently justified. Thus, the scheme would conflict with policy ES10 of the Local Plan, insofar as it seeks to ensure that the loss of an asset is supported by clear justification.

Other Matters

18. The appellant has drawn to my attention a number of other planning permissions in the area which have been granted. It is clear from the information before me that the circumstances of each of the cited cases is different from that which is before me and as such no useful comparisons can be drawn between them. As such, I have considered the appeal scheme on its merits.
19. I acknowledge that the appellant has a longstanding connection to the site, having lived there for a number of years and that they wish to stay at the site and construct a dwelling that would be their "lifetime home". However, these personal circumstances are not sufficient to warrant allowing the appeal.
20. There is reference to the demolition of the structures enabling the future of the main dwelling, Maidenhill House, to be protected. However, there is no convincing rationale provided to support this. As such, this matter has had little bearing on my decision.

Conclusion

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

Martin Allen

INSPECTOR