
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 July 2020

by M Allen BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 August 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/P0119/W/20/3250565

The Vicarage, 12 Horseshoe Lane, Chipping Sodbury BS37 6ET

- 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 Gloucester Diocesan Board of Finance against the decision of South Gloucestershire Council.
 - The application Ref P19/8525/F, dated 5 July 2019, was refused by notice dated 25 November 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as "the erection of dwelling house (new vicarage) with garage and associated access and parking arrangements (revised scheme)".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, bearing in mind the sites location adjacent to the Chipping Sodbury Conservation Area and adjacent to The Vicarage, a non-designated heritage asset.

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises an area of land to the side of an existing dwelling known as The Vicarage. Currently the site accommodates a single storey garage associated with the dwelling as well as hedging which serves to enclose the rear garden. Adjacent to the site lies a Public Right of Way (PROW) leading eastwards, which I observed at the time of my visit to be reasonably well used.
4. The Vicarage forms the northernmost dwelling in a linear arrangement of properties that front onto Horseshoe Lane. It is set back from the road, with a spacious lawned front garden, an alignment which is shared with the other dwellings on the road. Notwithstanding this, The Vicarage also has open aspects to both sides, whilst other dwellings in the road are more constricted within their respective plots. This open aspect to both the front and sides of the building adds to the building's aesthetic value, serves to reinforce a sense of importance to the property, which comprises part of its significance as a non-designated heritage asset. I acknowledge that the area within which The Vicarage sits has been subject to change and that a dwelling has been constructed previously to one side of it. Nonetheless, the building retains an

attractive appearance and the site retains a spaciousness that is a positive component of the site and the area within which it sits.

5. The site lies adjacent to the boundary of the Chipping Sodbury Conservation Area (the CA), therefore within its setting. Whilst there is an area of modern housing development to the front that is within the CA, the site itself given its spacious appearance shares little visual affinity with this and is viewed more closely with the dwellings along Horseshoe Lane. In this regard, it provides an attractive transition between the more densely arranged dwellings to the south and the burgrave plot layout of the CA in close proximity to the site.
6. The proposed scheme would see the construction of a new dwelling to the side of The Vicarage, adjacent to the PROW. Whilst I note that the design of the proposal itself has been formulated in order to take design cues from The Vicarage, in that it includes a hipped roof and traditional bay window features, the introduction of what is a substantial building within one of the spacious side areas, would appear as a cramped form of development. Notwithstanding that the dwelling would be set back within the site and there being some attempt to locate the bulk of the proposal furthest from the existing building, it would substantially impinge upon the spacious appearance of the site and appear as a discordant addition in views from the road. Given that the principal feature in these views is currently The Vicarage and its ample environs, this discordant addition, which includes the sub-division of the existing gardens, would have a harmful visual effect, diminishing the contribution that the generous gardens and general spaciousness make to the significance of the non-designated heritage asset.
7. Given the arrangement of the current vehicular access, there are views into the site which are afforded from the adjacent PROW and as such, the new dwelling, which I have found to be a discordant visual addition would be visible to a significant number of people as they travel along the PROW. I accept that a garage building currently occupies the site of the proposed dwelling, however this is a small, subservient building and does not have the presence within the site that the proposed dwelling would have.
8. Given the location of the site, it currently makes a positive contribution to the setting of the CA. As I have identified above, it serves to provide a transition between the housing development to the south and the more traditional burgrave plot layout to the north. The introduction of a dwelling here would jar with the existing building, would diminish the spacious appearance of the site and would be a visually incongruous element, harming the setting of the CA. I acknowledge that the appellant has submitted a heritage statement however for the reasons given above I have disagreed with the conclusion that there would be no harm resulting from the proposal.
9. Accordingly, I find that the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area, including harming the significance of the non-designated heritage asset and resulting in detriment to the setting of the CA. Thus, it would conflict with policies CS1 and CS9 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan: Core Strategy (adopted 2013) and policies PSP1, PSP5 and PSP17 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan (Policies, Sites and Places Plan (2017)). Together, and amongst other things, these policies seek to ensure development respects the character of the site and its context, that heritage assets are conserved, that development makes a positive contribution

to an area, that development of open spaces does not adversely affect the quality of a locality and that development protects the setting of heritage assets.

Other Matters

10. I acknowledge that the site is within the settlement where there is good access to services. I also note comment that the existing vicarage is no longer fit for purpose, with the new dwelling including facilities to meet the needs of its intended usage as a new vicarage, such as accessible W.C. facilities and robe store. Therefore, the scheme would result in some public benefit through the provision of a modern facility. Nonetheless, whilst these are positive aspects of the proposal, they are not sufficient to not overcome the harm that I have identified.
11. There is further reference to the Council's handling of the planning application, however that is a matter for the appellant and Council, not the appeal.

Conclusion

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

Martin Allen

INSPECTOR