



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 August 2020

by Mrs H Nicholls FdA MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 August 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/P1133/W/20/3247485

Valley Farm, Road past West Ogwell, West Ogwell TQ12 6EL

- 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 Dr Rachel Doyle against the decision of Teignbridge District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/02122/FUL, dated 31 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 20 December 2019.
 - The development proposed is creation of new entrance, driveway and parking area, demolition of lean-to building attached to garage and amendments to garage to form new opening.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effects of the proposal on the setting of the Grade II listed building known as 'Valley Farm' and on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Setting of listed building

3. Valley Farm is a Grade II listed farmhouse. Under Section 66(1) of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990, I am required to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting.
4. The farmhouse is an early C19 building with a late C19 addition. It has a pleasant, double fronted principal elevation which is largely symmetrical aside from the one-sided roof hip and chimney arrangement. It is constructed from rendered stonework and has traditional windows and doors. It also has internal features of interest, including some ornate roof trusses and a chimneypiece.
5. From the listing description and from my own observations, I consider that the significance of the designated heritage asset relates primarily to the age, form and historic fabric of the building, particularly the original parts, and the specified features of special interest. Moreover, the characterful Georgian front elevation with dominant stacks, windows and single hipped arrangement is particularly pronounced in views through the former orchard and contributes significantly to its setting as a traditional farmhouse with associated farm buildings.

6. The access to the farmhouse is from the far south-west and opens into a yard area, surrounded by now-converted, former farm buildings. Despite now being residential and interspersed with domestic outbuildings around the yard, their former use as part of a working farm associated with the farmhouse is easily capable of being interpreted. The logical arrangement of the former farmhouse with its principal elevation overlooking an open paddock, and access set to the side, entering first via the former farm buildings, contributes positively to the significance of the building and its setting.
7. The division of ownership of the yard and surrounding buildings lends to a busy and complicated parking arrangement. For this reason, amongst others, the appellant seeks to create a new access through the paddock and create a new parking area set to the front of the building. This would also necessitate alterations to reorientate the garage, including removal of an aged lean-to extension from its current rear elevation.
8. Due to the way in which the principal elevation of the building is viewed over the green and pleasant sloping paddock, without the obvious clutter of domestic vehicles and associated paraphernalia, it allows an appreciation of the understated authenticity of the building. The integrity of the unit as a former working farm also relies upon the maintenance of a degree of connectivity to the former buildings and yard, with the importance of the main farmhouse signified by the swathe of green sweeping around its front and eastern side.
9. The introduction of a new access and hardsurfaced area, formally laid out for parking, would harmfully urbanise and clutter the soft quality to the building's frontage. It would also create a visual separation between the farmhouse and former working yard and buildings that would undermine the coherence and significance of the current arrangement. Though there would still be a gap of approximately 24 metres between the building and the parking area, it would be clearly visible in views towards and from it, which would irreversibly alter and unacceptably harm its setting.
10. Whilst I note that there is a small gravelled parking area immediately adjacent to the front boundary wall, this is much smaller in scale and is more discreetly sited than the appeal proposal. Though there is little evidence about how the parking area came to be, its restoration would not be sufficient to offset the harm to the building that would be created by a far larger parking area and visual segregation of the farm unit.
11. I am mindful of the parking issues experienced by the appellant and the desire to have a clear right of way to enable any emergency responses as necessary. The desire to achieve access for equestrian transport and to provide a parking space and charge point for an electric vehicle also help explain the solution put forward. However, the resolution of these issues are of limited public benefit and it is not clear that the appeal proposal is the only means of doing so.
12. For the reasons above, the proposal would harm the setting and thus, the significance of the heritage asset, contrary to Policies S2 and EN5 of the Teignbridge Local Plan 2013 – 2033 (adopted 2014) (Local Plan). These Policies, amongst other things, seek to ensure new development respects and draws inspiration from the local historic environment, responding positively to the character and distinctiveness of the area. They also seek to secure new development with a high quality of design that does not allow highway requirements to dominate the site's appearance and function.

13. Under the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), I find that the magnitude of harm to the significance of the heritage asset would be less than substantial. Less than substantial harm does not equate to a less than substantial planning objection. I must give considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving the setting of any listed building. The Framework also sets out that such harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Character and appearance of the wider area

14. The area surrounding the appeal site is characterised by a mixed arable and pastoral farming landscape and a network of winding, narrow, high hedged lanes. There are scattered farmsteads and clustered houses which take traditional architectural forms and utilise a common range of materials, including, stone and slate. These characteristics chime with those of the wider 'Lemon Valley and Ridge Landscape Character Area'¹ in which the site is situated.
15. The proposal would remove a section of hedgerow from a long, winding stretch of country lane which is currently enclosed by dense hedges with interspersed trees. Whilst no trees would need to be specifically removed, the creation of a new opening in the hedgerow would harmfully alter the character of this section of lane, fragmenting its enclosed characteristic and opening up a view to a new parking area that would appear unduly urban within such a rural landscape.
16. Though I note that the opening in the hedge would have a wooden five-bar gate installed, which is a feature typically found within the area, this would not sufficiently mitigate the harm resulting from the additional removal of hedgerow and creation of an urbanising feature visible from the roadside. Nor would the introduction of new landscaping inset on the new visibility splays be sufficient to mitigate the interruption of a visually coherent landscape feature.
17. As such, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area, contrary to, in particular, Local Plan Policies S2, S22, WE8 and EN12, which collectively seek to secure high quality design and protect and enhance woodlands, trees and hedgerows. For similar reasons, the proposal would also conflict with Policy CO1 of the Ogwell Neighbourhood Plan 2018 – 2033 (made 2018), which seeks to ensure new development responds to and integrates with the local built surroundings, landscape context and setting.

Other Matters

18. I note that the extent of paddock that would be lost to the proposal is likely to be of limited ecological value.
19. The appellant has drawn attention to the County Council's advice where it suggests that more than three dwellings will not ordinarily be permitted where they are to be served by a private drive due to the likelihood of 'problems'. The current situation has occurred more incrementally than would be the case in most instances where the advice would be applicable, i.e. in the planning of a new development. Though the scheme would reduce some of the reliance on the shared yard and access, it would still not result in full compliance with the

¹ Teignbridge District Landscape Character Assessment 2009

advice and nor is it intended that the access through the courtyard be completely severed in any case.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

20. There would be very limited public benefits from the freeing up of some parking space, enabling a clearer right of way for emergency responses by the appellant in their important line of work and through the removal of an aged lean-to extension from the garage.
21. However, these benefits, considered in the round with the other highlighted matters, are not collectively sufficient to outweigh the identified harm. The proposal would also harm the character and appearance of the area.
22. For the above reasons, the appeal is dismissed.

Hollie Nicholls

INSPECTOR