



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 July 2020

by Gareth W Thomas BSc(Hons) MSc(Dist) PgDip MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 27 August 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/P0119/W/20/3249497

Fleur De Lys, 12 Shortwood Road, Pucklechurch BS16 9RA

- 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 UKS Group Ltd against the decision of South Gloucestershire Council.
 - The application Ref P/19/19005/F, dated 12 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 10 February 2020.
 - The development proposed is for the erection of 9no. three-bed dwelling houses including associated soft and hard landscaping. Demolition of single storey rear extension to Fleur De Lys.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The appellant provided late evidence in the form of a Transport Technical Note (my description) that sought to explain the reasoning why it was considered that 8 car parking spaces for the revised dining facilities at the Fleur De Lys PH would be adequate. The Council has been given the opportunity to comment. Given that the matter is germane to one of the principal main issues of this appeal and that the Council's reason for refusal merely referred to there being insufficient information in this regard to enable an assessment to be undertaken, I do not believe that the evidence should be turned away. In any event, given the factual basis on which this evidence was prepared, I also do not consider that any party would be prejudiced by this late evidence. Accordingly, I have considered the appeal on this basis.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in this appeal are:
 - the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the Pucklechurch Conservation Area and setting of St Thomas à Beckett Church, a Grade 1 Listed Building, and;
 - whether the proposed car parking arrangements for the re-vamped public house would result in on-street parking problems to the detriment of highway safety and convenience.

Reasons

Character and appearance/setting of the listed building

4. The appeal site lies within the commercial core area of the Pucklechurch Conservation Area (PCA) on land comprising the pub car park that slopes fairly sharply behind the public house that fronts Shortwood Road. The site is surrounded by housing of mixed design and character. Beyond to the north across Westerleigh Road lies the Grade 1 listed St Thomas à Beckett Church, which is visible across gardens to properties fronting the Class II highway. From the Council's Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and, from my observations at the site visit, Pucklechurch contains a large number of fine high-status dwellings interspersed with small, modest vernacular former workers cottages located close to the highway. The commercial core has a distinctly built-up and enclosed character contains key buildings that include the former coaching inn of the Fleur De Lys. There are oblique glimpses of the important listed church from parts of the built-up area of the commercial core area and the greenery of the churchyard.
5. The significance of the PCA lies in the clear hierarchy of dominant and subservient buildings and general form, fairly consistent use of materials and their positioning in the street scene with the church and the occasional views out to the wider Cotswold scarp reflecting its rich history and its former importance as a centre of trade and position on the former turnpike road to Bristol.
6. St Thomas à Beckett Church occupies a prominent position in the street scene and dates from the Norman period although the current building dates largely from the 13th century, with additions in the 14th century with remodelling occurring in the Victorian period. It is set back from the road and its significance is derived from its early English ecclesiastical styling with the three-stage tower dominating the skyline from many parts of the village. Its setting when viewed from the B4465 benefits from the greenery that exists and the sense of openness on the opposite side of the road where there are some garages and other domestic outbuildings beyond which comprises the host building's car park. The view from the south porch of the church across the cemetery and towards the Fleur De Lys, particularly during certain times of the year, is generally open at this point with the consistency of roof heights being a notable feature.
7. In principle, the Council believes that there is some scope for the redevelopment of the pub car park. The proposal would see the demolition of the restaurant and utility areas to the existing public house, which are modern extensions of little merit, the erection of a pair of semi detached 2-storey dwellings immediately to the rear of the Fleur De Lys and two terrace blocks comprising three and four 3-storey terraced dwellings respectively within the existing pub car park. In terms of character and appearance, the Council's concerns relate to the scale of development and the alleged resultant failure to provide adequate amenity for future occupiers of the dwellings and landscaping and also to the mass and design features to the houses.
8. Setting aside the character and appearance of dwellings on Queen's Road immediately to the north-west, which are very much of their time, the character of this part of the PCA along both Shortwood Road and Westerleigh Road within the central core is very much dominated by enclosed streets and

generally low terraced buildings that contain many features explored in the Council's SPD. Through the gap of the site entrance on Shortwood Road and from Westerleigh Road and churchyard, the character of generally low terraced buildings is supplemented by the greenery of boundaries to the car park. The elevated nature of the appeal site would make the scale of the elevations and their roofs appear excessive and even dominate the Fleur De Lys PH itself and would consequently be at odds with the prevailing form of development.

9. Turning to the layout, whilst I accept the appellant's arguments that the proposal is intended to reflect that of a mews form of development and that generally there would be a reasonable amount of private amenity space provision, the pair of semi-detached houses would be shoehorned into the available space immediately to the rear of the Fleur De Lys and coupled with the over dominance of these properties would result in a development that would appear decidedly out of kilter when viewed from both within the site and from views across from Westerleigh Road and the churchyard. This also contributes in my view to the lack of opportunities that would be possible for effective landscaping and softening of the mews development generally. There is substantial merit in the Council's reasoning that as a result, the appeal development would fail to respond sympathetically to the opportunities that should be taken on an infill development in a highly sensitive historic environment.
10. The Council has also noted the inability of the development design to provide sufficient landscaping as well as the failure to introduce architectural features and detailing that better reflects the character and appearance of the PCA. The layout and number of units would result in an excessive amount of hardstanding areas, which would give the proposal an altogether harsh urban feel. Moreover, the lack of chimneys to some of the dwellings, the excessive paraphernalia to the roofscapes and the lack of attention to the detailing of entrance porches as well as the uniform use of bland rendered walling would contribute to a sense that this would not be a well-conceived or thoughtful development opportunity overall.
11. Taking all this into account, the appeal development would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the PCA and would materially harm the setting of the Grade 1 Listed Church. It would therefore be contrary to Policies CS1, CS9 and CS34 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan Core Strategy (CS) and with policy PSP1 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan Sites and Places Plan (SPP), the Council's SPD and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework. In combination, these policies set out to ensure that new developments, particularly within sensitive historic environments, achieve the highest design standards in terms of siting, form, scale, height, massing and detailing so that they respond appropriately to the distinctive character of the area and ensure that heritage assets are conserved and enhanced.

Whilst the harm to the heritage assets would be less than substantial, the public benefits arising from the proposal, which amount to additional housing within a sustainable location and a revamped commercial operation providing local employment and social opportunities, would not outweigh that harm. For those reasons, the proposal would also conflict with Policy PSP17 of the SPP. This policy is in general accordance with the heritage conservation aims of the Framework. For the reason given above, I do not consider there to be material

conflict with SPP Policy PSP43, which sets out to achieve reasonable private and communal external amenity space.

Loss of dedicated pub car parking facilities

12. The Council questions the ability of the public highway network to absorb potential overspill demand for parking that might arise with a reduction in spaces associated with the Fleur De Lys PH and its proposed revised arrangements for eating. A Transport Technical Note has been provided by the appellant. However, no detailed parking survey analysis has been undertaken as requested by the Council's Highways Officer although as the public house is temporarily closed due to Covid 19, this is now impracticable. Thus, no information is available that would clarify existing on-street parking supply or occupancy levels of any existing supply that might exist. That said neither has the Council provided any evidence of its own. The Council has abandoned its 2007 guidelines of 1 parking space per 5sqm for A3 uses.
13. On my site visit, I observed that the B4665 is a busily trafficked through route with twisting alignments and a road junction in the commercial core area of the village centre. There are few on street parking facilities and where this does occur, cars either mount the pavement to park or take a chance by parking in an unsatisfactory manner in the vicinity of the three-armed priority junction between Shortwood Road, Westerleigh Road and Abson Road.
14. The appellant's Transport Technical Note advises that the revamped Fleur De Lys will reopen as a micropub, which will serve generally local customers and offer snacks. A TRICs assessment has been carried out using the "06-Hotel/I – Public House (Without Restaurant) dataset for vehicular surveys. From this, the appellant calculates that there will be a maximum of four cars parked in the car park at any given time. However, the appellant also concedes that in the event of overspill parking becoming a problem, a solution involving the provision of double yellow lines requiring an appropriate traffic regulation order would also assist in preventing on street parking in the vicinity of the pub. There is no indication at this stage whether such an order would be supported or eventually sanctioned.
15. It seems to me that any excess demand from customers would spill onto the surrounding roads where there is little capacity to accommodate it. This would be likely to increase the potential for conflict and cause inconvenience for other road users. Furthermore, each of the eight spaces would be conveniently located close to and therefore accessible from Shortwood Road. If they remain unallocated, it would be difficult to restrict their use to pub goers where there already appears to be a significant demand for on-street parking.
16. I am not satisfied that the provision of eight parking spaces would be sufficient for the revamped public house, notwithstanding the intention to operate as a micropub, particularly where this facility would front a busy road with seemingly high volume of through traffic. This is a further indication of the unsatisfactory layout and cramped nature of the development overall.
17. Accordingly, in the absence of robust site specific evidence and following my own observations, I find that the proposal would be harmful in terms of on-street parking pressure which, in turn, would be significantly detrimental to highway safety and the convenience of road users contrary to Policies CS8 of the CS and PSP11 of the SSP that together seek to ensure that proposed

development does not give rise to traffic generation likely to have an unacceptable effect on highway and road safety.

Other Matters

18. The appellant draws attention to the development of the former service station on Westerleigh Road. Whilst there are comparisons to be made, this site is located in an altogether tighter urban setting, on a flatter site than the appeal land and incorporates several design features that are in keeping with the prevailing character.

Conclusion

19. I have found that the proposed development would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area and would cause harm to the setting of St Thomas à Beckett Church, a Grade 1 listed building. Whilst the harm to the setting of the listed building and Conservation Area as a whole would be less than substantial, I nevertheless attach considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving the character of appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of the listed building. Notwithstanding that the development would result in additional housing within a sustainable part of the village together with economic and social opportunities, these would not overcome the harm that I have identified. Moreover, on the basis of the evidence before me, the development would be likely to lead to unacceptable harm to the safety and convenience of users of the highway arising from overspill parking of vehicles.
20. For the reasons set out above, I therefore conclude that the above appeal be dismissed.

Gareth W Thomas

INSPECTOR