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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 September 2020

**by I A Dyer BSc (Eng) MIHT**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 16 September 2020**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/F3545/W/20/3252705**

**Barn, Pigeon Lane, Fornham All Saints IP28 6JP**

- 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 & Mrs M Chalk against the decision of West Suffolk Council.
  - The application Ref DC/19/1737/FUL, dated 21 August 2019, was refused by notice dated 27 November 2019.
  - The development proposed is demolition of the existing barn and construction of a proposed dwelling with outbuilding (to include parking).
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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 site and the surrounding area.

### Reasons

3. The appeal site fronts onto Pigeon Lane which, at this point is an unmade track bounded by mature hedges and scrub. Behind the site lies a golf course whilst opposite, between Pigeon Lane and Mildenhall Road lies an open field. This field lies within the Fornham All Saints Conservation Area (the CA).
4. The barn is the last substantial building on the end of predominantly residential development extending along one side of Pigeon Lane. The dwellings along Pigeon Lane are a mixture of detached and semi-detached single and two-storey structures of varying design and scale. The appeal site is a point of transition between the countryside and the more discernible built up area of the settlement. Beyond the appeal site Pigeon Lane is closed to motor traffic by bollards, becoming a bridleway.
5. The existing building is a modest timber-clad barn with a lower, set-in element attached. The building has a rustic character and its design and form relates well to the semi-rural setting within which it sits. These are positive characteristics that contribute to the character and appearance of the site and its area.
6. Whilst the site lies outside the settlement boundary of Fornham All Saints and is, therefore, within the countryside for planning terms, there is no dispute between the parties that it is a suitable location for a dwelling, having

previously been granted planning permission to convert the barn into a dwelling.

7. The proposed replacement building would be significantly higher than the existing barn structure with a single roofline and lack any articulation on the main façade. This would result in a large building of monolithic appearance. This monolithic appearance would be emphasised by the proportions and positioning of windows within the façade. The design of the building would introduce a strong element of urban architecture to the site. The scale and form of the building, whilst screened to a degree by intervening planting, would be visually prominent in the landscape when viewed from Pigeon Lane, the Mildenhall Road and the golf course.
8. This increase in scale and urban form would be at odds with the semi-rurality in the setting that I have identified above and the incongruence would, in this instance, constitute harm.
9. The site lies just outside the CA, which, in this location, provides a rural setting for the village of Fornham All Saints and its historic core. The existing barn, with its agricultural form appears in some views across the CA from Mildenhall Road. Whilst the existing building contributes to the rurality of the setting of the CA, it would, however, be encompassed within views including the more urban development adjacent to it on Pigeon Lane and so, in context, the proposal would not result in harm to the setting of the CA.
10. Whilst the conversion of the barn for residential purposes has been approved by the Council, the conversion would retain the scale and form of the existing barn and would not result in the harm that I have identified above.
11. I therefore find that the proposal would result in unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area. It would, therefore, be contrary to Policies DM2, DM5, DM22 and DM33 of the Forest Heath and West Suffolk Joint Development Management Policies Document (2015) and Policy CS3 of the St Edmundsbury Core Strategy (2010) in as much as together these require, amongst other things, that development should maintain or create a sense of place and/or local character, create buildings that have a strong sense of place and distinctiveness that is appropriate for the location and that, in the countryside, replacement buildings must respect the scale and floor area of the existing dwelling and result in a more acceptable development than might be achieved through conversion.
12. Similarly the proposal would be contrary to those parts of the Framework that seek to achieve well designed places that are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and are sympathetic to local character, including the surrounding landscape setting.

## **Conclusion**

13. For the reasons given above the appeal is dismissed.

*I Dyer*

INSPECTOR