
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 September 2020

by I Radcliffe BSc(Hons) MRTPI MCIEH DMS

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23rd September 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/P0240/W/20/3254735

Claridges Farm, High Street, Eggington, Bedfordshire LU7 9PQ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr M Jones against Central Bedfordshire Council.
 - The application Ref CB/19/03595/FULL, is dated 25 October 2019.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a single dwelling and the relocation of existing access and gates.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. As the proposed development constitutes limited infilling in a village it would not be inappropriate development within the Green Belt. The main issues therefore in this appeal are the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of Eggington Conservation Area and the setting of Claridges, a Grade II listed building.

Reasons

3. The National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') is an important material consideration. Section 16 of the Framework identifies that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource. Paragraph 193 advises that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, such as a Conservation Area and a listed building, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.

Conservation Area

4. The appeal site is located within Eggington Conservation Area. In the exercising of planning functions the statutory test in relation to Conservation Areas is that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. Policy BE8 of the South Bedfordshire Local Plan Review 2004 ('Local Plan') requires the protection of the character and appearance of a locality through high quality design that respects local design features. Whilst the Local Plan predates the Framework, as policy BE8 is consistent with its emphasis on good design it is not out of date and I attach significant weight to it.

5. In terms of assessing the significance of the Conservation Area and the contribution that the appeal site makes to it, I have taken into account the Eggington Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA), the comments of the parties and my observations during the site visit.
6. The Conservation Area covers the central and eastern part of this small rural village whose linear layout contains simply designed older and historic buildings along with more recent infill housing together with some gaps. A limited palette of materials characterises the Conservation Area. Amongst the older buildings timber frames are commonplace and the use of hand-made bricks to infill the frames or to construct buildings is widespread. Roof coverings include thatch, clay tiles and slate. The significance of the Conservation Area and its listed buildings, which date from the medieval period through to the 19th century, is therefore architectural and historical.
7. The house at Claridges Farm, together with associated buildings and the car sales business are well set back from the road. An extant permission exists for two large detached houses set well back from the road close to the existing house at the Farm.
8. The appeal site occupies most of the break in development along the road frontage that provides a wide lawn lined access to Claridges Farm. As the access to Claridges Farm through the plot would be retained the proposed dwelling has been designed to give the appearance of an entrance lodge. By so doing this would raise the perceived status of Claridges Farm to that of a high status residence which would be at odds with the character of this small rural village Conservation Area. Moreover, the inclusion of detailed stone lintels, quoins and an entrance portico, which would be visible through the gated access, would give the building a distinctly Georgian appearance which is uncharacteristic of the Conservation Area. The net effect of the proposed development would therefore be to adversely affect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area as a whole and undermine its significance. As such it would not constitute good design and would be contrary to policy BE8 of the Local Plan.
9. A tall leylandii hedge along the western boundary of the site would be removed as part of the development. However, in public views from the road the hedge is of little amenity value and so its loss would not harm this designated heritage asset.

Listed building

10. In the exercise of planning functions, the statutory test in relation to a listed building is that special regard shall be had to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
11. Claridges is a particularly large detached Grade II listed building that dates from the seventeenth century. Set well back from the road and constructed with a timber frame, bricks and with a clay tiled roof its special interest and significance is historical and architectural. Its setting includes its large plot and Claridges Farm on its western side with more recent infill housing along the road on its eastern side. In views through the access and above the height of tall boundary walls, the openness of its plot and the appeal site allows the building to be more visible and thus appreciated in public views on the

approach along High Street from the west in a manner that is no longer possible from the east. On the basis of the historical plan in the CAA this openness appears to be a longstanding feature of the setting of Claridges. As a result, it contributes to its significance.

12. The proposed house would reduce the open land that separates the curtilage of Claridges from the dwellings on the western side of the appeal site by approximately half. As a consequence, the proposed house would have an adverse effect on the setting of the listed building and an appreciation of its significance.

Planning balance

13. The harm caused by the proposed development to the significance of the Conservation Area as a whole and setting of Claridges, a Grade II listed building, would be less than substantial. In such circumstances, paragraph 196 of the Framework advises that the harm that would be caused should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
14. In accordance with the statutory duties described, I attach considerable importance and weight to the harm that would be caused to the Conservation Area and the setting of Claridges. On the other side of the balance, the proposal would make efficient use of the site and provide a small house which would increase by a nominal amount the housing stock in Central Bedfordshire. I attach some weight to these benefits of the scheme.
15. Taking all these matters into account, my overall conclusion is that the public benefits of the proposal fall a long way short of outweighing the harm that would be caused to Eggington Conservation Area and the setting of the Grade II listed building Claridges. The proposal would therefore be contrary to a policy of the Framework that provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed, as well as failing the statutory tests. As such, in addition to being contrary to policy BE8 of the Local Plan, it would be contrary to section 16 of the Framework and the policies of the Framework as a whole and would not constitute a sustainable development.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal should therefore be dismissed.

Ian Radcliffe

Inspector