



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 October 2020

by B Davies MSc FGS CGeol

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 November 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/P1615/W/20/3254639

Five Acres, School Crescent, Corse, Gloucester, GL19 3RE

- 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 Alfred Hall against the decision of Forest of Dean District Council.
 - The application Ref P1960/19/FUL, dated 12 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 30 December 2019.
 - The development proposed is construction of new barn.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the Snigs End (Staunton and Corse) Conservation Area and, linked to that, whether the proposal would preserve the setting of Grade II listed 'Freedom Cottage'.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a long, narrow storage barn behind the house and stable block at Five Acres. The field in which the barn is situated has partly been covered with rubble hardcore and contains several small storage compounds, including a shipping container, and heavy machinery. The property is located at the end of the School Crescent cul-de-sac, which comprises a hedged lane and regularly spaced cottages in spacious plots. Beyond this, and directly behind the barn, the landscape opens up across large fields. The proposal is to replace and extend the northern elevation of the barn by over 9 metres in depth and nearly 2 metres in height.
4. The site is in the Snigs End (Staunton and Corse) Conservation Area (CA). This is one of only 5 Chartist settlements completed in the 1840s, with the initial aim of gaining political reform. Estates were purposely laid out to meet the needs of a community and plots were intended to be large enough to allow for self-sufficiency. At Snigs End CA much of the original layout of the plots in rows, crescents and blocks survives. The adopted Character Appraisal (2000) also emphasises the importance of characteristic boundary hedgerows along the lanes, and the open and spacious character of the area.

5. The neighbouring Freedom Cottage is listed because it is an excellent example of one of the characteristic Chartist cottages and forms an original group with others. The cottage is seen in the context of hedged boundaries and more distant views of the wider Chartist landscape. This setting makes a positive contribution to the significance of the listed building.
6. There is a statutory duty in Section 66(1) and Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ('the Act') to pay special attention to preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting.
7. When viewed from the public right of way running along the field adjacent to the site, the existing structure is just visible above the boundary hedge. The proposed structure would be larger, higher and significantly more noticeable when viewed from the public right of way and from School Crescent. It would be visible as part of a cluster of buildings in combination with the unusually large house at Five Acres and substantial stable block to the rear. Cumulatively, the development would be increasingly and visibly out of character with the geometric, low-density development that the CA is noted for.
8. Given that the listed building can be seen from the appeal site, it is within the setting. At the site visit, the existing barn was partly blocked from view by Freedom Cottage when standing on the road in front. The proposed building would be rise above and be more easily seen to the side of Freedom Cottage, albeit at a distance. This would lead to the listed building being increasingly enclosed by large outbuildings, which is not in keeping with the traditional and characteristic, low-level, low-density setting. On this basis, I consider that the proposal would adversely affect the setting of the listed building, and thereby its significance, and the ability to appreciate it.
9. I acknowledge that there would be a benefit to the appearance of the CA from removing visual clutter from around the site, including shipping containers and heavy machinery, and the Council has suggested a condition that might secure this outcome. However, as written, the condition would not prevent re-introduction of such paraphernalia in the future and, regardless, I do not consider that a re-written condition would be practical for preventing accumulation of small-scale storage in the long term. I therefore consider the benefits gained from decluttering of the site to be small and short term, and would not mitigate the harm I have identified.
10. In terms of the approach of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) I consider the overall harm to the significance of the heritage assets to be 'less than substantial' and I have therefore applied the test in paragraph 196 of the Framework which requires that the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Construction of the extension would generate a small short-term contribution to the economy, and there would be benefits from replacing a dated structure and temporarily decluttering the site. However, these minor public benefits carry limited weight and as such would not outweigh the harm to the CA and setting of the listed building which having regard to the duty under Section 66(1) and Section 72(1) of the Act, carries considerable weight.

11. Policy AP 109 of the Forest of Dean District Council Allocations Plan 2006 to 2026 (adopted 2018) requires that proposals are not detrimental to the setting of the Staunton and Corse Conservation Area and its component parts. Policy CSP.1 of the Forest of Dean District Council Core Strategy (adopted 2012) and Policies AP 4 and AP 5 of the AP together require that development preserves and, where appropriate enhances, local character and those aspects of the historic environment together with their settings which are recognised as being of special historic quality. For the reasons above, the proposal does not meet the requirements of these policies.

Conclusion

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

B Davies

INSPECTOR