
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 November 2020

by M Philpott BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30th November 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/W3520/W/20/3252814

**Land adjacent to Model Farm House, Park Road, Combs, Stowmarket
IP14 2JN**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Stuart Scarff against the decision of Mid Suffolk District Council.
 - The application Ref DC/19/05573, dated 28 November 2019, was refused by notice dated 10 February 2020.
 - The development proposed is construction of 2 no. detached dwellings using existing vehicular access.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. Outline planning permission is sought. The appellant's Statement of Case suggests that only matters of access are to be considered at this point and that matters of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale are reserved for future consideration. However, the planning application form shows that matters of access and layout have been sought for approval and the Council determined the application on that basis. I have therefore determined the proposal on the same basis as the Council. Accordingly, I have taken the housing layout plan into account insofar as it relates to access and layout matters.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the significance of heritage assets.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises a parcel of open space adjacent to a vehicular access that serves agricultural land and residential properties off Park Road. A few trees and other vegetation are located within the site and a hedge runs across its site alongside the road.
5. The Planning Statement indicates that the site was used historically for agricultural purposes as part of the nearby Model Farm, which is a Grade II listed building. It has a formal design and is set back behind open space from the road, which provides it with status in the streetscene. Although it has been converted into residential properties, it retains agricultural characteristics

- including features detailed in its listing description and derives significance from its historic and architectural interest.
6. Model Farm House located beside the site and converted former barns to the rear were also associated historically with Model Farm, which is evident from their set back position, close physical relationship and commonality in their designs. These buildings have historic and architectural interest together with Model Farm as an intentionally designed group of agricultural buildings and are non-designated heritage assets.
 7. Model Farm Cottage is also a Grade II listed building, which is located on the other side of the access from Park Road. It appears to pre-date Model Farm and it is not clear whether they were associated historically. Based on the listing description, it primarily derives its significance from its features of architectural interest, including its thatched roof, eyebrow dormer and fenestration.
 8. The site is an undeveloped open green space that has a rural feel and provides relief and a sense of spaciousness and prominence to the heritage assets. It contributes positively to the settings of Model Farm Cottage, the non-designated heritage assets and, to a limited extent, Model Farm as part of the group of former agricultural buildings. The site facilitates the appreciation of the significance of the heritage assets by enabling views from Park Road.
 9. The proposed dwellings could be designed to have an appearance that would be compatible with the heritage assets and the properties in the wider area. However, the dwellings would be set closer to the road than the heritage assets and appear prominent and cramped, with limited relief around them. The development would erode the site's spacious and rural character and its contribution to the settings of the heritage assets. The dwellings would reduce the prominence of the heritage assets in the streetscene and restrict, compete in and detract from views from the road. The ability for Model Farm Cottage's architectural features and the heritage interest of the group of former agricultural buildings to be appreciated would be harmed.
 10. Old Farm House is another nearby Grade II listed building, which is located opposite the site on Park Road. It also pre-dates Model Farm and appears to derive its significance from its architectural interest. It is set back from the road and partially screened by vegetation along its front boundary. Intervisibility of the proposed dwellings and Old Farm House would be limited and the road would provide a sense of separation between them. The setting and significance of this listed building would thus be preserved.
 11. I have been referred to an appeal decision that allowed an outline proposal for the erection of 2 dwellings near to a listed building¹. It sets out that concerns regarding the size of those dwellings could be addressed when reserved matters are considered. Full details have not been provided but, in any event, matters of layout were not sought for approval in that case. In this case layout matters are sought for approval and I have identified that there would be harm to heritage assets.
 12. The harm to the significance of Model Farm Cottage and Model Farm would be less than substantial. In such circumstances, paragraph 196 of the National

¹ Appeal reference: APP/W3520/W/19/3230783

Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) directs that the harm to the designated heritage assets should be weighed against the public benefits of the development. In addition, paragraph 197 sets out that a balanced judgement is required having regard to the scale of the harm and the significance of the non-designated heritage assets.

13. The proposal would increase the supply of housing and the appellant contends that there has been an undersupply of family sized homes in the district. In addition, the future occupiers of the dwellings would likely spend on local services and facilities and engage in the community. There would also be economic benefits arising from the construction process. Furthermore, whilst interested parties suggest otherwise, the Council has not contested the appellant's view that Combs is served by bus routes and the site is within walking and cycling distance of services and facilities in Stowmarket. In addition, the Council approved a scheme² nearby without raising accessibility concerns. However, overall, the public benefits identified are limited as a result of the small scale of the proposal.
14. Taking into account the considerable importance and weight that I must give to harm to designated heritage assets, I do not find that the public benefits of the proposal outweigh the harm that would be caused to the significance of the listed buildings. In addition, the benefits do not outweigh the harm to the non-designated heritage assets. Paragraphs 196 and 197 of the Framework do not indicate in favour of the development.
15. The proposal would result in harm to the significance of heritage assets. The settings of Model Farm Cottage and Model Farm would fail to be preserved. The proposal is contrary to Policy HB1 of the Mid Suffolk Local Plan, which places a high priority on protecting the character and appearance of all buildings of architectural or historic interest and the settings of listed buildings in particular.

Conclusion

16. For the above reasons, the appeal is dismissed.

Mark Philpott

INSPECTOR

² Council application reference: DC/19/05572