



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 2 March 2021

by A Tucker BA (Hons) IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 March 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/R0335/W/20/3257467

Land adjacent to Knibbs Knook, Warfield Street, Warfield, Bracknell, Berkshire RG42 6AU

- 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 S Spong against the decision of Bracknell Forest Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 19/01109/FUL, dated 20 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 12 February 2020.
 - The development proposed is erection of 2 no. dwellings (2 no. detached 4 x bed units) including associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. I have taken the details of the site location from the Council's decision notice as it is more accurate.

Main Issue

3. The effect of the proposal on the setting of the grade II listed building, known as Knibbs Knook and Wee Knibbs.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is adjacent to a grade II listed building which comprises two cottages. Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (LBCA) requires the decision maker, in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
5. The listed building is a modest structure that stands back from the road within a spacious plot. It dates from the late 16th century. It has a simple linear form parallel to the road, with a baffle entry plan, huge chimney stack, and exposed timber frame. It has a modest scale and appearance, derived from its low eaves level and shallow depth, as well as the undulating roof forms and irregularities of its timber frame. In combination these characteristics are significant contributors to its special interest.
6. Development is held away from the listed building by large gardens to either side. When viewed from the road these gardens give the listed building a more spacious and verdant setting than neighbouring dwellings, further enhanced by

- the lack of any development presence on land to the rear, which includes the appeal site. The degree of separation from other buildings and the spatial connection retained between the listed building and the surrounding countryside, which historic maps demonstrate is long established, are characteristics of the building's setting that contribute to its special interest.
7. Unlike the previous scheme, which was dismissed at appeal¹ the proposal includes the retention of a substantial tree screen behind Knibbs Knook. This tree screen contributes to the verdant setting of the listed building, and its retention would limit views of the proposed dwellings from Warfield Street, when viewed from the areas to the front of the listed building. It would also limit views between the listed building and the appeal site. However, the proposed re-positioned access would open up views into the site from the road, to the extent that the dwelling proposed for plot 2 would become prominent to view. As one moves east along Warfield Street the second dwelling on plot 1 would also become visible.
 8. This would have the effect of extending built form into the area behind the listed building, in line with the adjoining dwellings at the rear of Old Bakery Mews. It would give the listed building a more developed backdrop, in the form of a row of dwellings constituting backland development that would extend behind its garden. The number of dwellings has been reduced and other modest changes made when compared with the previous scheme. However, I find that the harmful urbanising effect would be very similar for both schemes, particularly as the dwellings would have a deep footprint and standard scale that would be at odds with the broad form and modest scale of the listed building relative to the road. As such, despite the retained planting the proposal would see development extend to the rear of the listed buildings, which would significantly erode their spacious, verdant and semi-rural setting.
 9. The appellant suggests that the previous Inspector accepted the continuation of development in line with Old Bakery Mews. However, the reference to this appears to be merely descriptive of the proposal, rather than an assessment of the merits of the scheme.
 10. The development of the adjacent site is further advanced than it was at the time of the previous appeal. Evidence suggests that the Council has granted an outline application². The layout is however indicative, and I have no information to suggest what scale the buildings may have, whether there would be any intervening landscaping or when construction work may commence. Notwithstanding this, even if the development of the adjacent area did come forward and it resulted in a strong presence of development in the area to the southwest of the listed building visible from Warfield Street, in combination with the appeal proposal this would have the effect of surrounding the listed building with development, causing significant harm to its spacious and verdant setting. I am not therefore satisfied that the grant of outline permission for the adjacent site makes the appeal proposal acceptable.
 11. In terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) the harm would be less than substantial. Paragraph 196 of the Framework establishes that any harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

¹ APP/R0335/W/19/3231588

² 20/00214/OUT

12. The proposal would deliver two new dwellings, with associated social and economic benefits in a location with good access to local services and facilities. This is a clear public benefit that attracts substantial weight. Furthermore, the proposal would secure a pedestrian link to the adjacent development site. However, I give this less weight as it is not clear how necessary this is, or whether it could be delivered elsewhere.
13. I have found that the proposal would cause significant harm to characteristics of the listed building's setting that contribute to its significance. Paragraph 193 of the Framework establishes that great weight should be given to the conservation of a heritage asset. In this context I find that the public benefits of the proposal would not be sufficient to outweigh the degree of harm identified.
14. In summary, the proposal would fail to meet the requirements of the LBCA as it would fail to preserve the setting of the building. It would be contrary to Saved Policy EN20 of the Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan 2002 and Policies CS1 and CS7 of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2008, which together seek to ensure that development proposals are well designed to be in sympathy with the appearance and character of the local environment and protect historic features.

Other Matters

15. The appeal site is within the vicinity of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA). The addition of residential units within this area would be likely to have a significant effect on the internationally important interests and features of the SPA. However, as I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons, the likely significant effect will not occur in any event, and this matter does not therefore need to be considered further.

Conclusion

16. There are no material considerations that indicate the application should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan. For the reasons above, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

A Tucker

INSPECTOR