



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 6 April 2021

by A Tucker BA (Hons) IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 May 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/V3120/W/20/3261167

Meadowgold Cottage, 1 Upper Common Lane, Uffington, Oxfordshire, SN7 7RU

- 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 Mrs Thomas against the decision of Vale of White Horse District Council.
 - The application Ref P20/V0394/FUL, dated 10 February 2020, was refused by notice dated 11 May 2020.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing outbuildings and the erection of a two storey dwelling, formation of parking area and enlargement of access on garden land at Meadowgold.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - a) the effect of the proposal on the setting of the grade II listed building, known as Meadowgold Cottage, and
 - b) whether the site would be suitably located for the development proposed having regard to local and national planning policies.

Reasons

Listed building

3. 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.
4. Meadowgold Cottage, referred to as No. 1 Upper Common on the list entry, is a grade II listed building. It is included in a single list entry with the attached cottage to the west, known as Chalkstone Cottage. The proposal is for a new dwelling within the existing garden of Meadowgold Cottage.
5. The list description suggests that Chalkstone Cottage dates from the late 17th century, and that Meadowgold Cottage is later in date. The 1898-1900 OS plan shows that the pair were once four small cottages. They were likely used to house agricultural labourers. The cottages have a simple linear form, parallel

with the lane. Their walls are built of squared and coursed chalkstone with occasional use of Sarsen stone, under a thick thatched roof that extends down to the head of the ground floor window openings, interspersed with chimneys along the ridge. First floor openings are set in the gable ends or within occasional eyebrow dormers. This, in combination with the use of simple locally sourced materials and the irregular placement of openings, gives the cottages a modest scale and vernacular appearance, enhanced by the undulating roof forms and the irregularities of the exposed timber frame. The scale of the cottages, the level of surviving historic fabric and their past use are all significant contributors to the special interest of the listed building.

6. In terms of setting, the cottages enjoy an open rural aspect to the south and east. This is enhanced by the size of the garden of Meadowgold Cottage, and the low level boundaries along the rear of both plots. This long established association with the surrounding rural landscape is readily appreciated from the adjacent footpaths. It is a characteristic of the building's setting that contributes to its special interest as a group of former cottages for agricultural labourers. The relationship the cottages have with the lane, set back behind large front gardens, and the contribution they make to the character and appearance of the streetscene are also setting characteristics that contribute to the building's special interest.
7. The proposal would see the garden of Meadowgold Cottage divided into two. The western half would be retained for the listed building and the eastern half would form the site and garden area for the proposed dwelling. The proposed dwelling would sit at the front of the appeal site, close to Upper Common Lane. It would be visually contained alongside existing vegetation to the eastern boundary of the site. Taking into account the muted material palette proposed and based on what I saw at the site visit, I am satisfied that it would only be possible to glimpse the proposed dwelling from the footpath to the east of the site. From this perspective Meadowgold Cottage can be viewed more easily, where its gable end and relationship with the open countryside to the south can be seen across the open boundaries of the southern part of the site. The proposed dwelling would not have an adverse impact on this view.
8. I consider views from the footpath to the south of the listed building to be less significant as a result of the impact of the various existing extensions that have been added to the south of the main east-west range, and the affect that these have had on views of the historic parts of the building. Notwithstanding this, from this perspective the proposed dwelling would be set further back into the site. The simple elevation treatment and linear form of the building would not be prominent in this view. Neither would it dominate or overwhelm the scale of the existing cottages when viewed from the footpath to the south.
9. However, from the more immediate environs of Upper Common Lane the proposed dwelling would sit in a prominent position relative to the listed cottages. Although of a similar size, there would be significant differences in materiality between the two buildings. The proposed dwelling would have a crisp and symmetrical full gable facing west. In contrast, the east facing gable of Meadowgold Cottage, which is easily viewed from the lane and the site entrance, has a considerably more modest scale derived from its half-hipped roof in combination with the soft undulating appearance of its covering of thatch. As a result, although the proposed building would have a slightly lower ridge height than the existing cottage, it would have a more prominent form,

- exacerbated by its assertive position forward of the existing cottage. This would result in a building that overwhelms the simple form and scale of the existing building, including its principal façade relative to the lane. It would thus cause significant harm to an aspect of the building's setting that contributes to its special interest.
10. I appreciate that there are other structures in similar forward positions along the lane, however most are of a much smaller scale than the appeal proposal. In terms of the existing structures at the appeal site, the proposed building would have a much greater impact than the very modest scale and ancillary appearance of these existing outbuildings, that occupy a smaller footprint and are tucked right into the corner of the site.
 11. The appellant suggests that the site area may have been divided up into separate parcels of land in the past. I have reviewed the evidence in respect of this. Based on my findings above, the position of the proposed building coupled with its design would cause harm to the setting of the listed building, regardless of whether the application site is or is not a parcel of land that is long associated with the listed building.
 12. The proposed dwelling would be close to the existing dwellings at Craven Common. I agree that these provide a developed backdrop to the appeal site, when viewed from the southern part of the site. However, these dwellings are to the north of the lane and therefore do not feature in views from the lane to the south over the appeal site, where the existing listed cottages and proposed dwelling would be seen close to each other.
 13. 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. The proposal would deliver a new dwelling in a location with access to a small range of facilities and services. This is a public benefit that carries weight. There would also be modest economic benefits arising from the construction process and the contribution that future occupiers would make to the local economy.
 14. However, as set out above, the proposal would cause harm to the building's special interest in the form of a substantial and long term alteration to a significant aspect of its setting. 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.
 15. In summary, the proposal would fail to meet the requirements of the LBCA as it would cause harm to the setting of the listed building. It would thus be contrary to Policies CP37 and CP39 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (LP part 1), Policies DP36 and DP38 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2 (LP Part 2) and Policy H4 of the Uffington and Baulking Neighbourhood Plan 2011-2031 (NP), which together seek to ensure that development proposals are designed to respond positively to the site and surroundings, conserve and enhance historic character and designated assets.

Location

16. Policy CP3 of the LP Part 1 classifies Uffington as a Larger Village within its settlement hierarchy. Policy CP4 of the LP Part 1 establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development within the existing built up area of Larger Villages, in accordance with Policy CP1 of the LP Part 1. Policy H2 of the NP supports housing within the built up area of the village. At paragraph 4.8.2 the NP establishes that the built up area of the village does not include gardens, paddocks and other undeveloped land in the curtilage of buildings on the edge of the settlement where they provide a transition between the surrounding countryside and the built areas of the settlement.
17. I accept that the site is at the edge of the settlement. However, the site would only be unacceptable in the context of the wording of the NP if it currently provides a transition between the surrounding countryside and the built up areas of the settlement. The submitted block plan and aerial view show that the proposed dwelling would sit between the existing cottages and the dwellings to the northeast at Craven Common. Indeed, the eastern edge of the proposed curtilage would largely align with the eastern edge of properties at Craven Common on the other side of the narrow lane. At my visit to the site I could see that the nearby dwellings at the southeastern end of Craven Common were very prominent from the end of Upper Common Lane.
18. I am not satisfied that this is an area where the existing development thins out towards the settlement edge. In this respect the density and spacing of dwellings along Upper Common Lane is reasonably consistent, and similar to the density and spacing of dwellings in other parts of the village. Similarly, development across the area of Craven Common is also of a consistent density. The dwelling would sit between existing built form to the west and northeast and would therefore be within the built up area of the village. It would not extend beyond or sit behind existing built form and would therefore not occupy an area that provides a transition between the built up areas of the settlement and the surrounding countryside. The existing undeveloped parts of the garden of Meadowgold Cottage to the south and southeast of the cottage, which are open to the fields beyond, would not be affected by the proposal.
19. With reference to the other objectives of Policy H2 of the NP, the proposal would not constitute ribbon development and would allow easy access to the majority of village facilities.
20. In summary, I am satisfied that the site would be suitably located for the development as the proposed dwelling would be within the built up area of the village, in accordance with Policies CP1, CP3 and CP4 of the LP Part 1 and Policy H2 of the NP, which together establish the presumption in favour of sustainable development within the existing built up area of larger villages within the plan area.

Conclusion

21. Although I have found the location of the proposed dwelling to be acceptable in terms of the second main issue, this is a neutral matter that does not outweigh the harm I have found in relation to the first main issue. There are no material considerations that indicate that the appeal 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