
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 May 2021

by S. Rennie BSc (Hons), BA (Hons), MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 June 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/P0119/D/21/3269115

62 High Street, Wickwar, Gloucestershire GL12 8NP

- 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 D Martin & Ms E Smart against the decision of South Gloucestershire Council.
 - The application Ref P20/19204/F, dated 5 October 2020, was refused by notice dated 18 December 2020.
 - The development proposed is the construction of parking area for three cars in rear garden area.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issue is the effect of the development on the significance of the Wickwar Conservation Area (CA), the locally listed building (62 High Street), and the general character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The site is within the Wickwar CA. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas in the exercise of planning functions. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) also advises that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. In this case I would consider that the special character of the CA derives from the historic origins of Wickwar as a planned medieval settlement, including the characteristic rows of houses with long burgage plots.
4. Paragraph 193 of the Framework states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.
5. No 62 High Street is an old end of terrace property, which is typical of the narrow frontage burgage plot dwellings in this historic village. It is a locally listed building and therefore a non-designated heritage asset. Paragraph 197 of the Framework states that a proposal which would have an effect on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset would require a balanced

judgement having regard to the scale of any harm or loss, and the significance of the heritage asset.

6. The proposal would result in the loss of a significant length of stone wall to form the access to the proposed parking spaces. Some of this stone would be used to form the splay walls, with a high gate incorporated.
7. The stone wall is in a prominent location, being set along one side of Buthey Lane adjacent to the road. As such, the wall contributes towards this sense of enclosure of this lane. The high stone boundary wall itself is characteristic of this part of the CA, with similar such walls evident elsewhere in the historic core of this village. On this matter, I note that the Wickwar CA SPD advises that stone walls should be retained as an important feature, and I would agree that in this case the stone wall in such a prominent location is a positive feature within the CA. However, the proposal would result in the loss of a significant section of this wall from Buthay Lane, which would also be visible, if not prominent, from the High Street.
8. Furthermore, the Wickwar CA SPD states that an important feature of the CA is the historic layout and plan form of the settlement. The existing wall defines the historic side boundary of the typical long and narrow plot with the adjacent Buthay Lane. The splay and high gates may provide some level of continued enclosure, but they would be set-back from the historic alignment of the boundary wall. Also, the vision splays as proposed would be a modern feature, not typical of the historic layout of plots and boundaries within this part of the CA. The re-use of stone from the demolished section of wall would be welcomed, but this does not sufficiently mitigate the partial demolition of the wall as it exists.
9. There are other examples that the appellant has drawn my attention to of similar development, but these are in differing locations and context to that of the appeal site. Furthermore, the appellant has stated the similarities to the demolition of a section of wall at No 12 High Street, but I do not have full details of this planning approval to see how it compares. Whilst I note the similarities to the proposed development in these other cases/locations, I have considered this appeal scheme based on its own merits.
10. The proposal would remove a significant portion of this historic wall from this prominent location, which is currently a positive feature within the CA and to the setting of the locally listed No 62. Some of the stone may be re-used in the splays and some around the parking area, but a large portion of the wall as it exists would be gone. For these reasons, this proposal would be of detriment to the character and significance of the CA and would also diminish the setting of this locally listed building.
11. The proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Nevertheless, the harm would be less than substantial and in accordance with paragraph 196 of the Framework, that harm should be weighed against any public benefits of the proposal.
12. A public benefit would be that of the increased width of Buthey Lane to form the vision splays, which could be potentially used by members of the public as a refuge if walking or cycling through the lane when a vehicle approaches. The splay area could also help with deliveries/emergency vehicles access and possibly could improve bin storage. Therefore, there is a safety benefit, but I

have no substantive evidence that this has been an issue in the past or if it has led to incidents, with Buthey Lane being relatively short.

13. There is also a potential benefit in allowing the vehicles associated with No 62 to park on their land and not on the street. There does appear to be a high demand for on-street parking, and I understand that there may be future increased parking restrictions. Therefore, on-site parking would have some advantages, including the use of charging points, but as this would just benefit a single property the public benefits would be limited.
14. Whilst not a public benefit, I understand from the appellant that the parking provision would aid with access for disabled visitors to the house. I understand the issues set out by the appellant, but I am not convinced that there are no alternative means to address this issue without needing the demolition of part of an old stone wall to achieve this.
15. Whilst I note that there was little public objection and some support, the public benefits arising from the proposal would not offset the identified harm, to which I must attach considerable importance and weight. The personal issues raised to demonstrate the need for the proposed new access and on-site parking also do not outweigh the heritage harm.
16. Furthermore, notwithstanding its heritage impacts, the wall is of substantial character and reflective of its surroundings. As such, its partial demolition would erode the positive character and appearance of Buthey Lane in particular.
17. Overall and on balance, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of this area and the significance of the CA, which would be neither conserved nor enhanced. The proposal would also diminish the quality of the setting for the locally listed building at No 62 High Street. The public and personal benefits would not outweigh this harm and could not be mitigated with the use of conditions. As such, the proposal would be contrary to Policies CS1 and CS9 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan: Core Strategy (Adopted) December 2013; and Policy PSP1, PSP17 and PSP38 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan: Policies, Sites and Places Plan (Adopted) November 2017. These policies require development to safeguard features of heritage; preserve or, where appropriate, enhance those elements which contribute to a CA's special character or appearance; amongst other things.
18. The proposal would also conflict with the Wickwar Conservation Area SPD, due primarily to the loss of a significant section of stone wall within the CA.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons outlined above and in consideration of all the matters raised, the appeal should be dismissed.

Mr Steven Rennie

INSPECTOR