
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 August 2021

by J P Longmuir BA(Hons) DipUD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 September 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/W/21/3274901

Nunnery House, Tunworth Road, Mapledurwell, RG25 2LU

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant permission in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Woodman against the decision of Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/00009/PIP, dated 2 January 2020, was refused by notice dated 10 May 2021.
 - The development proposed is the conversion of agricultural building to residential dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and approval is granted under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) (Amendment) Order 2017 for the conversion of agricultural building to residential dwelling at Nunnery House, Tunworth Road, Mapledurwell, RG25 2LU in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 20/00009/PIP, dated 2 January 2020, and the plans submitted with it.

Procedural Matters

2. The proposal is for permission in principle. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The permission in principle consent route has 2 stages: the first stage (or permission in principle stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle and the second ('technical details consent') stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. A full planning permission is only secured when both of these stages have been passed. This appeal relates to the first of these 2 stages.
3. The scope of the considerations for permission in principle is limited to location, land use and the amount of development permitted. All other matters are considered as part of a subsequent Technical Details Consent application if permission in principle is granted. I have determined the appeal accordingly.
4. A drawing was included in the original submissions showing a possible elevation, this is considered as indicative only.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are:

- the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area and;
- the effect of the proposal on the setting of heritage assets including Mapledurwell conservation area and the listed Manor Farm.

Reasons

Character and appearance

6. The appeal site is within the confines of Mapledurwell village. Tunworth Lane loops around the village, by the southern edge of the appeal site, leading eventually to Tunworth.
7. The appeal site is within the discernible garden of Nunnery House as evident by its two greenhouses, vegetable patch, garage and access drive. The appeal building is clad in grey metal and of a functional shape. The case officers report notes this was a former market garden but that use ceased over 4 years ago and the building is therefore vacant.
8. The proposal would involve its re-cladding whilst retaining its shape. The existing cladding is not attractive and harsh, and the proposed re-cladding would be likely to improve its appearance. The simple form of the building would be retained, which together with its modest size would be subservient to the adjacent houses.
9. The elevational details would be the subject of the second stage of the process and the windows and doors could be simple shapes, proportions, arrangement and detailing to maintain a deferential appearance. The submitted evidence shows that it would not require rebuilding, and this was reasonably accepted by the Council.
10. The decision notice refers to the domestication of the appeal site. However, the 3 bay one and half storey garage being built has an overtly domestic appearance particularly from its dormer windows. Indeed, I note from the planning history in the case officers report that this was accompanied by a change of use of the land to residential. Similarly, I found that the use of the land also indicated domesticity. The adjacent houses and their gardens to the east are also very apparent and to the west the appeal site (red line land) is not seen in connection with the countryside being in its own self-contained hollow.
11. From the nearest external public realm, Tunworth Road, the site is partially obscured by the hedgerow. I note the Council suggest that the hedge would be more transparent in winter, but the building's design and landscaping could be detailed accordingly.
12. Light pollution should be controllable at the next stage when windows are designed. In any event an agricultural use could lead to light pollution and the adjacent garage would in reasonable expectation use lighting. Similarly, cars and other domestic paraphernalia would not be out of place as this reflects the current context and the site does not impinge on the surrounding countryside.
13. I therefore conclude that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the area.
14. Policy EM1 of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan (LP) requires that proposals are sympathetic to the character and visual quality of the area.

Reference is also made to dark skies and views. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) paragraph 126 states the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Paragraph 130 requires development to respond to the local character, whilst paragraph 174 states decisions should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Paragraph 185 highlights the importance of dark skies. The proposal would not be in conflict.

The Conservation Area and setting of listed building

15. The site and its surroundings are within the Mapledurwell Conservation Area. This is characterised by its linear groups of historic buildings along narrow verdant lanes with hedgerows and gently undulating topography but with some contrasting long views, and timber frame and thatched roof slopes amid a largely residential character. The site is shown as within an area of high archaeological potential and many of the adjacent buildings are depicted on the 1841 Tithe map.
16. As I have found above the form of the building would be simple and the elevational treatment could be designed sympathetically at the next stage. The site lacks an agricultural character and does not assert that contribution to the Conservation Area.
17. Manor Farm is to the east of the appeal site and its associated curtilage listed outbuilding would be nearer. The farm building dates from the late 18th century which is characterised by its brick walling and tiled hipped roof and sash windows. It is prominent on Tunworth Lane.
18. As stated above the building has a simple form which would be maintained by its re-cladding and the elevational treatment could be muted, so that the dwelling would not detract from the listed building and its setting including the curtilage structures. Similarly, I find that the appeal site does not have an agricultural character and therefore the principle of residential use would not harm the setting of the heritage assets.
19. Policy EM11 of the LP requires all development must conserve or enhance the quality of the heritage assets. Reference is made to setting and the distinctiveness of assets. Paragraph 199 of the Framework requires that great weight should be given to the assets conservation. Paragraph 200 confirms the importance of setting. Paragraph 202 requires, in the event of any harm, that is weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. The proposal would not be in conflict with the above policies.

Other matters

20. I note that the Council lacks a 5-year housing land supply, having 4.44 years. The proposal would make a contribution. Additionally, the new dwelling would have social and economic benefits and accordingly there is a need for the dwelling. The proposal would make good use of a redundant building through its conversion, which would be an environmental benefit. These factors support the principle of the proposal.

Conditions

21. The second ('technical details consent') stage has specific requirements which have to be met and conditions are not necessary at this permission in principle stage.

Conclusion

22. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

John Longmuir

INSPECTOR