



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 November 2021

by Graham Chamberlain BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6th December 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/W/21/3275495

Worsted Lodge Farm, Babraham, CAMBRIDGE, CB22 3AX

- 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 Howard Kent (Transport) Ltd against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 20/05296/FUL, dated 21 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 26 March 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as 'Barn conversion and two bay garage'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Background and Preliminary Matters

2. During my site visit I observed that the roof of the appeal building has been removed. The works involved in doing this do not form part of the proposal before me. I have confined my assessment to the proposal as shown on the drawings. Moreover, a highway access and driveway to the south east of the appeal building have been constructed and therefore works have commenced.
3. I understand that listed building consent¹ and planning permission² have been granted for the conversion of the appeal building into a dwelling. The main difference between the approved scheme and the proposal before me is that the latter includes a two-bay garage and a revised access arrangement.
4. A revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework') has been published since the Council issued its decision. The Council and appellant were afforded a chance to provide comments in respect of this change. The relevant sections of the document have not been altered save for the paragraph numbering.

Main Issues

5. The main issues in this appeal are the effect of the proposed garage and access arrangements on:
 - The setting of the Grade II listed building known as Worsted Lodge Farmhouse, including the curtilage listed buildings; and
 - The character and appearance of the area.

¹ 20/01942/LBC and 20/05297/LBC

² 20/01941/FUL

Reasons

The setting of the listed building

6. Worsted Lodge Farmhouse was first listed in 1986 and is probably a late 18th or early 19th Century farmhouse with later extensions. It is finished in gault brick and has a distinctive gambrel roof. It is a fine example of domestic architecture from the period and was probably constructed following the enclosure of the surrounding heath land during the Napoleonic War.
7. The historic farm complex to the rear probably dates from the mid-19th Century and encompasses the Cart Lodge and Granary. It is a surviving example of 'model farming'. These buildings would have been expensive and ostentatious constructs and therefore quite an undertaking. The appeal building stands slightly outside the model farm complex and, like Worsted Lodge, probably predates the phase of development relating to the model farm.
8. The appeal building is a former stable block that was probably contemporary with Worsted Lodge as indicated by historic mapping. It is likely that it originally functioned as a stable designed for riding and vehicle horses rather than farm animals. Historic mapping seems to suggest that access to the building was from the driveway in front of Worsted Lodge, perhaps for practical reasons. It therefore has a close knit functional and spatial link to the main house. Evidential and historic value can be drawn from this relationship. In this respect the appeal building contributes to the understanding, experience and setting of Worsted Lodge.
9. The appeal building is positioned in line with Worsted Lodge and has therefore probably been reasonably prominent in views from the old Roman Road and/or the site entrance since its construction. In recognition of this the building has some decoration in the form of gault-brick dressing but also an uncompetitive and subservient scale and appearance that clearly allows the hierarchy of buildings on site to be understood.
10. The building has been altered over the years but photographs accompanying the submissions demonstrates that with its roof it is quaint and visually pleasing. It therefore has aesthetic value that may be more than fortuitous. This is important to the setting of Worsted Lodge as it is a service building that complements, and in some respects enhances, the setting of the main house by framing the entrance to the farmyard.
11. The appeal scheme would involve a cart lodge being constructed in front of the appeal building and closer to the road than Worsted Lodge. This would entirely fail to respect the hierarchy of structures on the site. Due to its ill-informed siting the proposed cart lodge would appear as a discordant suburban interloper in the setting of the historic farmstead. It would interfere with views of the appeal building from the site frontage and therefore dilute the visual experience of the aesthetic quality of the existing buildings. The proposal would harm the evidential, historic and aesthetic value of the farmstead derived from its setting. The significance would therefore be harmed.
12. The cart lodge in isolation would not be unattractive because it would be well proportioned and finished in appropriate recessive materials. The projecting plinth could add some quality as would the use of side hung doors. The cart lodge would also be subservient in scale. However, this would not overcome

the inherent flaw with the proposal's inharmonious siting discordantly forward of the appeal building.

13. I share the view of the Council, and the author of the heritage statement (HS) submitted by the appellant, that vehicular access into the site would best be achieved from the driveway serving Worsted Lodge. Such an approach would respect the close functional relationship of the appeal building with the farmhouse. It could also limit the extent of hardstanding and the sense that the appeal building had a sprawling domestic curtilage comparable in size to that of Worsted Lodge. The author of the HS also explains that the proposed garden was not a stable yard. Instead, the area to the south and south east was probably a paddock and therefore a sense of this could be retained if the principal access is taken off the driveway serving Worsted Lodge.
14. However, the proposal does not follow the approach set out in the HS. Instead, the appeal building has been closed off from Worsted Lodge through the planting of a hedge. In turn, the principal access to the appeal site is taken from the south east. This has emphasised the separation and harms the experience and understanding of the site as a close-knit group of buildings. There is nothing of substance to suggest this approach is justified as a means of overcoming concerns relating to highway safety or living conditions.
15. The harm that would occur (or has occurred) would not be severe and therefore it would be 'less than substantial' within the meaning of the Framework. Paragraph 202 of the Framework requires such harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
16. The conversion of the appeal building to a dwelling would harm its significance as it would no longer be the ancillary building to Worsted Lodge it was intended to be. This would inherently erode its significance.
17. That said, it may be that the building must experience some harm to be saved in the long term. In this respect, conversion to a dwelling may be the optimum viable use of the building. I share the view of the parties that the conversion shown on the drawings would be sensitive. Providing pinned back doors and minimising the fenestration would greatly assist in retaining the original character and significance of the building. That said, planning permission and listed building consent are already in place to convert the building and therefore it is not necessary to allow this appeal to achieve a long-term future for the building. Moreover, a dwelling can be delivered on site regardless of whether this appeal succeeds so the benefits that would flow from this are of limited weight.
18. The appellant submits that the cart lodge is required to facilitate the conversion to a dwelling because it will provide space to park cars and store domestic paraphernalia. However, many properties do not have garaging and function quite acceptably as dwellings. The HS shows how parking can be conveniently achieved without a garage/cart lodge. Unlike the proposed cart lodge, parked vehicles would be lower in profile and have a transient and non-permanent character. As a result, they would have less of an impact than the cart lodge.
19. That said, I do accept that the occupants of the dwelling would likely need somewhere to store garden tools and such like. However, this need not be in a double cart lodge. A small sensitively designed and sited tool shed could suffice. It is therefore overstating matters to suggest the cart lodge is required

to facilitate the conversion. There is negligible public benefit from the proposed access arrangements because a more appropriate solution with access from the west has already been granted. Constructing the cart lodge would also result in some very modest economic benefits.

20. Thus, when giving considerable importance and weight to the special regard I must pay to preserving the listed building's setting³, I find that the overall harm that has/would arise from the proposal would not be outweighed by its very minor public benefits. Accordingly, there would be a conflict with Paragraph 200 of the Framework as harm to a designated heritage asset would not have clear and convincing justification.
21. In conclusion, the proposed garage and access arrangements would be (and are) harmful to the setting of the listed building and this harm would not be outweighed by public benefits. The harm caused by the cart lodge would be sufficient in isolation to justify dismissing the appeal. The proposal is therefore at odds with Policy NH/14 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 (LP), which seeks to secure development that sustains and enhances the significance and setting of heritage assets in accordance with the Framework.

The effect on character and appearance

22. For the reasons already set out, the proposed cart lodge would appear unduly prominent and discordant when viewed from the south by virtue of it encroaching into an open area forward of the existing building. Consequently, it would harm the character and appearance of the area as well as the setting of the historic farmstead. The fence along the site frontage, and the evergreen hedge behind, would not mitigate this impact due to the respective heights. However, these boundary features largely screen the new driveway from view and therefore this aspect of the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the area.
23. In conclusion, I find that the cart lodge would harm the character and appearance of the area contrary to Policies S/7, H/17 and HQ/1 of the LP. These policies seek to secure development that preserves or enhances the character of the area and appropriately responds to the context.

Conclusion

24. The proposed garage and access would be contrary to the development plan and there are no other considerations which outweigh this finding. Accordingly, for the reasons given, the appeal has failed.

Graham Chamberlain
INSPECTOR

³ See Section 66(1) of The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990