



Appeal Decisions

Hearing held on 14 December 2021

Site visit made on 15 December 2021

by Patrick Whelan BA(Hons) Dip Arch MA MSc ARB RIBA RTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 January 2022

Appeal A Ref: APP/J1915/W/21/3269273

Fisher's Farm, Ermine Street, Colliers End SG11 1ER

- 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 G Williamson, LW Developments Ltd, against the decision of East Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 3/20/0983/FUL, dated 22 May 2020, was refused by notice dated 27 November 2020.
 - The development proposed is the conversion of existing barn into 2 residential dwellings; demolition of modern agricultural buildings and their replacement with 4 detached and 2 semi-detached dwellings; associated garaging, parking and landscaping.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/J1915/Y/21/3269274

Fisher's Farm, Ermine Street, Colliers End SG11 1ER

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by G Williamson, LW Developments Ltd, against the decision of East Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 3/20/1006/LBC, dated 29 May 2020, was refused by notice dated 27 November 2020.
 - The works proposed are the alteration and conversion of existing listed barn into 2 residential dwellings with associated parking and landscaping.
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Decisions

Appeal A Ref: APP/J1915/W/21/3269273

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal B Ref: APP/J1915/Y/21/3269274

2. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

3. As the proposals concern a listed building, I have had special regard to sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).
 4. The appellant submitted revised and additional drawings of the works proposed to the listed barns, including the locations of services meters, joinery details, and a cross-section through the first floor proposed.
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5. I have considered these under the principles established by the Courts in *Wheatcroft*¹. The drawings provide additional detail of the works. They do not change the nature of the proposals to such a degree that to consider them would deprive those who should have been consulted on the change, the opportunity of such consultation. I have therefore determined the appeal with regard to them.
6. As set out above, there are two appeals on this site. To avoid duplication, I have dealt with the two appeals together, except where otherwise indicated.

Main Issues

7. The main issues are:
 - whether the appeal site is a suitable location for housing with particular regard to its location in the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt, and whether it has good access to services and facilities;
 - whether the proposals would preserve the grade II listed farm buildings at Fisher's Farm and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that they possess;
 - the effect of the proposals on the setting of the listed farm buildings at Fisher's Farm; the grade II listed Barnacres; and the grade II listed Farmhouse; and,
 - the effect of the proposals on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Whether the appeal site is a suitable location for housing

8. Policy: There is no dispute that the appeal site lies outside the settlement boundary of the village of Colliers End, as drawn in the East Herts District Plan 2018 (DP). The parties also agreed at the Hearing that the use of the appeal site is agricultural.
9. DP policy DPS2 sets out a hierarchical development strategy, prioritising development on brownfield sites, sites in urban areas; urban extensions; and limited development in villages.
10. DP policy GBR2 seeks to maintain the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt, which is where the appeal site lies in the Plan, as a valued countryside resource. It lists the types of development which will be permitted here, subject to their being compatible with the character and appearance of the rural area. The development types are, in summary, (a) buildings for agriculture and forestry; (b) facilities for sport, recreation and cemeteries; (c) employment-generating uses; (d) the replacement, extension or alteration of a building, provided the size, scale, mass, form, siting, design and materials of construction are appropriate to the character, appearance and setting of the site and/or surrounding area; (e) the limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites in sustainable locations, and (f) rural exception housing.

¹ Bernard Wheatcroft Ltd v Secretary of State for the Environment [JPL, 1982, P37]

11. The village of Colliers End is identified as a Group 2 village in DP policy VILL2, wherein limited infill development, together with small-scale employment, leisure, recreation and community facilities are permitted, as well as small-scale development identified in a neighbourhood plan. It lists seven criteria which development should meet, the most relevant to these proposals being that it will (a) relate well to the village in terms of location, layout and connectivity; (b) be of a scale appropriate to the size of the village having regard to the potential cumulative impact of development in the locality; and (c) be well designed and in keeping with the character of the village.
12. Standon Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan 2017-2033 (NP) in policy SP8 anticipates limited infill housing in the defined village boundaries of Colliers End, which it defines as contributing to the character of the street scene, in accordance with DP policy VILL2. It holds a presumption against development in the Rural Area, in policy SP9, with exceptions for specified rural needs, and unless it accords with the District Plan and the Framework.
13. The appellant argues, firstly, that DP policy GBR2 is not a closed list of types of development permitted in this location. Second that, in any case, the development falls within criterion (d) the replacement of a building etc. Third, that the appeal site appears very much part of the village, and should be considered so. Moreover, the future occupiers of the proposed houses and barns would share the same access to services and facilities as their neighbours a few metres away, inside the village settlement boundary line.
14. The rural area: Applying the list of development permitted in the Rural Area as set out in DP policy GBR2 to the proposals to justify the development in the Rural Area, my view of this proposal is that it does not fall under any of the categories of development described in the policy.
15. Even if it were considered to fall under criterion (d), as suggested, the criterion requires the size, mass, siting, scale, and design to be appropriate to the character, appearance and setting of the site and surrounding area. The front piece of the policy too reinforces this by requiring the described development types to be compatible with the character and appearance of the rural area. For the detailed design reasons given below, the design of the proposals fails to meet the demands of the policy. Therefore, the proposed development, when considered to be within the Rural Area, would be in conflict with DP policy GBR2 and NP policy SP9.
16. There is no suggestion that the proposed homes would be isolated homes in the countryside. Paragraph 80 of the Framework, which lists the circumstances where they may be permitted does not therefore apply. Nonetheless, when considering the development proposed on its own terms, without recourse to the list of development in policy GBR2, for the reasons below, it would not recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, placing it in conflict with the Framework which, in paragraph 174, requires decisions to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. It would also conflict with the Framework which describes in paragraph 126 that the creation

of high quality, beautiful places as being fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.

17. The village: The settlement boundary line excludes the listed farm buildings at Fisher's Farm from the village, yet it includes within the village the C16 listed farmhouse beside them, and to which they have long been visually and actively linked, across a track directly off the road and leading into the fields beyond.
18. I saw on-site that the long flank of the C19 stables and the end of the C17 barn which form the yard closest to the road share, with the farmhouse, an almost common front line towards the road. The C16 and C17 barns and the C18 and C19 stables in the group of buildings forming the courtyard closest to the former London to Cambridge Road have as strong and direct a bearing on this historic coaching route running through the village, and which was perhaps its genesis for development, as the farmhouse to which they have, at least in terms of layout and use, been connected over centuries.
19. So too the pond alongside the road, and the C17 house, Barnacres, which stands still further from the core of the village, yet falls inside its boundary. The same boundary line also captures the terraces of cottages on the opposite side of the road, even though they extend even further from the core of the village than Barnacres. These features share a similar spatial relationship to the former London to Cambridge Road in terms of their enclosure of it, their bearing on it, and their direct access from it, as the historic barns which have as much bearing on the road and the built form of the village as many of the buildings within it.
20. From my assessment on the ground then, the agricultural buildings which roughly form two side-by-side, three-quarters enclosed courtyards onto the track leading from the road, appear more inside the village than outside it. The second enclosing group of farm buildings admittedly has less bearing on the road. Nonetheless the second yard shares the same access as the closest yard, the buildings of both are physically attached, and the second yard extends no further back from the road than the back garden of the farmhouse, its reach not being dissimilar to other plots in this section of the village. In my view then, the two clusters of buildings which form the two yards, stand as much inside the village as does the farmhouse, Barnacres, and the terraces to the north.
21. The buildings in the land beyond these two courtyards, in which stand the C20 buildings Barn 1 and Barn 2, and the row of metal silos, are altogether more isolated and dispersed structures. These have less affinity with the tighter grain of the footprints and proximity of the buildings within the village and less connection with them than they do with the broader open space of the arable fields beyond, in which modern farm buildings and silos, including the recently erected large, metal barn are typical, agricultural features of the countryside. The land containing these structures, in my view, lies firmly in the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt, and rightly identified by the Council as lying outside the village.

22. In any event, for the reasons given below, even if the whole appeal site were considered to be within the village, the proposed development would conflict with DP policy VILL2 and NP policy SP8.
23. I have noted the prior approval² granted by the Council for the change of use of Barn 1 and Barn 2 from agricultural use to residential. However, the PPG³ makes clear that prior approval is a light-touch process where the principle of the development has already been established, and which does not seek to replicate the planning application system. While I have had regard to the prior approval, the starting point for my decision on the s78 appeal must be the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
24. In any event, the appellant has confirmed that since the new agricultural storage building permitted under Part 6 Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 for which the Council confirmed that prior approval⁴ was not required has been implemented, the change of use of Barn 1 and Barn 2 under Part 3 Class Q is no longer permitted under the Order. The Class Q scheme is no longer a fall-back to justify this development.
25. Access to services and facilities: While there is a church, a hall, and some industrial and agricultural employment in Colliers End, residents rely on surrounding settlements for everyday services and facilities. The closest of these is High Cross, a Group 2 village around 1.3 miles away, which has a convenience shop, a public house, a petrol station, and a primary school. The Group 1 village of Standon & Puckeridge, with greater services and facilities, is around 2.4 miles from Colliers End.
26. While the distances of these villages from Colliers End may deter walking as a means to reach them, they are linked by intermittently lit paths, and served by twice-hourly bus services from bus stops close to the appeal site, which would make alternative forms of transport to the private car a realistic and attractive prospect, for at least some journeys. Where car journeys would be needed, because of the proximity of Puckeridge and the historic market town of Ware, 4 miles away, they would, at least, be relatively short.
27. These observations resonate with appeal and local decisions in this area. First, to the 2016 appeal decision⁵ on a site at the opposite tip of Colliers End, where the Inspector reinforced the conclusion of an earlier appeal decision⁶ in which that Inspector found no compelling grounds to conclude that a proposal, just beyond the drawn village boundary to the north, would be unsustainable as a result of its rural location, or its level of accessibility to services and facilities.
28. Second, the Council followed that conclusion in 2018 when it approved a housing development⁷ on a site which was just outside the drawn settlement boundary of Colliers End. It also concluded when granting planning

² LPA Ref: 3/19/0733/ARPN

³ Planning Practice Guidance, paragraph 28

⁴ LPA Ref: 18/1370/AGPN

⁵ Appeal Ref: APP/J1915/W/16/3150971

⁶ Appeal Ref: APP/J1915/W/15/3121638

⁷ LPA Ref: 3/17/1582/FUL

permission⁸ for a housing scheme just to the north of the drawn settlement boundary, further from the core of the village than the appeal site, that the village was considered to be a sustainable location.

29. I acknowledge the Council's point that since those decisions were made the national and local policy context has changed, and the local public house has closed. The Parish Council point out that the church has closed as it is in a state of disrepair. However, there is no evidence that the policy context today is so different from before, nor that the closure of the public house and church has been fatal to the provision of local services and facilities that a conclusion departing from the foregoing decisions is justified.
30. The Framework recognises in paragraph 105 that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, which should be taken into account in decision-making. Given the number and proximity of other villages with services and facilities, the development here would help to enhance or maintain the vitality of those rural communities, as indicated in paragraph 79 of the Framework and what it envisages as development in one village supporting services in a village nearby, where there are groups of smaller settlements, as here.
31. I conclude on this issue that while the appeal site lies outside the settlement boundary drawn in the District Plan, which places the location of the development in conflict with DP policy GBR2, this is tempered by my finding, on the ground, that the agricultural buildings which roughly form two, adjoining, three-quarters enclosed courtyards onto the track leading from the road, are within the village.
32. I have found that future occupiers would have good access to services and facilities. Notwithstanding this, for the reasons discussed below, the proposed development would conflict with the local and national policies which apply to development in the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt and in a village of this standing, placing it at odds with DP policies GBR2 and VILL2, NP policies SP8 and SP9, and paragraph 174 of the Framework.

The significance of the listed buildings on and surrounding the appeal site

33. Fisher's Farm: the C16 barn and its C17 extension retain substantial historic form and fabric with significant archaeological, illustrative and architectural special interest in their own right, particularly the arrangement of the timber framing in the walls with their long braces and staggered rails, and the queen-strut trusses bearing on jowled posts, with braces from post to chord, distinctively long and curved in the C16 section, enclosing substantial volumes of space, as well as the porches of differing heights and the lean-to on one side.
34. The C18 and C19 stables which attach to them also contribute to the architectural and historic significance of the listed building, both in their form and construction as well as their siting at ninety degrees from the extended

⁸ LPA Ref: 3/18/1149/FUL

- barn section, to form a three-sided enclosure around the mainstrey on the farmhouse side.
35. In addition to the individual and collective significance of these barns and stables, their siting and phasing to form an enclosure opening onto the garden behind the listed farmhouse, and with the opposite mainstrey facing onto the small, field enclosure suggested on the historic maps indicates the possible success of the early development of the farm.
36. Attached back-to-back to the C18 stables is a second yard, three-quarters enclosed by C20 farm buildings which have some historic interest insofar as it indicates the growth of the farm and changing agricultural practices, as well as displaying some re-used, historic timbers.
37. Fisher's Farmhouse: This large, C16 or earlier open hall house, extended in the C17 and C19, has evidential and illustrative value as a post medieval dwelling. Its siting, fronting towards the old London to Cambridge Road, while at the same time overlooking the yard enclosed by the barns and stables of the farm, and the large garden area behind it, at times shown enclosed and sub-divided on historic maps, has particular significance.
38. Individually, each of these farm buildings has special historic and architectural interest, as summarised above. However, as well as their individual historic and architectural significance, the buildings, as a group of surviving farmstead buildings, have a collective, historic significance demonstrating the form and layout of a farmstead which has developed from the C16. Their position close to the London to Cambridge road, with the setting behind them of open arable fields and distant woodland, indicates the agricultural technology, the social construction, and the architectural aspirations of the people who lived here and who worked this land successfully over at least four centuries.
39. Barnacres: This grade II listed, C17 house has a frontage close to the road and a relatively short, almost truncated garden behind it, which is shown on the C19 mapping. As well as the special architectural and historic interest from its surviving fabric and forms, it has particular significance in this context from its more domestic vernacular, its C17 extension, and the short dimension of the enclosed space behind it, suggesting its focus was more towards the activity on the road in front of it than to the farmland behind it.
40. Other listed buildings: On the other side of Fisher's Farmhouse is the grade II listed Little Quakers and building on north, dating from the C16 and C17, and on the opposite side of the road from Fisher's Farmhouse stands the early C16 grade II* house.

Whether the proposals would preserve the listed buildings on the appeal site and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that they possess

41. Demolition: The Council does not object to the demolition of the C20 structures which form the second, enclosed yard, and which are attached to the C16 barn and C18 stables. While their removal would result in the loss of a few timbers which have been crudely re-used in the construction of the lean-to, their unknown source and isolated use would diminish any loss of significance.

42. The demolition of the structures enclosing the second yard would remove part of the evidence of the farm's development. I am mindful that while these buildings may not appear to have much significance to us today, their C19 origins and contrast with the earlier buildings may be significant to future generations, at least in their form and siting if not in their materials and detailing.
43. However, their siting severely restricts the visibility of the older sections of the buildings forming the earlier courtyard. The precarious detailing of the connections between old and new also threaten the weather tightness of the older sections. Their individual and collective contribution to architectural and historic significance is small. Their removal, as part of a sensitive scheme of works to adapt the older buildings, and subject to a condition for their historic recording, would not harm the special interest of the listed building.
44. Use: I acknowledge the Council's concern about changing the use of the barns from agricultural to residential. Their continued agricultural use would be ideal, but modern farm machinery and crop storage requirements are far larger and more demanding today than when these barns were built, as demonstrated by the investment in the recently erected large, agricultural building⁹ beyond the historic barns. Its purpose was described as for the storage of arable crop, fertilizers and farm machinery which the existing buildings, because of their restricted height, small door openings and lack of storage capacity do not provide.
45. While the barns presently store old tractors and old farm implements, and at my visit I saw a few turkeys being kept in the C18 stables, the older buildings appear generally redundant for the modern agricultural requirements of this arable farm, and risk falling further into disrepair from the lack of maintenance without an active, commercially viable use.
46. Insofar as the agricultural use of historic farm buildings on a farm would be lost here, there would be some harm to their historic significance. However, I am mindful of the guidance in the PPG¹⁰ about the risk of harmful changes from a succession of failed ventures, particularly relevant here given the proximity of residential use on one side and active agricultural activity on the other.
47. Moreover, adaptation to non-agricultural use is an option supported by guidance¹¹ which explains how without appropriate uses to fund their long-term maintenance and repair, traditional farmstead buildings will disappear from the landscape. The sensitive adaptation to residential use of these buildings would help to secure immediate repairs as well as their long-term conservation. I find no harm in respect of the change of use of the historic barns to residential.
48. Sub-division: I appreciate the spectacular, spacious effect of the C16 barn and its C17 extension being in a single volume, which while lit only by gaps in the wall cladding and missing roof tiles has an ethereal character. It allows the detailing of the roof and the walls to be appreciated, exposing the whole

⁹ LPA Ref: 3/18/1370/AGPN

¹⁰ Planning Practice Guidance, paragraph 15

¹¹ Historic England: Adapting Traditional Farm Buildings, Best Practice Guidelines for Adaptive Reuse, 2017

- architectural drama of the roof and the textured effect of the wall studs. More significantly, it reflects the phase of development which necessitated the C16 barn and its extension becoming a single space.
49. However, while the subdivision would remove that historic phase, diminishing the historic integrity of the listed building and undermining something of its architectural interest, it would follow close to where the end wall of the C16 barn may have stood before it was extended in the C17. The precise position and detail of the new party wall could be controlled by condition so as to retain sufficient space beside the roof truss to limit the impact of the change.
50. External works: The subdivision of the courtyard and the formation of private gardens around it would not undermine the significance of the listed building. An enclosing boundary of some kind appears to have existed between the Farmhouse and the listed building, the historic maps indicating that this was around the Farmhouse back garden rather than around the yard of the listed building. Erecting an enclosure along the open side of the yard, so long as it were low enough to allow the visual and spatial link between the enclosed area of the listed building and the Farmhouse to continue, would not harm that important, historic link between the two listed buildings.
51. Given the size of the openings and their position in the Farmhouse, I can identify no need for the enclosure to be so tall or solid to prevent loss of privacy of the yard area by overlooking from within the Farmhouse that it would threaten the continuity of the visual and spatial link.
52. Alterations: The dry lining of the external walls would not obscure wall elements which contribute to the significance of the building, and the position of the roof insulation, leaving the timber trusses, part of the rafters, and the purlins, exposed, would ensure the architectural interest of the roof generally remains visible.
53. The proposed floor slab would be vapour permeable. Most of the few, new window and door openings would retain the solid character of the roofs and walls of the barns. They would be generally set within existing openings or between existing timber studs which would minimise the loss of historic timber and sensitively constrain the size of the openings. Planning conditions could control the details of these alterations, as well as the sensitivity of repairs and making good.
54. As part of these alterations and repairs, relatively small elements of historic fabric, in very few instances, such as sleeper wall alterations, would be lost. Though this too would diminish, albeit to a very limited degree, the historic significance of the listed building, this needs to be weighed in the heritage balance.
55. Notwithstanding this, it became clear at my inspection, that the proposed front door into the C16 barn (plot 7) would require a door opening's width of the historic timber rail in the wall to be removed. The appellant has acknowledged that the posts, arch-braces, queen strut trusses and staggered rails in the walls are of architectural, historic, and archaeological value as surviving historic

fabric and as evidence of historic architectural practices. To remove a section of this rail would compromise its historic structural integrity, and its historic and structural role within the wall.

56. This element of the proposals would cause less than substantial harm to the historic significance of the listed building, in which circumstance the Framework, in paragraph 199 says that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. More significantly, the rail is part of the historic structure of the building, which is a feature of its special historic interest. This alteration would not preserve that feature to the desirability of the preservation of which I am required to have special regard.
57. I understand that an alternative location for the front door could be found. However, the effect on the significance of the building of any changes to accommodate such a change is unclear. The layout of the dwellings and the locations of openings in relation to significant historic fabric are of fundamental importance to the consideration of the works to the listed building. Notwithstanding the typical details submitted, there are no location-specific elevation drawings nor any photographic surveys indicating the positions of the posts and rails and studs in the walls, nor for that matter, the roof trusses, and the effect of the proposed openings or alterations on them.
58. I appreciate that there may be elements of works not envisaged or anticipated during a conversion project, and these can be properly covered by conditions. However, the Council or its consultees will not have had the chance to comment on such changes were I to apply a notwithstanding condition for an alternative position for the front door opening. In these circumstances, and given that the uncertainty concerns a heritage asset which the Framework describes as an irreplaceable resource which should be conserved in a manner appropriate to its significance, a planning condition would be insufficient and inappropriate.
59. It also became apparent during my inspection that the insertion of the proposed first floor into part of the C17 barn would require the removal of the arch braces between the truss and posts in the second bay. Aside from the risk to the structural integrity of the roof from their removal, with no indication of sensitive compensating measures, the further depletion of historic fabric, in this case changing the historic character of the building structure, would also harm the special historic and architectural interest of the listed building.
60. In any event, I am not convinced that there are not more sensitive ways to incorporate some measure of a mezzanine floor without the cumbersome stepping arrangement under the roof truss which necessitates the removal of historic braces and the formation of bulkheads around the slender existing openings in the wall. Nor is the spatial balance of a 2-bay mezzanine reached by a stair cutting across the voluminous, knave-like space of the barn sympathetic in the volume of the 4-bay section of the barn, the effect of which would deplete the building of its special architectural interest.
61. Altogether, the degree of harm to the significance of the listed building would be less than substantial. Nonetheless, as above, I give this harm, and the

conflict with the objectives of DP policies HA1 and HA7 which protect the architectural and historic character or appearance of listed buildings and which require works to preserve historic fabric, and Standon Neighbourhood Plan policy SP4 which says that designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, considerable importance and weight in the planning balance of these appeals.

The effect of the proposals on the setting of the listed farm buildings at Fisher's Farm; the listed Barnacres; and the listed Farmhouse

62. Fisher's Farm buildings: Save for the house proposed on plot 6, the new houses would be set sufficiently distant from this listed building, across generally open space, that its spacious setting would be preserved. However, the combined effect of the greater height of the house proposed on plot 6, and its proximity to the listed building, would overpower the listed building.
63. I have already found no harm from the removal of the buildings forming the modern yard, which would reveal more of the significant section of the listed building. I have also taken into account Barn 1 and Barn 2, which would also be demolished. So too the cylindrical silos, which the house on plot 6 would replace. However, these agricultural buildings are set some distance from what would be the retained sections of the listed building. Their form and appearance is distinctively agricultural, and not out of place on a farm in the countryside. They do not cause harm to the setting of the listed Fisher's Farm buildings, or indeed any listed building in the vicinity. The condition and siting of these buildings does not justify the harm to the architectural significance of the listed building which merits greater space around it than the house on plot 6 would permit.
64. Barnacres: I appreciate that the focus of this listed building is more towards the road than to the field behind. However, the height of the house on plot 1, which appears would be on higher ground, would dominate the more demure scale of this C17 cottage.
65. I acknowledge that the development would donate a strip of land behind to Barnacres. from the field behind it. However, I am not convinced of the merit, in terms of historic authenticity, of supplanting a historic boundary on the distinctive character of enclosure of Barnacres that is indicated on the historic maps to have stood for considerable time. More significantly, the present aspect behind Barnacres is an open one onto a field, reinforcing the rural character of the setting behind it. There would therefore be harm to the setting of the listed building Barnacres.
66. Farmhouse: Given the distance of the Farmhouse from the proposed buildings and the separation provided by the access track, as well as my finding no harm, subject to conditions, from the enclosure of the yard, the setting of this listed building would be preserved.
67. Other listed buildings: I have considered the effect of the proposals on the settings of the other listed buildings in the vicinity, to the desirability of the preservation of which I am required to have special regard. Because of the

distances between them and the proposals, as well as intervening structures and planting, their settings would be preserved.

68. I conclude on this issue that the proposed development would harm the western setting of Fisher's Farm buildings and the western setting of Barnacres. The resulting loss of significance to these buildings would, in the terms of the Framework, be less than substantial. Nonetheless, it would conflict with DP policies HA1 and HA7 where they protect the historic environment and require proposals to preserve the setting of listed buildings. It would also conflict with policy SP4 of the Standon Neighbourhood Plan where it says that designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.
69. It would also run against the Framework, which in paragraph 200, identifies the potential for harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset including from development within its setting, and which in paragraph 206 encourages development within the setting of heritage assets to look for opportunities to better reveal their significance.

The effect of the proposals on the character and appearance of the area

70. Though the linear form of development which encloses the main road fronting towards it is what activates the road through the village and characterises the pattern of development within it, it is no longer an exclusive form. For example, Bird Court and Parkins Close are two recent developments in the village which have taken the form of short cul-de-sacs. Therefore, the short cul-de-sac is no longer a development form incompatible in the village.
71. Notwithstanding this, the vast majority of the site of the new houses would be beyond the village, in the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt. Here the pattern of development, where it does occur, is far looser-grained and more dispersed than this proposal. Cul-de-sacs of such closely set housing are generally not a feature of the pattern of development in the Rural Area.
72. The proposed layout, of handed or repeated house types, with formally arranged hedges defining the common boundaries, enclosing single trees set in the middle of small, rectangular, front lawns beside paths leading to the front doors of symmetrically arranged houses, many with footprint:plot ratios and back garden depths more akin to urban locations, sited in symmetrically arranged pairings, would have more of a suburban appearance than the character of a rural yard beside historic barns and stables in the countryside.
73. I appreciate the formality of the site arrangement of the houses and their elevations, as a visual response to the mainstrey of the C17 barn and the length of the roofs over the barns. However, the architectural character of the barns and stables comes as much from the difference between the various phases of development in pitch, eaves, ridge, and plinth as it does from the more demure scale of their strong, simple solid forms and play of textures.
74. While the appellant is right to eschew a pastiche approach, the height of the proposed houses, the exploitation to the point of exhaustion of the mainstrey

- form and opening, and the overuse of symmetry would tend to visually overwhelm the more humbly scaled asymmetry of the listed barns and stables.
75. Moreover, the proposed cul-de-sac development, located largely outside the village, would appear larger than many of those cul-de-sac developments which are inside the village. The size of the footprint of this development, excluding the retained, listed building, even if it were considered to be inside the village, would have a marked, unbalancing effect on the equilibrium of development in Colliers End.
76. This is specifically resisted by part V(b) of DP policy VILL2, which expects development inside Group 2 villages to be of a scale appropriate to the size of the village having regard to the potential cumulative impact of development in the locality. Being located in the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt rather than within the village, the effect of the incompatibility of the development on its wider surroundings would be even greater.
77. Furthermore, the new-build element would not fill in between anything; it would develop the land behind Barnacres and behind the listed building, the gap which might have been capable of being filled-in would be the access road into the development. Even if the new-build section were considered to be within the village, the proposal would conflict with DP policy VILL2 and NP policy SP8 which permits limited infill development in Group 2 villages.
78. I appreciate that the site layout is based on access into the barns from the north. However, there is no evidence that entry to the barns needs to be from that direction. Indeed, the siting on the north elevation of one of the front doors in the barns would harm the special interest of the listed building.
79. I have taken into account that the C20 agricultural buildings, Barn 1 and Barn 2, the silos and the buildings forming the second yard would be replaced by this development. However, agricultural buildings like these are commonplace on farms. In terms of their character and appearance, and despite their condition, they do not look out of place on a farm in the countryside.
80. I conclude on this issue that I find no harm to the character and appearance of the area from the adaptation of the listed building. The new-build section of the proposed development would however result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. It would conflict with DP policies GBR2 and DES4 which require development to be compatible with the character and appearance of the rural area and to reflect and promote local distinctiveness.
81. It would also run against NP policy SP13 which says that the redevelopment of historic farmsteads should be sensitive to their distinctive character, materials and form, and that the scale and design of new development will reflect the overall character of the built environment of the Parish.
82. It would be at odds too with the fundamental objective to make high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places and it would not contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment as indicated in paragraphs 126 and 174 of the Framework.

Public Benefits and Balance

83. I have found that the proposals would harm the significance of the listed barns at Fisher's Farm and fail to preserve their special architectural and historic interest, as well as their setting. The proposals would also diminish the setting of the listed building Barnacres. I give this harm considerable importance and weight in the planning balance of these appeals.
84. Paragraph 199 of the Framework advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to their conservation. Paragraph 200 goes on to advise that significance can be harmed or lost through the alteration or destruction of those assets or from development within their setting and that this should have a clear and convincing justification. I have found the harm to be less than substantial, but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight.
85. Paragraph 202 of the Framework anticipates that where a proposed development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, which includes the securing of its optimal viable use.
86. The principal heritage benefit would be the conservation of the listed building following extensive repairs, and improvements, and those sensitive elements of the adaptation work to accommodate the change of use, including the immediate landscape around the listed building. The new residential use would secure its long-term conservation, and the demolition of the buildings forming the second courtyard would improve the setting of the retained section of the listed building to which they are attached which would also be a heritage benefit. The restoration of the pond would bring heritage benefits too, as well as ecological opportunities.
87. There is support from local residents for the proposals which, as well as securing the optimal viable use for the listed building, would provide the social benefit of eight new homes in a sustainable location, with the future occupiers bolstering the demand for services and facilities in neighbouring villages.
88. Occupation of the development would bring economic benefits too from the spending of future occupiers in the local area as well as from its construction which would stimulate employment, the commissioning of services, and the retention of building craft skills.
89. I find no benefit to the setting of the listed buildings or the character and appearance of the area from the demolition of Barn 1 and Barn 2 and the silos. Similarly, as I have found the new-build element harmful to the setting of the listed buildings as well as to the character and appearance of the area, there cannot be a public benefit from its design.
90. The heritage benefits to the listed building, including securing the optimal viable use, would be significant. However, the heritage benefits and the other public benefits in the proposals, including the benefits across the whole scheme, would not outweigh the less than substantial harm to the significance of Fisher's Farm buildings and their setting, and to the setting of Barnacres, to

which I attribute considerable importance and weight, and to the conservation of which the Framework indicates great weight should be given.

Conclusion

91. I have found that while the appeal site has good access to services and facilities, most of the new-build section would be in the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt, where it would conflict with the settlement strategy of the development plan. Though my assessment found the listed building to stand more inside the village than outside it, and I have found no harm from the change of use of the listed building, the proposals would diminish the historic significance of the grade II listed farm buildings at Fisher's Farm, and their setting, and fail to preserve their special architectural and historic interest. They would also harm the setting of the grade II listed building Barnacres, as well as the character and appearance of the area.
92. I conclude, therefore, that the proposal would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act, paragraph 197 of the Framework, and it would not be in accordance with the development plan, when read as a whole. There are no other considerations to outweigh that finding. For the reasons given above, the appeals are dismissed.

Patrick Whelan

INSPECTOR

Appearances

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