



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 January 2022

by Lewis Condé BSc (Hons), MSc, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: Tuesday 15 February 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3940/W/21/3282410

The Manor House, West Street, Great Somerford, SN15 5EH

- 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 J Davies against the decision of Wiltshire Council.
 - The application Ref 20/09711/FUL, dated 3 November 2020, was refused by notice dated 14 April 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as 'Replacement garage and garden implement store for Manor House'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appellant submitted an updated existing site plan (ref: BDS-05-20) and updated proposed site plan (also ref: BDS-05-20) for the purpose of the appeal. The updated plans do not change the form of the proposed development but instead address errors in the plotting of trees on the original application plans. The Local Planning Authority (LPA) has had the opportunity to review the revised plans and has provided comments in relation to the re-plotted trees. Given the minor alterations involved are for accuracy purposes, and that the LPA has provided comments, I do not feel any party is prejudiced by my acceptance of the revised plans.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Great Somerford Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The appeal relates to the Manor House, a large semi-detached dwelling located towards the western edge of Great Somerford. The Manor House benefits from a generous residential curtilage. Within the curtilage there is an existing sizeable outbuilding, located approximately 40m to the south-west of the Manor House, which the current development is proposed to sit adjacent to.
5. The site occupies a prominent location on West Street, a main route in and out of Great Somerford. The western boundary of the site is delineated by an attractive stone wall that is considerable in length and is a defining feature along this part of West Street. The height of the wall varies, along its length nearest the Manor House it measures approximately 1.8m in height. The

boundary wall drops in height to approximately 1.5m as it moves further away from the Manor House, including the section where the development is proposed.

6. The appeal site is located within the Great Somerford Conservation Area (GSCA). No conservation area appraisal has been produced. However, from my visit it was clear that, despite variety in detailed design of the built form, there is a general cohesiveness to the GSCA. This cohesiveness stems in part from a rich, traditional rural architecture. The GSCA also has a pleasant rural and verdant quality and I note that the Great Somerford Neighbourhood Plan (GSPN) identifies at paragraph 4.10 that grass verges, stone walls, hedges, and trees enhance the village's rural setting. From my own observations, I agree with the comments of the GSPN.
7. Despite the GSCA not containing strong building lines, I also observed on my site visit that most dwellings and associated outbuildings were set within their site boundaries. Furthermore, for the most part, property boundaries were characterised by stone boundary walls, of a simple form, or hedging.
8. The appellant is seeking to develop the proposed garage and store building directly off the site's existing boundary wall, that faces onto West Street. Despite the use of matching materials, I feel that the integration of the building directly off the wall would result in an incongruous addition. This is predominantly due to the introduction of the blank end elevation and differentiation in heights between the proposal and the remaining boundary wall. This difference in height alongside the location of the development, with a considerable length of wall either side of the proposals, would result in a rather stark and jarring appearance. The prominent location of the development would further accentuate the development's harm.
9. In seeking to justify the proposals, the appellant has provided several examples of built form in the surrounding area that is positioned on, or close to a roadside, in similar arrangements to the appeal scheme. However, on my site visit, I observed their contexts to be markedly different to the appeal proposals. This was either due to their locational position or the precise form of development. Indeed, the appellant has highlighted the examples should not be taken as direct comparisons, but instead they illustrate that there is no consistent placement of built form throughout the GSCA, and that it contains a range of different architectural styles and aesthetics.
10. I recognise that the GSCA is varied in its building pattern and specific style of buildings. However, this does not overcome my concern that the form of development proposed, through its scale and attempt to integrate directly onto the existing boundary wall, would appear as an unfitting and harmful addition.
11. Given the size, scale, and nature of the appeal development I consider it would cause less than substantial harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification and in accordance with paragraph 202 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), I must weigh the harm against the public benefits of the proposal.
12. The appeal scheme would provide a new garage and storage space benefiting the owner/occupants of the appeal site. In this instance, there are no public

benefits that weigh in favour of the development that would outweigh the harm.

13. As a result, I find that the appeal proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of Great Somerford Conservation Area. Consequently, the appeal proposal would conflict with the design and historic environment aims of Policies CP57 and CP58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy 2015. When read together these policies require development to be of a high quality of design that should protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic environment.
14. Furthermore, the proposal would also fail to meet the requirements of Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 or the Framework insofar as it relates to heritage assets.

Other Matters

15. As previously identified, revised plans were submitted for the appeal to address a drafting error relating to the location of existing trees on site. Following a review of the revised plans, concerns have been expressed that the development has the potential to harm nearby trees. The appellant has identified that the relevant trees are self-sown sycamores which will be sought to be retained, albeit new tree planting (additional or replacement) can be secured by condition if necessary. I note such concerns but given that I am dismissing the appeal on other grounds, I have not considered this matter further.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above, having considered the development plan as a whole and all other relevant material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Lewis Condé

INSPECTOR