
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 September 2022

by A.Graham BA(hons) MAued IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24th November 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/C1570/W/22/3294955

Land Adjacent Wigmore Farm, Henham Road, Debden CB11 3LX

- 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 Toby Potgieter against the decision of Uttlesford District Council.
 - The application Ref: UTT/21/3077/FUL dated 7 October 2021, was refused by notice dated 24 December 2021.
 - The application is for erection of single detached dwelling with attached garages.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issue is the impact of the proposal upon the setting and significance of the Grade II Listed Wigmore Farm.

Procedural Matter

3. The appeal refers to Plot 2 that forms part of an associated field belonging to the Grade II Listed Wigmore Farm. Outline agreement was obtained from Uttlesford District Council in March 2019¹ for the erection of two dwellings on this land and this was subsequently renewed. A planning application² was submitted for two dwellings in 2021 and was dismissed under appeal in 2022³. More recently an application was approved by the Council for a 1.5 storey dwelling to Plot 1 of the site⁴. Plot 1 is located to the northern part of the field adjacent curtilage outbuildings associated with the farm itself.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is currently an open field or paddock situated immediately to the south west of Wigmore Farm and is located to the side of the approaching driveway into the farm complex. The Council's Conservation Consultant states that the site is within the curtilage of the Listed Building. The Listed Building itself consists of Wigmore Farm which is an attractive partially thatched and rendered farmhouse cottage dating to the later 18th century but likely containing older timber frame elements within. The farmhouse sits along a

¹ Outline Planning Application UTT?19/0245/OP with all matters reserved for two dwellings 27 March 2019.

² UTT/21/1048/FUL

³ APP/C1570/W/21/3280447 18 March 2022.

⁴ UTT/22/2025/FUL Approved by Uttlesford District Council 23 September 2022.

straight driveway that enters the site off a right-angle bend from Henham Road. On approach along this track the first building one sees are the farm buildings associated with Wigmore Farm, most of which are clustered around a farmyard to the rear of the farmhouse and appear as typically ancillary farm buildings clustered around a courtyard.

5. Wigmore Farm itself currently sits somewhat obscured by foliage and slightly to the east of the driveway, but nevertheless it still represents the principal building upon the site and commands the approach to the farmyard through its presence here. Much of the distinction between the primary farmhouse and its outbuildings comes from the materials used in their construction, Wigmore Farm having a rendered façade and thatched roof and most of the outbuildings sporting a brick plinth with dark coloured weatherboarding and pantiles.
6. Whilst it is apparent that some buildings to the rear of the house have been subsequently modified, they maintain the general compact form and layout as shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey plan of the site dating from the later 19th century. I consider therefore that much of the significance of Wigmore Farm is obtained through its historic, aesthetic and evidential heritage values obtained through its form, construction and age as well as its essential agricultural character defined by its open landscape setting and its compact built form.
7. As mentioned above the appeal site relates to an area of open grassland adjacent to the approaching driveway towards the farmstead. Although it is somewhat visually shielded from the Listed Building by hedge line and coniferous planting there are still views into this field from the driveway and it still maintains an element of agricultural character on approach to the Listed Building itself. Although there is an electricity pylon to the south, across the other side of Henham Road, this is not noticeable when approaching the farm complex itself and is so far removed so as it does not diminish the heritage value of the site to any notable extent.
8. The Outline approval as well as the subsequent Planning Permission to Plot 1 have effectively allowed expansion of the farmstead to the south west of the principal Listed Building within this field. This has had the effect of allowing development forward of the farm ranges and has the potential, if not correctly executed, to somewhat undermine the hierarchy that currently exists of farmhouse with outbuildings primarily located to its rear.
9. The most recent approval to Plot 1 has allowed a building that largely echoes the farmhouse in terms of its form and domestic materials. The proposal before me seeks to deliver the outline approval for a second dwelling to Plot 2 in the form of an L shaped 5 bedroom house that appears to take deliberate influence from the historic agricultural barns. In contrast to Plot 1 the proposal before me would therefore attempt to echo the traditional barn forms in terms of its general forms, courtyard layout and dark cladding materials which I consider would be in the favour of this scheme.
10. In considering whether to grant planning permission for any further such development to Plot 2 of this site Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (The Act) requires me to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a Listed Building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. The National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) also states that

when considering the impact of proposed development on the significance of the heritage asset, 'great weight' should be given to the asset's conservation.

11. In considering this appeal I firstly consider that the site contributes in a positive manner to the character and appearance of the Listed Building and contributes positively to the setting of the farm complex as a whole. The land, through it being a relatively modest enclosure associated with the farm provides an important agricultural approach to the farm proper that is important for the setting of the Listed Building.
12. In assessing this appeal I acknowledge that the principal of expanding development in this direction has been agreed. I consider however that in order to successfully deliver such a scheme the overall character and appearance of the farm complex would need to be respected. In this regard I do consider that the proposal before me has gone to some great lengths to mitigate the sub-urbanising effect of the previous scheme as noted by the previous Inspector.
13. The recent approval of Plot 1 has resulted in permission for a new building that echoes more the Listed farmhouse rather than appearing as an ancillary outbuilding. The scheme before me, in contrast, attempts to reinforce the agricultural character of the site and has the potential to 'evolve' the farmstead layout through its more contextual design that better reflects and therefore reinforces the historic character of the farm. Therefore, I consider that the proposal could be seen as a more natural evolution of the farmyard that would not be wholly alien to its historic roots.
14. When considering the overall scale, massing and bulk of the proposal however, despite this being obviously inspired by a traditional weatherboarded barn structure, the scale and massing of the proposed building would be notably larger than any other building currently upon the site. This is confirmed by the Heritage Statement which recognises that the proposed building would be notably bigger than the existing barn. Although being of 1.5 storeys therefore the proposed building would still be very large with high eaves lines and even higher ridgelines associated with the pitched roofs.
15. Although there would be some intervening foliage between the proposed building and the Listed Farm complex the proposal would clearly be within the setting of Wigmore Farm and it would still have an impact upon the significance of the Listed Building. Historic England Guidance⁵ confirms that intervisibility is not the only contributing factor to such settings and in this regard I consider that the proposed building would introduce an overly large building within the immediate setting of Wigmore Farm that would ultimately be harmful.
16. In assessing this harm, I consider that the general approach in reflecting the farmyard aesthetics of dark weatherboarding as well as the L shaped footprint and the overall pitched roof form, do have some merit and demonstrate the correct general approach for the Outline permission to this plot to be delivered. However, ultimately, the overall scale and massing of the proposed building would be overly excessive and, far from this building being seen as ancillary in the context of the Listed Farm, it would instead dominate this important approach to the farm itself and ultimately appear over dominant. I therefore

⁵ Historic England 'The Setting of Heritage Assets' 2017.

conclude that there would be Less than Substantial Harm sustained to the Listed Building and its setting.

17. In identifying this harm I am required by the Framework to weigh such harm against the Public Benefits of the proposal. I am also required to give 'great weight' to the heritage asset as well as the special regard as required by The Act. In terms of Public Benefits I consider the principal one of these is the contribution of this proposal to the five year housing land supply (5YHLS) that the Local Authority is currently unable to meet. I consider that the contribution of a single 5 bedroom house in this location would provide some benefit therefore for a certain demographic.
18. However, even when giving significant weight to this matter and applying the balancing exercise within The Framework I do not consider that this would justify the overly large and harmful proposal when considered alongside immediate setting of the Listed Building. I ultimately conclude therefore that the harm that I have identified to the Listed Building and its setting would outweigh the benefits of securing a single new dwelling of this type in this location as well as those benefits associated with a modest contribution to the local authority's housing need.
19. As such, although this proposal demonstrates the potential for a solution to this site, through its more contextual design approach, ultimately the scale and massing of the proposed development would be excessive and cause harm to the immediate setting of the Listed Building and its associated farm complex that would not be outweighed by the associated benefits outlined above. As such the proposal fails to conform to The Framework as well as Policies ENV1 and GEN2 of the Uttlesford Local Plan that seeks to ensure a distinctive and high quality, contextual design in such cases that protect the historic environment.

Conclusion

20. For the reasons given above, and taking into account of all other matters raised, I dismiss the appeal.

A Graham

INSPECTOR