



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 January 2023

by Helen Smith BSc (Hons) MSc MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 February 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/J3720/W/22/3303922

The Dutch Barn, Glebe Farm, Wixford Road, Exhall B49 6EA

- 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 I Smith against the decision of Stratford-on-Avon District Council.
 - The application Ref 22/01291/FUL, dated 27 April 2022, was refused by notice dated 12 July 2022.
 - The development proposed is conversion of redundant farm building to form a detached dwelling with associated parking and amenity space.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposal is a suitable location for the proposed dwelling having regard to development plan policy; and
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, with particular regard to the Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is an agricultural building on the outskirts of the village of Exhall. The site is located near to the Church of St Giles and a former farmstead that has been converted to residential. The appeal site is accessed via a track off the main road. The surrounding area is countryside.

Suitability of Location

4. Policy CS.15 of the Stratford-on-Avon District Core Strategy (CS) (2016) relates to the distribution of development in Stratford-on-Avon District based on a pattern of balanced dispersal, in accordance with the distinctive character and function of a wide range of sustainable locations. Under this policy, Exhall would fall within the category of 'All other settlements', where development is to be restricted to small-scale community led schemes to meet identified local need. However, the proposal would not be a community-led scheme that would meet an identified local need. Therefore, the proposal runs contrary to Policy CS.15.
5. Exhall is a small, rural village that has a loose-knit linear form of development along the main highway. The appeal building itself is set back from the

prevailing pattern of development along the highway and located within a parcel of land positioned behind the former farmstead (Glebe Farm). The site is bound by agricultural fields on two of its sides and is clearly separated from the former farmstead buildings and the adjacent church by an access track, which detaches the appeal site from these buildings. The appeal building therefore exists as a sporadic form of development within a spacious rural setting. As such, it is not physically joined to the existing urban development. In addition, it does not have the characteristics of a village location but instead reads as part of the countryside beyond.

6. The proposal would represent a conversion of the existing building, as it would utilise the existing sub-structure of the barn, which comprises its steel portal and timber frame, parts of the corrugated cladded walls and the existing roof. However, the proposal would not be constructed of brick or stone and there is no substantive evidence before me to suggest that the appeal building is listed or of local historic, architectural or other merit. In addition, there is insufficient evidence to indicate that residential is the only viable use for the building.
7. As such, the proposal would not satisfy the forms of development in Policy AS.10 of the CS, including criterion c) which allows for the 'conversion to residential use of a building within the physical confines of a village', or criterion d), which allows 'conversion to a residential use of a redundant or disused building in open countryside, constructed of brick or stone, that is listed or of local historic, architectural or other merit. In such cases, residential should be the only viable use and the building should be capable of conversion in a manner that is appropriate to its character and setting.' Thus, the proposal would conflict with Policy AS.10.
8. Given the appeal site's proximity to existing dwellings, the site is not isolated in the context of paragraph 80 of the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework), which sets out that new isolated homes should be avoided in the countryside. However, the appeal site's lack of isolation with regard to paragraph 80 of the Framework does not mean that the site would be reasonably accessible to services when considered in the context of other requirements of the Framework.
9. Exhall does not have any shops, services or facilities. The site is not located within reasonable walking or cycling distance to settlements containing services and facilities, and the location is not well served by public transport. Therefore, future occupants of the proposed dwelling are likely to be reliant upon private vehicles to access essential services and facilities.
10. My attention has been drawn to a previous planning approval (20/01786/FUL). This previous approval was for a change of use of six existing holiday lets to five permanent dwellings. However, these buildings are sited closer to the main highway and are enclosed around a courtyard at the former Glebe Farmstead. Therefore, due to its siting closer to the road and its courtyard form it is not directly comparable to the appeal scheme, which is sited in an outlier position to the farmstead. Its relevance is therefore limited for the purposes of my determination of this appeal. As such I give it little weight.
11. I acknowledge that the appeal building is located within the Exhall Conservation Area and historically the building is likely to have had a functional relationship with the former Glebe farmstead. However, I find that the appeal building's physical separation from the former farm buildings means that it is

not viewed in the context of the cluster of former farm buildings. To that end, it appears as a separate building in the rural landscape and is physically segregated from the prevailing pattern of development in the village.

12. For the reasons given, the proposal would be located in the open countryside in conflict with policy. In addition, the proposal is not a community-led scheme and offers no significant benefits to the local area that would outweigh the harm identified. Thus, the proposal runs contrary to the overall development strategy for the District, which weighs heavily against it.
13. The proposal therefore fails to accord with Policy CS.15 and Policy AS.10 of the CS (2016), which strictly controls development in open countryside.

Character and Appearance

14. The appeal site comprises a three-bay steel framed Dutch barn with an attached timber-framed lean-to structure. The main barn incorporates a corrugated metal finish to the roof and side section adjacent to the lean-to structure. The barn is partially enclosed on its north-western and south-western elevations with close-boarded fencing, and its south-eastern elevation is open. The lean-to structure is finished with green corrugated sheeting to match the main barn.
15. The site is located within Exhall Conservation Area (CA). The CA is characterised, in part, by its rural village character and its pleasant rural surroundings. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires me to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Exhall Conservation Area.
16. The appeal building has an agricultural design and, along with the openness of the surrounding countryside, contributes positively to the rural character of the area and the CA.
17. The proposal would utilise matching materials to the existing barn, being constructed of new green corrugated cladding. However, the proposal would comprise a number of openings, including large glazed sections and a balcony feature on its south-eastern elevation. This would introduce an overtly modern feature that would detract from the plain, simple, and utilitarian character of the existing barn. The fenestration and balcony feature would be visible from public vantage points along the nearby public footpath. They would appear as incongruous and dominant features that would significantly harm the traditional character and appearance of the Dutch barn in its countryside setting. Furthermore, the proposed flue would have a large industrial appearance, resulting in an unsightly addition to the barn. The proposal would therefore cause harm to the character and appearance of the barn and the surrounding area.
18. Consequently, the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the CA. I would qualify that the degree of harm would be less than substantial. In accordance with paragraph 202 of the Framework, that harm should be weighed against any public benefits of the proposal.
19. The proposal would make use of a disused farm building and contribute to the delivery of housing for the area. However, given the small scale of the

proposal, the provision of one additional dwelling would attract only limited weight as a scheme benefit.

20. There would be short term economic benefits resulting from the construction stage, along with longer term economic and social benefits from the use of local shops and services by the occupants. However, these would be likely to amount to small benefits relating to just a single dwelling and therefore attract limited weight.
21. Accordingly, giving great weight to the conservation of the designated heritage asset, I consider that the less than substantial harm I have identified would not be outweighed by the scheme's public benefits when considered cumulatively.
22. For the reasons given, the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the CA. It would also cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area. As such, the proposal fails to accord with Policies CS.8 and CS.9 of the CS (2016). Collectively, these policies, amongst other things, seek to ensure new development achieves high quality design that respects local character and distinctiveness and conserves and enhances the significance of heritage assets. In addition, the proposal would not accord with the policies of the Framework (Section 16) which seek to conserve the historic environment.

Other Matters

23. My attention has been drawn to other planning permissions, including two prior approval permissions under Class Q of the General Permitted Development Order. However, prior approval is a different process. Therefore, the schemes put forward by the appellant are not directly comparable to the proposal before me. Furthermore, I do not know the full circumstances and site-specific details of these other schemes. In any event, I have determined the appeal on its own merits based on the information before me and my own observations of the area.
24. The appeal site is located near to the Church of St. Giles, a Grade II listed building, and Glebe Farmhouse, also a Grade II listed building. I am required to have regard to the preservation of the setting of these buildings. However, given that I am dismissing the appeal, the proposed development would not result in a change to the way in which these heritage assets are experienced. Therefore, I do not need to give this matter further consideration.
25. The Council has raised no objection to the proposal in respect of the effect it would have on the Arden Special Landscape Area (SLA). Based on the evidence before me and the observations I made during my site visit, I also find the proposed development would have no effect on the SLA. However, this is a neutral effect and therefore carries no weight in favour of the proposal.
26. The proposal would not be detrimental to the living conditions of any neighbouring occupiers. Nevertheless, a lack of harm in this regard does not weigh in favour of the proposal.

Conclusion

27. The proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole, and there are no material considerations worthy of sufficient weight that would indicate a decision other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above, the appeal is therefore dismissed.

Helen Smith

INSPECTOR