



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 June 2023

by R Sabu BA(Hons), MA, BArch, PgDip, RIBA, ARB

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3 July 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/D3505/W/22/3305343

Land North of Coram Street, Hadleigh, Suffolk

- 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 Coolmere Ltd against the decision of Babergh District Council.
 - The application Ref DC/22/01499, dated 21 March 2022, was refused by notice dated 25 May 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as, 'single storey dwelling served off existing approved access.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. As the proposal relates to the setting of a listed building I have had special regard to section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).

Main Issues

3. During the appeal, the Council confirmed that they no longer wish to contest the third and fourth reasons for refusal relating to protected species and a Special Protection Area. Therefore, the main issues are:
 - whether the proposal would provide a suitable location for housing having regard to the character and appearance of the area and the accessibility of services and facilities; and
 - the effect of the proposal on the Grade II listed Coram Street Farmhouse.

Reasons

Location

4. Coram Street is characterised by modest dwellings with ample spacing and open countryside beyond. Two dwellings to the north of the site were under construction at the time of my site visit. However, they were set back from the road and appeared to be set on large plots. Together with the undeveloped nature of the site, the area has an attractive spacious semi-rural feel.
5. The proposal would introduce a single storey dwelling and garage to the undeveloped plot that would urbanise the site. This would result in an adverse effect on the spacious semi-rural character of the area.

6. The building would be single storey, have a traditional form and external materials would include weatherboarding. The hedges along the boundary of the site may also partially screen views of the building from the road. However, it would nonetheless occupy a large part of the width of the plot and would be visible from the street. As such, the proposal would harm the spacious character of the area.
7. The site lies outside the settlement of Hadleigh and is therefore within the countryside in the terms of the Core Strategy & Policies (Part 1 of New Babergh Local Plan) February 2014 (CS).
8. The site lies around 2km from the town of Hadleigh which has a wide range of services and facilities. There are no footpaths or streetlights between the site and the town. Therefore, future occupiers may not be able to walk safely to the town. However, given the limited distance to the town, it would be cyclable.
9. Moreover, given the range of services and facilities in Hadleigh, it is unlikely that future occupiers would travel further than the town for daily requirements. Therefore, the site would provide adequate accessibility to services and facilities.
10. Consequently, the proposal would not provide a suitable location for housing having regard to the character and appearance of the area. Therefore, it would conflict with CS Policy CS15 which seeks, among other things, development that respect the local context and character of the different parts of the district.
11. CS Policies CS1 and CS2 relate to the presumption in favour of sustainable development and settlement pattern and are not directly relevant to this main issue.

Listed building

12. Coram Street Farmhouse (Farmhouse) is a historic timber framed farmhouse. Its significance lies in the evidence of historic rural vernacular architecture and its prominence in the surrounding area. Adjacent to the Farmhouse is a collection of barn structures which appear to have been converted to residential use. The site lies opposite the Farmhouse and within its setting. Given its undeveloped open nature, the site contributes positively to the rural setting of the listed building.
13. The proposed dwelling would urbanise the site and would be visible from the road and from the Farmhouse. I note the modest scale of the building, the proposed materials and the vegetation along the boundary. I also note the proposed managed meadowland at the front of the site. However, the scheme would nonetheless introduce a dwelling into the site which would be visible from the road and listed building. As such, it would diminish the rural character of the setting of the listed building thereby eroding its significance.
14. Consequently, the proposal would fail to preserve the significance of the Grade II listed building.
15. 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. Given the limited scale of development, the harm would be less than substantial in this instance but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight. Under such circumstances, paragraph 202

of the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, which includes the securing of optimal viable use of listed buildings.

16. I note that the soft frontages and hedges would be retained and that the vegetation on the site is proposed to be enhanced. The proposed meadow would occupy the front of the site but would be smaller than that approved as part of the development of houses to the north. Given the size of site, any ecological benefits would be likely to be limited in any event. From the evidence the site was historically undeveloped. As such, although the proposed building is designed to have a barn-like appearance, it would not replace a historic building and would not enhance the historic narrative of the listed building.
17. I also note the social benefits that future occupiers would bring to the community, the Government's aim of significantly boosting the supply of housing and temporary economic benefits during the construction process. Given the scale of the proposal, these benefits would be limited. Therefore, these are not sufficient to outweigh the harm that I have identified.
18. Given the above, I conclude that, on balance, the proposal would fail to preserve the setting of the Grade II listed building. This would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act, paragraph 199 of the Framework and conflict with CS Policy CS15 that seeks, among other things, proposals that respect heritage assets. It would also conflict with Policy CN06 of the Babergh Local Plan (2006) (LP) which seeks, among other things, new works within the setting of listed buildings that harmonise with the existing building and its setting. As a result, the proposal would not be in accordance with the development plan.
19. I note LP Policy CN01. However, as it does not relate to heritage assets, it is not directly relevant to this main issue.

Other Matters

20. I note the evidence regarding the consistency of CS Policy CS2 with the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework). However, even if limited weight was attributed to the conflict with this Policy, given the harm identified above, it would not alter my overall decision.
21. I note concerns regarding the service provided by the Council. However, I have necessarily assessed the scheme on its planning merits.

Conclusion

22. For the reasons given above the proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole and in the absence of material considerations to indicate otherwise, the appeal is dismissed.

R Sabu

INSPECTOR