



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 October 2023

by Penelope Metcalfe BA(Hons) MSc DipUP DipDBE MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26th October 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/P0430/D/23/3323847

The Old House, Forty Green, Bledlow, Buckinghamshire, HP27 9PN

- 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 and Mrs Adam and Olenka Lawrenson against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application Ref 22/08342/FUL, dated 18 December 2022, was refused by notice dated 14 April 2023.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing outbuilding and construction of new pool house associated with main dwelling.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issues

2. I consider that the main issues in this case are its effect on the setting of a listed building and on the character and appearance of the area with particular reference to trees.

Reasons

Setting of the listed building

3. The appeal site comprises a Grade II listed building located close to the road with a large garden extending to the east. The road boundary is marked by a variety of trees and shrubbery. The Old House is a one and a half storey thatched timber framed house dating from the 17th century with later additions. Despite these extensions, the house retains its vernacular domestic scale and character, which together with its architectural features and use of local materials, contribute to its special interest and significance.
4. Historical maps indicate that the existing outbuilding was outside the curtilage of the listed building on an area of land which has been incorporated into the present garden. The garden is open and spacious and surrounded by an open agricultural landscape which contributes positively to and provides the setting of the listed building.
5. Listed building consent was granted in April 2023 for the demolition of the existing outbuilding on the basis that it related only to the demolition of the building which would not harm the setting of the listed building.
6. The proposed pool house would include a games room, study/hobby room, shower/toilet facilities, a covered sitting area and a plant/storage room. It

would be L-shaped, with one section approximately 13m along its northwest side adjacent to the front boundary and 5m deep, and the other section approximately 11m along its northeast side and 5m deep. The roof would be pitched with a height of approximately 4.1m. The materials proposed are a mix of timber cladding and white painted render, with extensive glazing along the southwest and southeast facing the pool, and clay roofing tiles.

7. There have been previous proposals for a pool house. One was permitted in 2016 which was of a simple design, approximately 14m long and 6m wide and of a similar height to this appeal proposal. One was dismissed on appeal in 2021 which was approximately 17m long, 6m wide and 5.3m high and of timber cladding with a corrugated metal roof. The latter was found to be too domestic in appearance on the basis of, among other things, its size, the extensive glazing and openings and the external staircase, and it would harm the setting of the listed building.
8. The proposal the subject of this appeal would be larger in floor area than the scheme permitted in 2016 which was of a simpler linear form rather than the L-shape proposed. It would be smaller and slightly lower than that dismissed on appeal in 2021 and further from the house, but would still be a substantial building, considerably larger than the existing modest building it would replace. Although most of the external walling materials would be timber cladding, the extensive glazing and white painted render, together with the tiled roof, would give the building a domestic rather than the subordinate, low key appearance which would be more characteristic of a small outbuilding appropriate to the domestic curtilage of a traditional vernacular dwelling in the countryside.
9. The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (the Framework) states that when considering the impact of a proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to that asset's conservation. Paragraph 202 states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
10. I consider that the size, location and domestic design of the proposed pool house are such that it would amount to a substantial and prominent presence in the visual and historical context of the listed building. It would diminish the status of the latter as the primary building on the site, causing harm to the setting of the listed building. This harm would be less than substantial and no public benefit has been identified.
11. I conclude that the proposal would harm the setting of the listed building and would be contrary to the Framework and to policies CP11 and DM31 of the Wycombe District Local Plan 2019 which promote the conservation of the historic environment, including the protection from harm of listed buildings and their settings.

Character and appearance

12. The site is located in an open agricultural landscape with large fields and boundary hedgerows and trees and sporadic development including a two storey detached house to the north. There is a wide gate giving access to the garden adjacent to the site of the proposed pool house. The existing outbuilding is partially screened by mainly deciduous hedging and a number of

mature deciduous trees and blends into the surroundings by virtue of its materials and modest size and profile.

13. Relevant policies in this context include local plan policies DM34, DM35 and DM44 which relate, among other things, to the protection of green infrastructure and biodiversity, the character of development in the natural context and the protection of the countryside, and Policy 6 of the Bledlow-cum-Saunderton Neighbourhood Plan (the neighbourhood plan) which requires new buildings to sit discreetly in the landscape and not have a negative impact on traditional buildings in the area.
14. The proposed pool house would be of a design, size and form which would have a domestic appearance out of keeping with the rural character of the surrounding countryside. Although the use of the building could be limited to a use ancillary to the main house, this does not diminish the impact of its size and domestic appearance, which would not sit discreetly in the open landscape and would therefore conflict with Policy 6 of the neighbourhood plan. The screening effect of the trees and hedging is limited when the leaves are off the trees and, in any case, there is no guarantee the vegetation would remain in the future. I consider that reliance on the screening effect would be insufficient to mitigate the visual impact of the proposal.
15. Although the existing trees are not subject to any statutory protection, they make an important and valuable contribution to the rural character of the area and it is unclear whether the existing outbuilding could be removed or the proposed pool house constructed with causing damage to them. Damage to or loss of the trees would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the landscape. In the absence of an arboricultural survey and assessment it is not clear whether the proposal could be implemented without causing unacceptable harm to the trees.
16. There is no evidence before me that the appellant has demonstrated that there would be no adverse effect on local wildlife including protected species and the local ecology. Consequently, I am unable to assess whether or not it would have a detrimental effect in this respect. It is therefore in conflict with local plan policy DM34, which, among other things, requires development to protect and enhance biodiversity, and for proposals to be supported by a proportionate assessment of existing biodiversity and ecological features.
17. I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area, contrary to local plan policies DM34, DM35 and DM44 and Policy 6 of the neighbourhood plan.
18. The appellant has drawn my attention to a development permitted at The Gables, Skittle Green. I have limited information regarding this, but it appears that it was the conversion of an existing stables building which was clearly related to the dwelling both physically and functionally and did not involve the construction of a new building or the setting of a listed building. The circumstances are therefore different from those of the appeal proposal.
19. For the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

PAG Metcalfe

INSPECTOR