



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 March 2024

by C Butcher BSc MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 April 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/J1860/W/23/3328922

The Old School House, Suckley Road, Leigh WR6 5LE

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs Cornford against the decision of Malvern Hills District Council.
 - The application Ref is M/23/00697/FUL.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of an existing dwelling and the construction of a replacement dwelling, including associated landscaping works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, including the setting of non-designated heritage assets.

Reasons

3. The site is located in a small rural village. The dwellings in the immediate area are of a variety of styles, sizes and designs which reflects the natural evolution of the village over many years. However, there are still common features that provide a feeling of uniformity among the buildings such as being brick built and having pitched tile roofs. The existing dwelling that occupies the appeal site largely conforms with this general character.
4. The proposed replacement dwelling would be very different, being predominantly rendered in timber, with a large flat roof and grey aluminium doors and windows. This would provide the dwelling with a wholly modern appearance that would bear little resemblance to existing dwellings nearby, including the more modern homes on Leigh Hurst. As a result, it would appear as an incongruous block like structure which would clearly look out of place in the context of its surroundings. The fact that there are some examples of flat roofs in the area does very little to mitigate this harm given that they only comprise very small areas of roofscape as part of garages or extensions.
5. While the dwelling would not be visible from Suckley Road, I did observe on my site visit that it would be very apparent when viewed from the public footpath that runs to the east of the appeal site. This issue would be mitigated to some extent in the summer months when the trees would be in the full leaf, however, during autumn and winter the harm associated with the appearance of the proposed dwelling would be clear and obvious.

6. The appeal site is also within the setting of Oakapple Cottage which is regarded as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA). While this dwelling has been extended and modernised over the years, the historic core of the building can still be appreciated from the private driveway. From this vantage point, the appearance of the proposed dwelling would clearly result in harm to the setting of the NDHA and the contribution that this makes to the building's significance.
7. There are other dwellings that are noted as being NDHA's to the south of Suckley Road. However, the proposed building would not be visible from this location and so I do not find that the settings of these buildings would be harmed.
8. Nevertheless, I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area, including the setting of Oakapple Cottage. It would therefore conflict with Policies SWDP6, SWDP21, SWDP24 and SWDP25 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan, February 2016, the relevant aspects of which seek to ensure good design and the preservation of character and appearance, including the historic environment. It would also conflict with Policy LB/D/1 of the Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan 2022 – 2041 which has similar aims.

Conclusion

9. The proposed development conflicts with the development plan when considered as a whole. I give little weight to the suggestion that the replacement building would be more sustainable in its use of energy than the existing building, as the retention and re-use of existing buildings is inherently sustainable and avoids the environmental impacts arising from demolition, the manufacture of materials and the construction process.
10. Accordingly, there are no material considerations, either individually or in combination, that outweigh the identified harm and associated development plan conflict. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

C Butcher

INSPECTOR