



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 June 2024

by Ian Radcliffe BSc(Hons) MRTPI MCIEH DMS

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5th July 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/P1805/W/23/3329267

Bordesley Hall Farm, Storage Lane, Alvechurch, Worcestershire, B48 7ES

- 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 M Price against the decision of Bromsgrove District Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/00391/FUL.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing office buildings and erection of 2 no. dwellings, car parking and associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The revised National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') was published on 20 December 2023 after the appeal had been submitted. However, as no changes were made to the conserving and enhancing the historic environment section of the Framework, and the other changes that were made are not material to this decision, the case of the appellant has not been prejudiced by not being able to comment in his statement on the revised Framework. I have therefore determined the appeal on the basis of the appeal statement, officer report and comments that have been received.

Main Issue

3. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the historic environment.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located within the Green Belt. It is common ground that the proposal in redeveloping previously developed land would comply with policy BDP4 of the Bromsgrove District Plan and paragraph 154 of the Framework and so would not constitute inappropriate development. I agree with that assessment.

Historic Environment

5. Policy BDP20 of the Bromsgrove District Plan ('District Plan') sets out the Council's approach to managing the historic environment. Amongst other matters, policy BDP19 of the District Plan requires that development also enhances the character and distinctiveness of the local area.
6. The Framework advises that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

7. The appeal site is occupied by a nineteenth century agricultural building that was converted to offices following the grant of planning permission in 2005. It is a matter of dispute between the main parties as to whether the building is a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA). Planning Practice Guidance notes that decisions to identify a building as a NDHA must be based on sound evidence.
8. Bromsgrove has published its selection criteria for its Local Heritage List. The wording of policy BDP20 makes clear that NDHAs are not limited to those identified on the Local List and assets recorded in the Historic Environment Record.
9. The former agricultural building is an L shaped, gable ended, single storey building. Constructed from brick and roofed in clay tiles it has a simple, utilitarian form typical of Victorian agricultural buildings associated with Bordesley Hall Farm. In terms of its authenticity, it is evident from historical mapping that the building was originally U shaped and that by some point after 1972 the western side of the building was demolished. Many of the original openings on the outside eastern elevation of the building though were retained as part of the conversion to office use, as were the dovecotes in the southern gable end. Attached to its northern end is a modest, more recently constructed single storey building that is also used for offices.
10. No drawings have been provided of the building's elevations before its conversion occurred approximately 20 years ago. However, on the basis of what I have read and seen it appears that the regular pattern of arched doors and windows on the inside elevations involved modifications to the brickwork and fenestration that, together with the insertion of rooflights, were carried out as part of the office conversion. Internally, although the original brickwork and flooring is no longer exposed, attractive King Post trusses support the building's vaulted ceiling. Taking the form of the building, the materials used in its construction and the extent of original features retained it is therefore overall a reasonably authentic historical building with some architectural interest.
11. The building is a reasonable example of a modified Victorian agricultural building associated with Bordesley Hall Farm. Owing to its location, partly enclosed by a retaining wall and buildings in non-agricultural use, it is not visible off site. Nevertheless, for those who visit the site and are familiar with the history of surrounding development the building forms part of the agricultural landscape associated with Bordesley Hall and Bordesley Hall Farmhouse. Given that the permission for residential development at Bordesley Hall involves preservation of the Hall this relationship will continue. I therefore agree with the appellant that the building and its relationship to the local historic environment does not meet the Council's criteria for it to be included on its Local Heritage list. However, this does not mean that it has no heritage value and is not a heritage asset. For the reasons given above, I find that it is a NDHA with historical and architectural significance of low to moderate value.
12. The proposed development would result in the complete loss of this NDHA and its historical and architectural significance and the loss of the attached more recent building on its northern side.

Planning balance and conclusion

13. Policy BDP20.14 of the District Plan is consistent with paragraph 209 of the Framework which advises that in considering applications that affect NDHAs a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

14. At present the Council cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites. With a housing land supply of 3.3 years the shortfall is notable. In circumstances where less than a 5 year supply exists, footnote 8 of the Framework establishes that the policies which are most important for determining the application are deemed to be out-of-date. Consequently, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.
15. The Framework sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development and the policies of the Framework taken as a whole constitute the Government's view of what sustainable development means in practice. There are three overarching objectives to sustainable development: social, economic and environmental.
16. The proposed development would make use of a previously developed site and result in two, new, inoffensively designed, three bedroom houses on the appeal site, rather than the single dwelling that would be provided if the permission for residential conversion of the existing building was implemented. Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that the proposed development which would need to begin within 3 years would be completed relatively swiftly. The social and economic benefits though associated with a single additional family sized dwelling on previously developed land would be limited, even taking account of the objective of boosting significantly the supply of housing in the Framework, the Council's housing land supply position and the restrictions that the Green Belt places on increasing such supply. Environmentally, the benefit of creation of new roosting opportunities and nesting for birds would be small.
17. The rectangular plan form and the L shape of the NDHA limits the dimensions of its rooms. However, even allowing for the internal insulation of the building's walls, no substantive evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that its internal dimensions would be insufficient to allow a residential conversion that would comply with the Nationally Described Space Standards.
18. Environmentally and socially, the adverse impacts of the proposal on the historic environment and the character and distinctiveness of the local area through demolition of the NDHA is a notable concern. The adverse impacts in this regard would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the social and economic benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. As a result, the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply.
19. In redeveloping previously developed land the proposed development would comply with policy BDP4 of the Bromsgrove District Plan. However, given the harm that the proposal would cause to the historic environment and the character and distinctiveness of the local area, contrary to policies BDP20 and BDP19 of the District Plan, I find that the scheme would be contrary to the development plan considered as a whole. There are no other considerations, including the provisions of the Framework, which outweigh this finding. Therefore, for the reasons given, the appeal should be dismissed.

Ian Radcliffe

Inspector