



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 April 2025

by K Stephens BSc (Hons) MTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 02 June 2025.

Appeal Ref: APP/J1860/D/25/3359615

Sherborne, Severn Stoke, Worcestershire WR8 9JA

- 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 Gail McGrath against the decision of Malvern Hills District Council.
 - The application Ref is M/24/00989/HP.
 - The development was originally described as “This application is seeking planning permission for a previously built garage. The existing garage is built at the bottom of a slope so that the garage height will not impact the surrounding neighbours’ or their view. The proposal is to paint the white painted brick to a light brown colour on all faces of the garage and retain the dark brick at the base of the garage. The North and South faces will be covered in a new wooden lattice that will allow for new evergreen vegetation to grow along the short faces of the building to cover the walls in vegetation and lessen the visual impact. The roof is to be covered in a sedum green roof which will also blend the roof into the adjacent hedge.”
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for construction of a block of four garages and amendments to elevation and roof treatments at Sherborne, Severn Stoke, Worcestershire WR8 9JA in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref M/24/00989/HP and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following condition:
 - 1) Within 3 months of the date of this permission, the proposed alterations to the garages as shown on drawing no. 2418-2 shall be fully implemented with details of the paint colours to be first submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Preliminary Matters

2. Since the appeal was made, a revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published in December 2024. As the document has not raised any new matters which are determinative to this appeal, I am satisfied that neither party would be prejudiced by my consideration of the revised Framework in reaching my decision.
3. I saw that the block of garages has been built (apparently circa 2020/21). Whilst the application is retrospective I have dealt with the appeal on its planning merits. I have omitted reference to ‘retrospective’ from the description above as this is not a definition of development.
4. I have used the Council’s description from the decision notice as it more succinctly describes the development. The condition I have imposed ensures that the works described in the appellant’s lengthy description and shown on the submitted plans are carried out.

5. For development which affects a listed building or its setting I am required, under section 66(1) of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the [listed] building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Background

6. The Old School House is a Grade II listed building¹ and has been successively in use as a farmhouse, a school, and as a Club and hotel (Severn Stoke Country Club²). There has been a protracted planning history at the Old School House and wider site. The dwelling Sherbourne lies to the south of the Old School House and according to the submitted evidence was built in about 2002 as ancillary staff accommodation for the Club. The Old School House has since been converted into 4 dwellings (Pembroke, Highclere, Oakwood and Cedar Lodge). To the rear of the Old School House is a curtilage listed outbuilding, known as Coventry Barn, which was ancillary to the school in the 1800s and was in situ at the time of listing. Coventry Barn has also been subject to a number of planning and listed building consents to be converted into a dwelling.
7. All six properties share the same vehicular access point off the A38 and shared driveway areas. There have been a number of applications submitted for various garaging and parking proposals for the properties in various permutations, not all of which have been fully implemented. This corresponds with the Council's statement that it has no objection in principle to allowing some ancillary garage buildings.
8. The appellant has also submitted a plan extract from a 2019 application³ that shows various proposed car ports at the wider site – a double car port on the site where the appeal garage now stands and 2 double car ports between the end of The Old School House and the site entrance off the A38. None of the car ports have been erected but, on my visit, I saw a large rectangular concrete base had been laid in a location similar to that shown on the submitted plan.
9. Parking for Sherborne was also considered in 2015 as part of an application to extend Sherborne and provide 2 car parking spaces to the rear and a dedicated access road from the south. The parking and access do not appear to have been provided. However, a large block of 4 garages the subject of this appeal (hereafter the appeal garages) has been erected in the space between the garden boundaries of Coventry Barn and Sherborne.

Main Issues

10. The main issues in this appeal are the effect of the development on the setting of Grade II listed The Old School House and Coventry Barn, and on the character and appearance of the area.

¹ National Heritage List for England: list entry number 1349083

² The Old School House was formally listed as Severn Stoke Country Club, but the list entry was subject to a minor amendment on 22 December 2021 to update the name and address.

³ Local Planning Authority ref: 19/002303/FUL

Reasons

Special interest and significance of the heritage assets

11. According to the listing description the Old School House is a timber frame and painted brick house dating from the 17th century, with a later 19th century brick schoolroom and later modern ground floor additions. From the submitted evidence it appears that the building became a school in the mid-19th century, then later a Country Club/hotel, but was most probably built originally as part of a farm. From what I saw on site and the submitted evidence, I consider the special interest and significance of the listed building is largely derived from its architectural, historic and archaeological interests in illustrating a 17th century vernacular timber-framed rural dwelling and later its change to a school reflecting the social evolution of the village.
12. The timber framed and timber clad Coventry Barn, now converted into a dwelling, sits to the west of the Old School House and is thought to be an ancillary building for the school. Its surviving timber framing appears to be broadly of late 18th or early 19th century. It is thought it may have been an existing barn that was dismantled and re-erected on the site. Its significance would appear to stem from its architectural, archaeological and historic interest as an example of a vernacular rural building using traditional materials and methods of construction and its association with the former school.
13. Special interest and significance of the heritage assets also stem, in part, from their setting and the surroundings in which they are experienced. As the Framework glossary explains, the extent of the setting of a heritage asset is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve.
14. In terms of its wider setting, the Old School House occupies a prominent and elevated location on the main road through the village and is a striking feature of the street scene. The Coventry Barn cannot be seen from the road. Due to its height and elevated position, the Old School House can also be seen from the west when viewed across fields from Ham Lane, as can the Coventry Barn. This wider setting contributes to an understanding of the Old School House as part of an original farmstead in an agrarian landscape, and the Coventry Barn ancillary to it later in time.
15. The immediate setting to the Old School House is the land to the rear. It is clear from the planning history and historical map evidence that the changes in use of the building from farm to school to club and hotel have all brought their attendant changes and alterations as well as various other buildings being built and demolished and surfacing and landscaping altered around them accordingly. Submitted evidence suggests there were gardens and trees to the rear of the school. When it became the Country Club the openness of the area was retained, and apparently a swimming pool occupied what is now the property Sherborne.
16. The subsequent conversion of the Old School House and Coventry Barn into residential dwellings and formation of separate curtilage for Sherborne has created a complex of six dwellings, together with the associated subdivision of the rear space into separate private garden spaces, demarcated with white boundary walls and modern glass balconies, although I understand the white wall boundary treatment around the Coventry Barn has not been fully authorised.

17. Before the appeal garages were built, the area would have been the remaining open space from the garden area of what was once the school and Club. The appellant's aerial image, taken circa 2018, shows the site of the appeal garages appearing to be grassed and open. The track is in a similar alignment to the current driveway. There are no areas of soft landscaping remaining in this space. Much of the historical context and setting has been diminished by the conversion of Old School House and Coventry Barn to residential units and the erection of garden boundary walls. Nonetheless, the space currently occupied by the appeal garages would have retained some of the open area setting, even if that experience has been eroded by the consented residential conversions.

Appeal development and effects

18. The appeal garages building is painted white and measures about 13 metres wide across the front with 4 garage doors and is some 6 metres deep. It is about 2.55 metres tall and has a flat roof. There is a tarmac apron that allows parking for one car in front of each garage door. The building is located parallel to and adjacent the western site boundary.
19. I concur with the parties that the appeal garages are not visible from the A38 and do not interfere with the principal roadside elevation or the setting of the listed building in the street scene. Due to differing ground levels across the wider site, the appeal garages are set down at lower level than the main bonded-gravel access driveway and the gardens of the converted Old School House. From Ham Lane to the west/south west the garage building is hardly visible due to it being set down at a lower level than the driveway and being flat roofed. Significantly, views and the wider setting of the Old School House and Coventry Barn are not obscured or affected by it. Hence the Old School House retains its prominence in the village and the wider landscape setting.
20. The appellant's aerial image shows an open area with no buildings on the site of the present appeal garages. However, the extract from the 1840 Tithe map clearly shows a linear building in the approximate location of the appeal garages. This building appears to form the outer perimeter of an enclosed courtyard farmstead, as at this stage the site was not yet a school.
21. Hence, there is historic precedent that an ancillary building, probably part of the former farmstead, occupied part of the site of the appeal garages and formed part of the enclosure to the rear of the Old School House when it was a farm. The appeal garages have therefore been built where there were once outbuildings. Their alignment along the western site boundary also reinstates the former courtyard enclosure shown on the 1840 Tithe Map.
22. Later Ordnance Survey extracts from 1884 and 1904 show the building no longer there. Instead the Coventry Barn (part of a bigger building) appears. This would seem to coincide with the opening of the school, probably in about 1849, as it was in 1848 that arrangements were made to extend education provision in the Parish and the building was given to the Parish by trustees of the 9th Earl of Coventry, along with funds for a schoolmaster's house and classroom to be added. Indeed the map extracts are annotated with the word 'school' close to what is now the Coventry Barn.
23. Due to their low-lying, flat roofed, simple linear form, the appeal garages appear somewhat like an ancillary building. The garage block has been painted white,

presumably to match the surrounding white boundary walls. However, the appellant has conceded that the white colour of the garage building is somewhat stark. I concur. Coupled with the expanse of the other surrounding white boundary walling, which are modern and urban in their appearance and more akin to a 'Mediterranean' setting than a rural Worcestershire village, the garage block as it exists is out of keeping within its historic context.

24. However, the plans propose to paint the brick work of the appeal garages a brown and the garage doors a darker teal-type colour. This would help the building become visually recessive and help give the Old School House its primacy and make the appeal garages appear more ancillary and reduce their urban appearance. The plans also propose installing a green roof and installing a trellis with evergreen planting. These would have limited effect on the appearance of the garage building as a whole but would soften the outlook for occupiers of the converted properties who look out across the roof of the garages towards the wider surrounding landscape.
25. Drawing the various points together, the immediate settings to the heritage assets have already been much changed by the recent approved residential conversions and the various consents for garages around the wider site. I find the appeal garages, with the proposed external changes, would not harm the setting of either the Old School House or Coventry Barn.
26. Accordingly the appeal garages, when altered, would accord with Policies SWDP21 and SWDP24 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan. Collectively these seek, amongst other things, and conserves or enhances heritage assets, including their setting.

Character and appearance

27. The site lies within the village of Severn Stoke. It is a predominantly a linear settlement either side of the A38. There are a mix of building design, styles and ages and some more modern housing developments. The Old School House, a former farm, historically had various ancillary buildings to its rear, as evidenced in various map extracts. There are also examples in the village of detached and separate garage buildings for residential properties. The appeal garages in their current location would not therefore be out of keeping with the historic form of development on the site, or more modern forms elsewhere in the village.
28. The subsequent residential conversions of the Old School House and Coventry Barn and subdivision of the space with white wall boundary treatments has already resulted in a somewhat modern and urban environment in this rural village within the setting of listed buildings.
29. The appeal garages have been painted white to match the other boundary walls. However, as already described above, the proposed external changes to the appearance of the garage building will make them look more rural, more ancillary and help to visually reduce their size and form. The garage building is not visible from the A38 and hardly discernible in the wider landscape.
30. I am satisfied that the development, as proposed to be altered, would not harm the character and appearance of the village and the surrounding area. Accordingly, they would accord with Policy SWDP6 South Worcestershire Development Plan,

which seeks, amongst other things, to ensure development responds to its surroundings and settlement character.

Other Matters

31. The Council refers to other possible options for providing garaging/parking provision for Sherbourne within the wider site. There may well be permissions that have not been implemented for various reasons or other locations that could be considered for parking and/or garaging, but these do not form part of the appeal before me.

Conditions

32. The garage building that has been erected is not what has been proposed. I have imposed a condition to ensure that the required details for changes to the external appearance are submitted, approved and implemented so as to make the development acceptable in planning terms. There is a strict timetable for compliance because permission is being granted retrospectively, and it is not possible to use a negatively worded condition to secure the approval and implementation of the proposed works before the development takes place. The condition will ensure that the development can be enforced against if the requirements are not met. As the alterations are not particularly difficult or complex - namely painting the exterior of the building, planting a green roof and erecting trellis and planting evergreen plants – I consider a 3 month time period would be adequate to achieve this.

Conclusion

33. For the reasons given above the appeal should be allowed.

K Stephens
INSPECTOR