



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 May 2022

by Samuel Watson BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8 June 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/J3720/W/21/3289265

Land and Buildings at Carrow Barn, north-east of Avon Carrow, off Hill View, Avon Dassett, Southam, Warwickshire 441094, 249955

- 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 R Worrall, Mr M Worrall and Mr L Worrall against the decision of Stratford-on-Avon District Council.
 - The application Ref 21/01361/FUL, dated 22 April 2021, was refused by notice dated 19 August 2021.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of existing barn, modern garage buildings and dilapidated structure, and erection of two local market dwellings and all associated works, including conversion of existing traditional building to garage for Plot 1.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, with particular regard to heritage assets and a special landscape area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located within the Avon Dassett Conservation Area which covers the village of Avon Dassett and the associated land surrounding it. The village is characterised by primarily modest stone cottages and terraces focused on the main road through the village, and set between the two, listed, country homes of Bitham Hall to the north and Avon Carrow to the south. The significance of this conservation area stems from the extent to which the historic buildings have remained intact and the legibility of the village's historic form and connection to both agriculture and the country homes. Avon Carrow is a large building set behind the development facing the road, Avon Dassett. It is set around a courtyard and adjoins agricultural land on three sides. Although converted to separate dwellings, its significance stems from the extent to which the historic interest and context of the building is still intact. Given the close proximity of the site, the proposal would clearly be within its setting.
4. The appeal site is also located with the Ironstone Hills Fringe, which the Stratford-on-Avon District Special Landscape Areas Study (the SLAS, June 2012) describes as being characterised by a rolling landscape of farmland with occasional woodland and sparse settlements of nucleated villages.

5. The appeal site itself is a long plot which set behind, and projecting away from, the main development of the village, and is accessed via the drive serving Avon Carrow. It is wooded and largely overgrown but contains two large agricultural buildings, one of which has collapsed. A public footpath runs along the edge of the site closest to Avon Carrow, from the village toward the fields beyond the site. Although the buildings are visible from the footpath, as they are set away from the road, Avon Dasset, and surrounded by mature trees, they are a retiring feature within the surrounding area.
6. The location of the two dwellings well away from the main road, and their spacious siting within the plot, would jar with the tight pattern of development characteristic of the village and conservation area. Although I note spacious plots, these appear to be primarily limited to the country homes and farmhouses, neither of which the proposal would be akin to. Their location and layout would also erode the defined visual boundary of the village and extend the built-up area into the open countryside.
7. As such, their siting would also begin to erode the rural surroundings close to Avon Carrow by extending the residential built form in front of the listed building's entrance, therefore cutting it off from its context as a country house. Although somewhat screened by the mature vegetation along the shared boundary, I find that this would only be effective while the trees are in leaf and that views would be more readily afforded when the trees are bare. As the site is higher than Avon Carrow the dwellings would be a dominant feature in views of the listed building.
8. Given the identified harm above, the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area or the setting of the listed building. I am mindful of the scale of the development in relation to these heritage assets and find that the harm caused would be less than substantial. However, the Framework is clear that great weight should be given to an asset's conservation. In this case the harm that I have identified needs to be weighed against the public benefits of the development.
9. The appellant has submitted that the proposed development would provide new local market dwellings where there is an identified need. I note that the Council agrees that there is such a need and moreover, the proposal would contribute towards the government's aims of increasing housing supply. As such I attach the provision of the new housing significant weight. However, the proposed development is of a small scale and so any economic or social benefits from the construction works and future occupiers would be limited.
10. The appellant has also raised a number of other benefits of the scheme, namely; the removal of the existing barns, the planting of trees and hedgerows, low carbon technologies, and improvements to the public right of way. I find that collectively these matters would provide public benefits to the character and appearance of the area, the environment and pedestrian safety. However, given the scale of these works the benefits achieved would be modest. Moreover, whilst I am mindful that these improvements may not be viable without some development taking place, it has not been suitably demonstrated that the proposal before me is necessary to realise these improvements. I therefore attached these matters limited weight.
11. Accordingly, although I have found public benefits, including one of significant weight, there is no public benefit cited which outweighs the considerable

importance and weight I give to preserving the character or appearance of the conservation area and setting of the listed building.

12. Therefore, as the proposal would not preserve or enhance the nearby heritage assets and would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area, including its landscape setting, it would conflict with Policies CS.5, CS.8, CS.9 and CS.12 of the Stratford-on-Avon District Core Strategy 2011 to 2031. These policies, amongst other matters, collectively require developments to maintain and enhance the sense of place, their local context and the surrounding landscape, as well as protect and enhance the inherent value of the historic environment. The proposal would also conflict with Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) regarding the historic environment, including Paragraphs 197 and 199-208.

Conclusion

13. The proposal would conflict with the development plan and there are no other considerations, including the Framework, that outweigh this conflict. Therefore, and for the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Samuel Watson

INSPECTOR