The Planning Inspectorate

Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol
BS1 6PN

Direct Line:
Customer Services:
0303 444 5000

Email: RT1@planninginspectorate.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/planning-inspectorate

Planning Appeals
Wiltshire Council
Monkton Park Office
Chippenham
Wiltshire
SN5 1ER

Your Ref: PL/2023/08462
Our Ref: APP/Y3940/W/24/3338548

06 September 2024

Dear Sir/Madam,

Town and Country Planning Act 1990
Appeal by Mr Gil Schwenk
Site Address: Long Barn, Lower Stanton St Quintin, Chippenham, SN14 6DB

I enclose a copy of our Inspector's decision on the above appeal(s).

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Thank you in advance for taking the time to provide us with valuable feedback.

Yours sincerely,

Zoe Day
Zoe Day

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The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 August 2024

by B Phillips BSc MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 September 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3940/W/24/3338548
The Long Barn, Avils Lane South East C166 To Scotland Hill, Lower Stanton St Quintin, Wiltshire SN14 6DB

- 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 Gil Schwenk against the decision of Wiltshire Council.
- The application Ref is PL/2023/08462.
- The development proposed is the subdivision of existing dwelling to 4no. separate dwellinghouses with associated works to provide associated curtilages and parking. Erection of Car Port.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Amended plans have been submitted which show existing and proposed skylights, a revised size and footprint for the carport and a vehicle tracking plan. These alterations are limited, and the Council have commented on the amended plans. Given the minor alterations to the scheme, to consider them would not deprive those who should have been consulted on the change, the opportunity of such consultation. I have therefore considered the appeal on the basis of these amended plans.

3. The Government published in December 2023 a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). The Council and the appellant have referenced this document within their appeal statements and as such I am satisfied that no party would be prejudiced by my also making reference to the Framework in this decision.

4. Since determination of the application, the Council has now adopted the Supplementary Planning Document Wiltshire Design Guide (March 2024) (SPD), and this is referenced in their statement of case. The appellant has had opportunity to comment on this document, and again, as such I am satisfied that no party would be prejudiced by my also making reference to the SPD in this decision.

5. The refusal reason and officer report set out that, in relation to the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the host property and neighbouring listed dwelling, that insufficient information was submitted. The Council's statement of case expands and elaborates on these and identify harm. Whilst the comments from the Conservation Officer relate to a

subsequent application[1], the similarities are sufficient for the comments to be relevant. The appellant has had opportunity to comment on this matter and has done so. As such, again, there would be no harm to natural justice in my consideration of the Council's comments on this matter.

Main Issues

6. The main issues in this case are:

• the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host property and its significance as a non-designated heritage asset, and the effect on the character and appearance of the surroundings;

• the effect of the proposed development on the setting of the Grade II listed Glebe House;

• the effect of the proposal on highway safety;

• whether the proposal would provide adequate living accommodation for future occupiers; with respect to the provision of light; and

• whether the proposal would meet sustainability and carbon reduction requirements.

Reasons

Character and appearance

7. The appeal property, Long Barn, is a part one part two-storey L-shaped building, with the single-storey rear element being a much more recent addition to the historic Long Barn itself, which is of two-storey form. The Long Barn forms part of an historic farmstead which is based around the residential property of Glebe Farm House, a Grade II listed property which is located to the immediate south.

8. The immediate context of this edge of settlement location is of large, detached dwellings, set within generous plots. This contributes positively to the surrounding spacious character, befitting of its countryside surroundings. There are examples of semi-detached and terraced properties on Seagry Road and Avil's lane at the centre of the settlement, however these are some distance from the appeal site and do not form part of its immediate surrounding context.

9. The proposal would result in a terrace of 4 dwellings, which would appear incongruous in the established immediately surrounding context of large, detached dwellings. The garden spaces for 3 of the 4 units would be significantly smaller than the gardens of neighbouring properties. The units would, compared to the surrounding neighbouring dwellings, appear cramped within their plots. This would erode the area's sense of spaciousness.

10. Consequently, the proposal would not reflect the form nor grain of existing development and would therefore harm the established spacious character of the surroundings.

11. The Council set out that Long Barn is a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA). Whilst the appellant disputes this, the Glossary of the Framework establishes

[1] Application reference PL/2024/03549

that non-designated heritage assets are 'those identified by the local planning authority'. Paragraph 209 of the Framework sets out that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. The significance of Long Barn results from its close relationship with the adjacent Grade II listed Glebe Farm House, and its historic form, design and appearance.

12. Whilst the barn has been extended[2] and a number of windows and openings inserted due to its conversion to residential[3], by virtue of the retention of mostly solid elevations with limited openings, the structure retains its simple form and appearance, and its original use remains evident. It contributes positively to the wider traditional farmstead layout and character of the surroundings.

13. In order to facilitate the separation of the building into four units, the proposal would result in the insertion of more openings into the front elevation and the increase in the scale of some openings to provide new doorways. Larger roof lights are also proposed. This would result in the further diminishing of the original simple form and character of the barn. Any improvements to the building through the removal of low-quality materials and its fenestration would not mitigate for this visual impact.

14. The setting of Long Barn is, whilst domestic, currently mostly open, befitting its original agricultural use. The clear separation of the front garden area and insertion of boundaries to provide separate garden areas for 3 of the units would break up the open frontage. As the only garden spaces for these properties, these spaces would likely include paraphernalia associated with independent residential use, such as outdoor seating and a washing line, additional landscaping and fencing. This would incongruously further domesticate the existing mostly open frontage and conflict with the original simple singular form of the building. It would diminish and harm its original character and its setting.

15. I conclude that the development would therefore harm the character and appearance of the host property and its significance as a non-designated heritage asset and would harm the character and appearance of the wider surroundings. This would conflict with Policies 57 and 58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) (CS), which along with the Framework, require development to respond positively to the locally distinctive character of settlements, and to protect built heritage.

Glebe House

16. As set out above, Glebe House is a Grade II listed building. Glebe House was originally a farmhouse originating in the late 16th or early 17th century. The significance of the property is derived from its special architectural and historic interest and level of survival. The listing description notes that it is an interesting example of early vernacular architecture, built in stone rubble, painted to the front, with part pitched clay tiled roofs.

17. Long Barn was part of the historic farm buildings of Glebe House and forms part of the historic context of the site. However, the frontage of Long Barn is separated from Glebe House by orientation, and it is not experienced as part of

[2] Application reference N/08/01256/FUL
[3] Application references N/95/2221.F & N/96/00740/FUL

its immediate setting. Long Barn is separated visually from Glebe House in that it clearly now forms a separate unit. The alterations on the side of Long Barn facing Glebe House are limited to an additional roof light, and the alterations on the frontage would not affect the architectural qualities of Glebe House or its immediate setting and would not harm how the heritage asset is experienced and appreciated.

18. The proposal would not have a detrimental effect on the setting of the Grade II listed Glebe House. Accordingly, I find that its significance would be preserved, in accordance with Section 66(1) of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990. There is no conflict in this respect with the protection of built heritage goals of CP Policy 58.

Highway Safety

19. Submitted drawing P 18676_900 02 provides vehicle tracking details, which show that a refuse vehicle can enter the site in forward gear, turn and exit in a forward gear. It also shows that this is also the case for emergency vehicles such as fire trucks and ambulances.

20. The existing appeal site access is sited on a sharp bend in the highway. Given the limited visibility to road users at this point, even if the highway is used as a 'rat run' and is busy at certain times, vehicle speeds at this point are low. Views from the access to the south are clear, however, views to the west are compromised by the adjacent stone wall. Nonetheless, I am satisfied that, given the width of the access, there are sufficient sight lines within the extent of public highway to provide an adequate stopping distance for the estimated low vehicle speeds. Whilst I note third party comments about accidents in this area, I conclude that opportunity for conflict between road users, including walkers and farm traffic, would therefore be limited.

21. The additional traffic and movements associated with 3 additional new units over the existing use, which includes tourist accommodation and 'training facility', would not be significant.

22. Were I minded to allow the appeal, there is sufficient space around the site to provide suitable bin storage and pick up location, which could be secured through condition.

23. As such, I am satisfied that sufficient information has been provided to show that safe access to the highway network would be provided and there would be no adverse impacts on the transport network. The development would not therefore harm highway safety. There is no conflict therefore with the highway safety objectives of CS Policies 61 and 62.

Living conditions

24. The existing property largely benefits from fenestration on only one side, its frontage, which faces north. However, in the context of a barn conversion where new openings are limited, I observed that these windows, given the limited size of the rooms, and the addition of rooflights, provide the existing property with sufficient natural light. They do not appear gloomy nor oppressive spaces.

25. The SPD sets out that the quality of internal space needs careful consideration in order to protect amenity. The submitted plans illustrate that all habitable

rooms would be served by either windows, glazed doors or rooflights or a combination of both. Again, given the limited scale and depth of the rooms and the space around the building, sufficient natural light would be able to reach each habitable room to ensure they are sufficiently bright. Whilst the majority of the openings would face north, future occupiers would be provided with acceptable living conditions in this respect.

26. The proposal would not conflict with CS Policy 57 which requires a high standard of design, and the Framework, which requires a high standard of amenity for future users.

Sustainability Requirements

27. CP Policy 41 identifies how sustainable construction and low-carbon energy will be integral to all new development in Wiltshire. The overall approach is to help to reduce Wiltshire's contribution to climate change through improved design and construction methods. It states that new development, including building conversions will be encouraged to '*design measures to reduce energy demand'.*

28. With regards to existing buildings, it states that:

'Retrofitting measures to improve the energy performance of existing buildings will be encouraged in accordance with the following hierarchy:

i. Reduce energy consumption through energy efficiency measures

ii. Use renewable or low-carbon energy from a local/district source and

iii. Use building-integrated renewable or low-carbon technologies.'

29. CP Policy 57 also seeks to ensure high quality design and place shaping through:

The maximisation of opportunities for sustainable construction techniques, use of renewable energy sources and ensuring buildings and spaces are orientated to gain maximum benefit from sunlight and passive solar energy, in accordance with Core Policy 41.

30. However, this policy also requires development to 'enhance local distinctiveness by responding to the value of the natural and historic environment'. As such, given that the building is identified by the Council as a NDHA, opportunities for improving the orientation of the building or rooms, whilst retaining the original character of the barn conversion and its setting, are limited. As set out above, each habitable room would be served by adequate natural light. Appropriate additional energy efficient measures such as high performance windows, doors, and insulation could be secured through a condition, were I minded to allow the appeal. This would ensure the development includes design measures to reduce energy demand.

31. I therefore find no conflict with the reduction in energy demand goals of CP Policies 41 and 57, and the meeting the challenge of climate change goals of the Framework.

Other Matters

32. Whilst not raised in relation to this scheme, I note that, with regard to a subsequent application referenced above, the Council's Ecology Officer has

raised the possibility of the presence of bats. This is due to age of the building roof, the site being located in a rural location adjacent to good bat habitat, and it is considered that it is highly likely that bats commute and forage across the site.

33. Circular 06/2005 states that the presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a development proposal is being considered which would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat. It goes on to say that it "… *is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision".*

34. However, as I am dismissing the proposal for other reasons, I have not considered this matter in detail because it could not lead me to a different decision.

35. The appellant has not disputed the Council's claim that it is able to demonstrate more than a four-year supply of deliverable housing sites, which, for a period of two years from the revised Framework's publication, is the relevant requirement having an emerging local plan at Regulation 19 stage. With no evidence to the contrary, I am satisfied that paragraph 11.d) of the Framework is not engaged.

36. The proposal would however result in 3 additional windfall units of accommodation which would contribute to the Government's broader objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. The proposal would result in short-term economic benefits arising from the construction process. Economic and social benefits are also likely to arise from the occupation of the units. Even if the provision of 2-3 bed homes would result in a greater diversity and more affordable dwellings in the immediate vicinity, given the quantum of development in this case, I give these matters limited weight in favour of the scheme.

37. Planning decisions should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For the reasons set out above, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the existing NDHA and its surroundings. The minor benefits outlined above do not outweigh this identified harm.

Conclusion

38. For the reasons set out above, the appeal is dismissed.

B Phillips

INSPECTOR