



Land off Church Place, Lydiard Millicent – Note on heritage matters

A planning application for development on land off Church Place, Lydiard Millicent was submitted to Wiltshire Council in 2017. The application was refused with seven Reasons for Refusal (RfRs) cited. Reason 7 related to heritage matters and stated: “The proposal is considered to result in harm to the setting of the Grade II* Listed Church and character and appearance of the Lydiard Millicent Conservation Area. The identified harm is regarded as less than substantial, but is not outweighed by any public benefit. In addition, it has not been suitably demonstrated that archaeological remains within the proposal site will not be unduly disturbed. Therefore the proposal is contrary to, paragraphs 17(10), 128, 131, 132, 134, 135 and 137 of the NPPF, Core Policies 57 (i, iv) and 58 (iii, iv) of the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy 2015 and Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990”.

Church of All Saints

With regard to the Grade II* Listed church, the heritage statement (Armour Heritage 2017) completed for this application identified that, in respect of its significance, the major contributors were the Listed Building’s archaeological, architectural and historical values, alongside the contribution of its immediate setting and the communal value it holds. The church represents a landmark building in the context of its village environment and as such is significant both visually and as a community asset.

The planning application proposed a modest group of new buildings some 115m to the south of the church, separated from it by the road and a significant area of green open space which it is proposed should represent a new Public Open Space which would offer an attractive and suitably located area to appreciate the significance of the Listed Building, away from the more formal churchyard. This POS would include an information board setting out the history of the church and its wider village setting, offering an enhanced opportunity to appreciate and understand this important heritage asset.

In respect of the wider setting of the church, whilst the proposed new development would lie within the church’s visual envelope, it would be well screened. The significance of the Listed church, *i.e.* its special architectural or historic interest, is considered in broad terms to be derived primarily from the historic and architectural value of its standing remains. Whilst the churchyard and village setting are also considered important, the contribution of the wider landscape setting of the village will be a factor of far less importance to the significance of the heritage asset.

Lydiard Millicent Conservation Area

The heritage statement identified that the proposed development site lies within the Conservation Area, whose southern boundary is part formed by the southern boundary of the Site. The heritage statement concluded that the site in its current condition does not contribute significantly to the



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character of the Conservation Area, given its position between the graveyard extension and the modern Parish Hall to the west, and modern farm buildings of Lydiard Farm to the east. It was however recognised that it does feature in views from the south afforded from a public right of way between the village and Parkside Farm, although these views are limited by both distance and a gentle drop in elevation from north to south.

It has been argued by the Conservation Officer that “The proposed development does not respect the historic building pattern of the area, nor does it reflect the vernacular scale or form of the village”. The development proposal is away from the village core and set some distance back from the road system, and as such is more reflective of a group of converted farm buildings rather than the gridded and boxy layout of many other new developments in the locale. The proposed development offers an alternative to the architecturally bland modern developments currently extant within the village boundaries and as such offers an interesting and visually different design concept, reflective of an evolving settlement and community. Whilst this clearly represents change in respect of the more ‘traditional’ patterns of settlement in the village, ‘change’ need not necessarily result in ‘harm’.

Whilst a negligible adverse impact upon the character of the Conservation Area was identified in the heritage statement, the development proposal has been assessed as also offering benefits to its character through improved public engagement with the Listed church. Currently the village and Conservation Area include only limited areas of public open space and the provision of such between the built extents of the proposed development area and the church is considered to be beneficial to the Conservation Area’s character and public amenity. As concluded in the heritage statement, it is considered that any adverse impact identified in respect of the proposed development will be at least neutralised by the positive effect of this mitigation.

The provision of affordable housing will also of course provide benefits to the community in an area, and at a time, where currently the lack of provision of affordable housing is a major political and social issue.

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