

	Online Comments
	17/12491/FUL
	<p>Preamble</p> <p>1. I have been commissioned by Mr G Vaughan to carry out an independent heritage impact assessment of proposed development adjacent to Little Talboys, Keevil. The site is included within a designated Conservation Area and is close to a number of nationally listed buildings. I am a retired chartered town planner with 40 years experience of appraising development proposals in the historic environment. I am a member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation and a past member of the Central Council, and Chairman of the South West branch. The assessment has been carried out in accordance with Conservation Professional Practice Principles published by the IHBC in 2017. The report is largely based upon a visit in January 2018.</p> <p>2. The following comments are intended to supplement comments previously submitted by Mr Vaughan to the Local Planning Authority concerning a planning application registered under reference 17/12491/FUL.</p> <p>Missing background information</p> <p>3. National planning policy requires the applicant to describe the significance of heritage assets that may be affected, and an appropriate level of specialist expertise is expected to be applied to the decision-making process (1). The first step for all applicants is to understand the significance of any affected heritage asset and, if relevant, the contribution of its setting to its significance. This assessment follows the general approach advocated in Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2 published by Historic England following consultation with relevant professional bodies.</p> <p>4. The submitted application contains a perfunctory list of designated heritage assets affected by the development. However, it is incomplete. The NPPF (1) requires that as a minimum the relevant Historic Environment Record should be consulted and heritage assets should be assessed using appropriate expertise. There is no evidence to show that key items noted in the HER have been taken into account or that there has been any attempt to identify the presence of any non-designated heritage assets. Relevant “missings” are a) the importance of the sunken Saxon holloway at the front of the site, b) the significance of the adjacent Church Farmhouse and yard. As well as being noted in the HER, Church Farm is noted in the Wiltshire Victoria County History as demonstrating external materials exemplary of the 18th century, and as forming part of the Blagden estate from at least 1793. The impact of the proposed development on the setting of the historic lane, and Church Farmhouse therefore need to be given serious consideration in the assessment of the proposals.</p>

5. Of even greater importance, the poor quality of the Statement submitted with the application is exemplified by the lack of any analysis how the components contribute to the character of the Conservation Area, or the setting of the surrounding heritage assets. Neither does the submission appear to have taken account of the Keevil Village Design Statement. Further, it lacks a satisfactory Design & Access Statement to explain how the submitted form, scale and layout of the development have been arrived at. These shortfalls have resulted in a harmful development that would detract from the character of the Conservation Area and the setting of the various designated and non-designated heritage assets.

Assessment

6. The submitted scheme would detract from the openness, spaciousness and tranquillity of the western end of the Conservation Area. These are positive aspects of the Conservation Area designation that contribute to the aesthetic, evidential and historic values of this heritage asset. This part of the Conservation Area with its widely spaced historic buildings and bucolic landscape is of genuine special character and outstanding quality. The Keevil Village Design Statement recognized this, and requires open spaces which contribute to the street scene to be respected. By proposing to fill almost the whole width of the site with development the quality and character of the Conservation Area would be harmed. Furthermore the setting of the Little Talboys, Beech Cottage (listed building address), and Beach House opposite, and the Grade I entrance piers and boundary wall to Keevil Manor, and Church Farmhouse would be unacceptably altered. Apart from views from Main Street, the panorama of these buildings obtained from the fields and public footpath to the south, and from private land (2) opposite the site, would be damaged. Little Talboys (noted in Pevsner) has evolved from a high status hall house, that has survived in its open setting for approximately 500 years and the proposed development would cramp the space around it. Its significance would be diminished. The government (1) defines significance as “the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its interest. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.”

7. The application has manifestly failed to apply the staged approach advocated within Good Practice Advice 3 – The Setting of Heritage Assets published by Historic England (revised December, 2017). The Advice Note advocates a staged approach to decision-taking, and recent appeal decisions with which I have been involved indicate this process should be the means for formulating and determining new development within the context of historic buildings.

8. The proposed development would also harm secondary characteristics of the

Conservation Area as the attractive front brick wall and grass verge separating the site from the holloway would be breached, and the roots of mature trees, particularly those close to the boundary of Little Talboys, would be damaged by the new construction.

9. The linked semi-detached form of the proposed development owes nothing to the established character of the Conservation Area, and the suburban-type layout with prominent vehicular turning spaces and garage doors are not redeeming features. The design of the proposed dwellings feature plastic windows and doors, rain water goods and barge boards and would detract from the immediate environs of the site. It should be noted that the application lacks adequate context drawings or photomontages. The substantial scale of the two-storey dwellings would contrast with the low thatched roofs at Little Talboys and Beech Cottage. The village Design Statement indicates that within the Conservation Area, or where new development may affect the setting of listed buildings, the preservation of their special character will be the primary consideration. Although the application is described as proposing 3-bedroomed dwellings, the actual 4-bedroom layout of the properties would fail to address any housing need the village may have. No claims that that the development would bring public benefits have been identified or claimed.

10. Policies 57 and 58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy seek to protect sensitive areas from inappropriate development, particularly in small rural settlements. Supporting text in paragraphs 6.128 & 6.129 are of special relevance.

Conclusion

11. In my opinion, the proposed development would cause substantial harm to the significance of the Conservation Area, the setting of listed buildings, and a non-designated heritage asset. In terms of national planning policy it cannot therefore be considered sustainable development. However this is not the end of the matter. Recent case law (3) has dispelled any ambiguity regarding the overarching requirements of the primary legislation.

12. The Barnwell Manor case was finally decided at the Court of Appeal which ruled the decision-maker must accord considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving the setting of a listed building when balancing against other factors which have not been given this special statutory status.

13. The Forge Field case followed and went further, ruling that finding harm to the setting of a listed building or a conservation area gave rise to a strong presumption against

	<p>planning permission being granted.</p> <p>14. The decision-maker is thus not free to give the harm identified such weight as he chooses. The primary legislation (4) places an overarching duty on the decision-maker to give preservation special regard, and where harm - any harm - to the setting of a listed building or conservation area is identified this must be given considerable importance and weight in the decision-making process.</p> <p>15. In my view, the proposals fail to accord with national requirements and local policies for the protection of the historic environment. In support of this conclusion I would draw attention to the appeal decision of August 2000 in respect similar proposals, under reference APP/F3925/A/001044162 (LPA ref 99/01513/FUL).</p> <p>References</p> <p>(1) National Planning Policy Framework – paras 128 and Annex 2</p> <p>(2) Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 stresses: Because setting does not depend on public rights of way or ability to access it, significance is not dependent on numbers of people visiting it as this would downplay such qualitative issues as the importance of quiet and tranquillity.</p> <p>(3) East Northamptonshire DC, English Heritage & National Trust v Secretary of State for CLG & Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Ltd (case no. CO/4231/2012) and The Queen on application of The Forge Field Society & Messrs Barraud and Rees v Sevenoaks DC & West Kent Housing Association etc. (case nos. CO/735/2013 & CO/16932/2013)</p> <p>(4) Section 66 (1) of the Act – contains a duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses, and</p> <p>Section 72(1) of the Act 1990 – contains a duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a designated Conservation Area.</p>
	<p>Mr. Ian Lund</p>

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Date:	12.02.2018
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