

Principle Conservation Officer - comments

Site and Assessment of Heritage Assets

The proposed site is located to the west of St Mary's Road and is made up of three fields. A public right of way currently runs along the western and northern boundaries of the site. There are no designated heritage assets within the site itself. However, there are some listed buildings within the immediate vicinity of the site. These include:

- St Mary's Church – Grade II*
- Farm Cottage and Rook Farmhouse – Grade II

Policy Context

Before proceeding to consider the policy context of the NPPF, it is of primary importance that the correct weight should be attributed to the desirability of preserving the setting of the listed building from the outset, in accordance with section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990:

"In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses"

The need for the decision taker to attach considerable or special weight to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings has been reinforced through two recent high court decisions of: Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Limited vs. East Northamptonshire District Council et al (2014); and North Norfolk District Council vs. DCLG and Mack (2014).

The above statute and its subsequent and consistent interpretation in recent high court decision emphasises the need for the policies of the NPPF to be implemented whilst always having regard to the need to give special or greater weight to the preservation of the setting of a listed building.

Where the impact on the setting of a listed building has been assessed in accordance with paragraphs 128 to 132 of the Framework, and has been found to fall within the category of 'less than substantial harm' (i.e. paragraph 134), then it is still important that when considering the balance exercise, and therefore the public benefits of any such proposal, that from the outset this is consciously weighed in favour of the need to preserve the setting of the listed building.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012 and sets down the policies that the Council must take into account when determining planning applications. This supersedes PPS 5, however, English Heritage (web-site 23 April 2012) advises that the Practice Guide (HEPPG) remains a valid and Government endorsed document pending Government's review of guidance supporting national planning policy as set out in its response to the select Committee".

The NPPF sets out, in paragraph 17, the 12 core planning principles that local planning authorities should consider in making planning decisions. One of these core principles relates directly to conserving heritage assets, as follows

“Planning should conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations;”

Paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation. It also goes on to state that significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Paragraph 133 provides guidance in relation to development proposals that cause 'substantial harm'. While, paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy states that where a development will lead to 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Paragraph 64 (Section 7 – Requiring Good Design) is also particularly relevant to this case in that development should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.

Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy states that planning permission will be granted for development that:

Protects and where appropriate enhances the borough’s statutory and non statutory heritage designations by appropriately managing development in or adjacent to conservation areas, listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments, historic parks and gardens, archaeological sites, buildings of local historic or architectural interest.

Policy CP16 (1a) of the Core Strategy states Planning permission will be granted for development that is designed to a high standard, which helps to create places where people want to live, work and relax. All development should demonstrate that its design:

Identifies and responds positively to existing features of natural, historic or local character within or close to the proposed development site.

Policy DM20 of the Allocations Plan states that development proposals must conserve and enhance the historic assets of Havant

Significance of Heritage Assets

St Mary’s Church

St Mary’s Church is listed as Grade II and dates back to the 13th century. The Church was restored in the 19th century but retains much of its medieval appearance. It is surrounded on all sides by a grave yard.

I agree with the heritage statement in regards of the historic significance of the Church when it states:

The heritage significance of the Church of St Mary is primarily derived from the architectural and historic interest of its physical fabric as an example of an ecclesiastical structure with 13th century origins. The setting of the asset also contributes to its significance, although the significance derived from the setting is less than that from its historic fabric. Elements of the physical surrounds and experience of the asset (its 'setting') which are considered to contribute to its heritage significance comprise:

- *The positioning and experience of the asset from within the surrounding churchyard;*
- *The experience of the asset from Church Road; and*
- *The experience of the asset elements of the wider open landscape to the west, north-west and south-west.*

Within this context, the site forms part of the wider open landscape to the south-west of the asset.

Farm Cottage and Rook Farmhouse

Both of these dwellings are Grade II listed with the historic core of the properties dating from the 18th century. The two dwelling were once a single dwelling house and there have been a number of 19th and 20th century alterations. The listing description notes that the building is a good example of an 18th-century remodelling of an earlier house. The house would have originally been set within a large garden with agricultural land beyond. However, the former area of garden has been recently developed for houses.

It is considered that the significance of the listed buildings is primarily focused on the architectural merits of the form and construction of the dwellings. The immediate garden also contributes to the setting but the wider area has drastically changed with the introduction of the modern residential scheme.

Impact on the setting of listed buildings

St Mary's Church

The Church is best experienced from within the existing grounds (graveyard). From this location the architectural detail of the structure can be appreciated and the relationship with its surrounds understood. This experience can also be achieved from Church Road.

Clear views of the Church are also available from the Public Rights of Way that bound the application site. I agree with the heritage statement when it states that:

'the best views are obtainable from the PROW which runs north-west from the Church towards Manor Road . From this PROW when walking south-east towards the Church it is possible to gain clear views of the Church spire and the associated chancel '

The proposals for the development of the site have excluded residential development from the north-western area of the site, creating an area of public open space. This will allow for a degree of openness

to be retained in the vicinity of the Public Rights of Ways to the west of the Church, and allow views of the Church from the northern parts of the Public Right of Way on the western boundary of the site to be retained. A view corridor from a southern point of this PROW to the church spire has ALSO been incorporated within the design of the development.

Development within remainder of the site will result in a restriction of the views towards the Church from the south-west.

It is my view that the proposed development will result in a change to the overall character of the site which in turn will change views from parts of the Public Right of Way, bringing residential development closer. This view does however already has a backdrop of residential development to the south and south-east and the views in these directions. It is considered that the proposed development will result in the loss of some views of the Church from the south-west. However, such views are not considered to make a significant contribution to the experience of the asset.

As such, it is considered that the proposed development will result in a change that will cause minor harm to the significance of the Church of St Mary via a change in its setting. This harm is considered to be at the lower end of the less than substantial bracket.

Such harm therefore needs to be balanced against the public benefits of the scheme in line with Paragraph 134 of the NPPF. Within this context, the limited harm caused to the overall heritage significance of the asset should be considered.

Farm Cottage and Rook Farmhouse

As described above I consider the listed dwellings are best experienced from within the immediate grounds. The modern development has resulted in the wider agricultural land being divorced from the Listed Buildings. During my site visit (winter months) I could see that the buildings were not readily visible from the application site even with limited leaf coverage on trees. In the glimpse views available these did not provide any understanding as to the former agricultural use of the buildings. I therefore consider that the wider agricultural setting with Rook Farm is negligible to the heritage significance of the assets.

In accordance with the NPPF I believe the degree of harm to this listed building would be less than substantial. In this context, the NPPF requires such harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.