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Redevelopment of existing buildings and construction of 8No new dwellings; re-use of existing open-fronted buildings for car parking (Outline application to include access)

Land off Culworth Road Chipping Warden

Heritage advice

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Context

Following provisional pre-app support the proposal is to redevelop the former farm site (Beeches Farm) with eight dwellings and associated parking and garaging. It is proposed to re-use the stone farm outbuilding ranges to the west of the site as garages and stores for the new dwellings. The application includes an indicative site plan showing the arrangement of housing around a central courtyard, houses 1 and 2 to the south, in a 'farmhouse form / style'. The remaining houses are shown as being part of a 'converted barn form style'. There is a parking and turning area within the courtyard. Six parking spaces are also indicated here, with garaging / stores in the existing stone outbuilding ranges, as above. Pre-app advice provisionally supported the proposed development subject to concerns about the site layout, and house designs.

The site is currently comprised of various agricultural buildings associated with the farm. The two stone-built, duo-pitched slate-roofed outbuildings along the western edge of the site are the historically more interesting, and were extant in 1884, and certainly prior to this. Other barn and shed buildings within the farm site are of more modern date and retain limited historical interest – either timber or clad steel-framed structures.

The immediate north of the site has been developed with housing. The area to the site's east and south is open grassland, part of this a recreation ground. To the west, there is modest development along the Banbury Road, a mix of C20 and earlier housing, single-storey buildings, and a stone-built Wesleyan chapel dated 1854, c. 100m to the south-west of the centre of the proposed site.

There are no Listed Buildings within the site, or within closer proximity. A cluster of Listed Buildings are located to the south and south-west along Culworth Road, but there is quite limited inter-visibility with the proposed development. For example, at their nearest points the rear of the Griffin Inn pub Listed Building is c. 80m from the south boundary of the site, with a building to its rear obscuring views of the pub's rear / and proposed site.

In 1884 the farmstead was in an open aspect, mostly surrounded by fields. The 1884 OS 25" map shows the farmhouse and its outbuildings arranged around an irregularly-shaped courtyard to its north / north-east, those to the north of the farmhouse now removed. The extant northern range of outbuildings are shown in 1884 as open to the west, facing into the former farm courtyard. The farmhouse, a brick-built dwelling with valley roof, is noted as being an 'other significant building' on the Conservation Area Appraisal map for the village, and is just outside the CA itself (see below). At their nearest points it is c. 12m between the rear of the farmhouse and nearest extant stone

outbuildings. It is approx. 38m from the rear of the farmhouse to the centre of the proposed site – e.g. within the courtyard area.

The chapel noted above is also an ‘other significant building’, as are six other buildings within its immediate proximity. The chapel is the nearest of these to the proposed site.

Chipping Warden’s Conservation Area is concentrated principally to the south and south-west of the proposed site. A narrow arm of the CA extends from its central area to the north, along Banbury Road, its easternmost boundary defined by the eastern side of this road. The farmhouse is immediately outside the CA boundary, but the chapel, Griffin Head, and ‘other significant buildings’ are within the CA in a cluster to the north-east of the junction of the Banbury and Culworth Roads.

Development affecting the setting of the Conservation Area is covered in the Chipping Warden Conservation Area Appraisal document, in the management plan. Item 11 ‘development affecting the setting of a Conservation Area’, confirms that development should not harm its setting: ‘any development in or around Chipping Warden which affects the setting of the conservation area should have regards to views in and out of it, the setting of positive buildings and the character of the landscape’. ‘Action 11’ confirms that any development which affects the Conservation Area’s setting must be properly considered, including that affecting its setting.

Along the Banbury Road there is a distance of c. 25m to 34m between the easternmost edge of the CA, and western edge of the site, at their various points – it is wider to the south than the north. To the south, the CA wraps around the chapel, Griffin Inn and ‘other significant buildings, as noted above. At their nearest points there is c. 50m between the CA in this area (rear plot boundary of the Griffin Inn), and the south edge of the site.

Assessment and advice

Whilst the Conservation Area does not meet with any boundaries of the proposed site, it is c. 25m to 34m distant to its western side, and c. 50m to the south (Griffin Inn rear plot). There are also several ‘other significant buildings’, including the farmhouse to the west, and the chapel, and other buildings.

Depending upon viewpoint there will be inter-visibility of the proposed site from Culworth Road looking north, in which will also be glimpsed views of the farmhouse (‘other significant building’). The eastern edge of the Conservation Area is also visible from the Culworth Road and within the recreation ground area, though this is defined by many mature trees and hedging, such that views into the CA are limited, even during the winter.

Because the proposed development will be visible from various viewpoints and does affect the setting of the Conservation Area’s eastern-boundary – and that enclosing the chapel, Griffin Inn to the south / south-west – the courtyard layout is supported in principle, as the most appropriate plan-form in this traditionally rural setting.

The re-use of the stone outbuildings is also supported, and it is recommended that the courtyard and new housing positions are revised so that these earlier ranges remain more visible, and form an integral part of the new development, which would also accentuate a clearer sense of the dwellings

being positioned around a large central (farm) courtyard – thus avoiding a slightly urbanised form here.

It is also recommended that the position and style of the proposed 'farmhouse' form / style dwellings are reviewed. In the present concept the proposal for the 'farmhouse' style dwellings may appear to be pastiche, when a more convincing design could work better here. The south side of the development will also be that most visible from the Culworth Road and recreation ground, and is therefore more sensitive vis-à-vis the CA and other heritage assets.

No elevations appear to have been provided confirming style, massing and materials, in which case it is difficult to comment more precisely on how the development will appear from various viewpoints, and whether it is read as a settled and sympathetic part of the village here. The use of local vernacular materials and detailing is noted in the provided plan, advice about which is included in the village Conservation Area appraisal.

Thank you for asking my advice.

GC