

S/2020/0903/MAO

Land South of Station Road Blisworth Northamptonshire NN7 3DN

Outline Planning Application for up to 35 (maximum) residential dwellings including access with all other Matters Reserved

NB. Due to the current restrictions on movement it has not been possible to make a site visit to assess the significance of the asset and the impact of the proposed works on that significance. These comments are made based on a desktop assessment and photographs kindly supplied by the applicant.

The site lies to the south of a pair of 1838 semi-detached cottages built in limestone ashlar with hipped slate roof and a single arched railway bridge built c1837 in red facing brick and grey lias, both are Grade II listed buildings where proposals should seek to sustain or enhance significance, which includes the setting, of heritage assets. They have a shared significance in terms of their age and association with the construction of the railway and their survival of historic fabric, form and features, in addition the cottages are also a good example of the classical style. In terms of setting the railway is intrinsic to the significance of both assets, however they are located within a rural setting largely unaltered since construction, this also makes a positive contribution albeit limited contribution towards overall significance.

It is proposed to erect 35 dwelling on the agricultural land to the immediate south of the site within the open countryside. A Heritage Statement has been submitted in support of the application which correctly states that the development does not directly affect any designated heritage asset, it also correctly acknowledges that the proposed development would indirectly affect these assets by being within their setting stating on page 29 that *“The setting of the two Designated Heritage Assets are located on Northampton Road to the north of Station Road will be affected by the proposed development. These are nationally important buildings, with high significance and high sensitivity. The Railway Bridge is a functional historical structure, still in use by the London to Birmingham railway crossing above Northampton Road”*. The development of the site will alter the setting of the heritage assets due to the loss of the rural agrarian setting and this is considered to harm their setting and therefore significance, albeit that harm is less than substantial. And whilst the contribution the setting of these listed building makes to the overall significance of the buildings is considered to limited Para 193 of the NPPF is quite clear 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 This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts toless than substantial harm to its significance”*.

In considering their proposal further the submitted Heritage Statement suggested that the *“layout and design could limit the impact of the buildings on the Designated Heritage Assets*

to the north and prevent the urbanising effect of the development if the character is in keeping with the existing detached dwellings set in their own gardens to the north, north-west and south". This is considered to further acknowledge the development does have a harmful impact on the setting of the listed building. However the correct test to apply first is set out in Para 196 this requires consideration of whether the public benefits of the scheme outweigh the harm, in this instance whether the proposal will fulfil the economic, social or environmental objectives of the NPPF. Only when the public benefit is considered to outweigh the harm should consideration be given as to how the development can mitigate the affects of the development of the setting. That said it is interesting to see that the outline plans show a landscape buffer to the west of the site rather than where it is suggested in the Statement, *"and a green space/buffer zone to the north opposite Grafton Villas and the Railway Bridge, to provide screening to minimise the impact of the Development"*.

In terms of other designated assets around the site such as the conservation areas of Blisworth and Grand Union Canal and the numerous listed buildings within Blisworth village I concur with the Statement that *"The topography and existing development, trees and hedgerows screen the proposed development from the Conservation Areas to the west and south and ensure that the impact would be neutral to the nearby Designated Heritage Assets to the south and west"*.

In terms of the non designated heritage assets mentioned in the Statement such as the ridge and furrow and Towcester to Cotton End Turnpike the later is unlikely to be affected by the development although there may be archaeological evidence found along the edges of the route. Advice of the significance of the ridge and furrow should be sought from the County Archaeologist.

Mandy Lumb
Senior Conservation Officer
2 July 2020