

From: Jonathan Duck
Sent: 09 August 2018 13:18
To: Gemma Pannell <Gemma.Pannell@babberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk>
Cc: BMSDC Planning Area Team Green <planninggreen@babberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk>
Subject: DC/18/02412 Land on east side of Bramford Road, Sproughton

Hello Gemma,

I visited the site this week and have the following comments to make.

The proposed development is for 64 dwellings with a new access from the B1113, along with associated parking, landscaping and open space. The issues of heritage concern relate to the impacts of the development on the setting of various designated heritage assets including, to the east of the site the Grade II Listed timber framed and brick Sproughton Hall, the Grade II Listed timber framed and brick mill house, the Grade II Listed red brick watermill, Grade II* medieval parish Church of All Saints, the Grade II Listed timber framed 1-4 Church Close, the Grade II Listed timber framed barn 50m west of the Hall, and the Grade II listed timber framed tithe barn. To the south, the assets include the Grade II Listed timber framed Walnut Cottage. It is fair to say that on the basis of this list, the various undesignated assets in the area and the obvious architectural quality of the immediate environment, this part of the village is extremely fine. It is noted that there is no Conservation Area in Sproughton.

The site the subject of this application is a strip of land approximately rectangular in shape, running parallel to the B1113 in a north-south direction, just to the north-west of the majority of the assets. The development is intended to fill the lower four fifths of the site, up to the boundaries of the properties running along Lower Street (including the rear garden land associated with Walnut Cottage), and in close proximity to Sproughton Hall.

There is concern over the proposed development from a Heritage Team perspective. The proximity of the dwellings to the west of the listed barn (situated approximately 50m to the west of the Hall) upsets the relationship between it and the fields adjacent. Whilst no evidence is provided by the agents as to the possible ownership and use of the land surrounding the Hall and the barns, it is probable that such an influential property as the Hall owned and managed the agricultural lands surrounding it, and this is to an extent inferred in the morphology, with the barn to its west, the mill to its east and the tithe barn to its south. The settings of these buildings undoubtedly extend beyond the ZVI illustrated in the HIA. Indeed, given the significance of the Hall and tithe barn in the life of most medieval and early modern villages, their settings probably extend to the edge of the village or even to the parish boundaries. Between them this little group of buildings and their agricultural settings notably reinforce the significance of each other, to the collective benefit of this part of the village. The relationship is furthered by the mill, the church and the rectory, and is a very good example of a medieval and early modern nucleated settlement, in which the most significant buildings in the settlement are gathered together – in this instance around the river and the church.

Despite the HIA clarifying at 1.12 that setting does not have a fixed spatial boundary, the HIA uses the Zone of Visual Influence as the unit of measurement for setting in this analysis. At 2.23 the HIA states that ‘the zone of visual influence (or setting) for each building is shown by...’ Clearly, the ZVI and the setting is considered to be the same. There appears to be no further analysis of setting.

At 2.26 it states that ‘the application site lies outside the zone of visual influence of the majority of listed buildings in the vicinity of the site’. This might be true, but is not the entire picture. The HE document, ‘The Setting of Heritage Assets’ (second edition), states that whilst ‘setting can be

mapped in the context of an individual application or proposal, it cannot be definitively and permanently described for all time as a spatially bounded area...’ In the HE guidance it also states that ‘the way we experience an asset in its setting.....is also influenced by our understanding of the historic relationship between places’ – and as noted previously, whilst the agent has provided no evidence of the relationship of the assets to each other and the land, the buildings reflect a traditional pattern of use, tenure and social and cultural relationship.

Views across the site from the B1113 in a south easterly direction offer good glimpses of the church tower, the Hall and the barns. These views are considered to be within the settings of all the buildings, and certainly they contribute to the significance of each. To erect housing in this area reduces the opportunity to appreciate this long-standing interrelationship, to the detriment of the buildings both individually and collectively. In terms of the HE document ‘Conservation Principles...’ these views could be described as offering aesthetic and evidential value of the development of the village, and should therefore be preserved rather than obliterated.

The following comments respond to particular points in the HIA.

4.28 In regard to Walnut Cottage ‘it could not be argued its setting extends any significant distance into the application site as there are only very limited views of the cottage from very specific parts of the south-west corner of the site’. This builds on the misunderstanding that setting is only a visual experience, rather than an associational or perceptual one. As an aside, it should be noted that the HE Guidance suggests the contribution that setting makes to the significance of an asset does not depend on public rights or an ability to access it.

4.30 The tithe barn’s setting ‘can therefore be appreciated primarily from Lower Street’. It seems the implication is that the visual appreciation of the setting is paramount, and that in this instance that setting is limited primarily to Lower Street.

4.31 There is a suggestion here that the tithe barn would be screened from plot 12 by an existing dwelling, ‘such that its impact on the setting of the barn would be negligible’. Again, setting is not limited solely to views – and this is why the ZVI is of extremely limited use because it does not equate to setting.

4.34 The proposed enclosure of the public open space is argued to be a positive change, because a greater appreciation of the setting could then be enjoyed. However, by enclosing the space, the setting is being eroded.

However, despite the foregoing, the Summary of Impact table in the HIA ascribes *adverse impacts* to the settings of the barn adjacent to the site, the tithe barn and the parish church. The Heritage Team takes *adverse impacts* to mean ‘harm’. This is therefore contrary to the requirements of the P(LBCA)A1990 to preserve the setting of listed buildings. In terms of the Act, the scheme would not preserve the settings of at least the barn to the west of the Hall, the tithe barn, or the Hall itself. There is a statutory duty at s66 to have ‘*special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting*’. The courts have recently interpreted this as making preservation of listed buildings ‘*presumptively desirable*’ and requiring preservation to be afforded ‘*great or considerable weight*’ as a ‘*high priority*’. Any harm to any listed building is to be treated in this way. In the Barnwell Manor High Court case, The Honourable Mrs Justice Lang stated that ‘*in my opinion the addition of the word ‘desirability’ in Section 66(1) [of the P(LBCA)A1990] signals that ‘preservation’ of setting is to be treated as a desired or sought after objective...*’

In terms of the NPPF, the development would cause a *moderate level of less than substantial harm* to the settings of the listed buildings previously noted and as such the Heritage Team does not support the development.

NB. The setting of Walnut Cottage is not impeded by the current proposal. Were the developer to construct properties solely against the back of the western half of Lower Street, and towards the B1113, avoiding entirely any development on the eastern half of the site – and ensuring glimpsed views across the land to the group of assets was retained – the Heritage Team may be able to view the scheme more favourably, subject to density, massing and architectural language.

Joff

Dr Jonathan Duck BSc (Hons) MSc PgDip IHBC FRSA

Heritage and Design Officer

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils - Working Together

tel: 01449 724677 | 07860 827042

email: jonathan.duck@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

web: www.babergh.gov.uk www.midsuffolk.gov.uk