

Conservation Officer comments for: 23/00673/OUT

Proposal: Residential development of up to 343 dwellings (Class C3), including provision of public open space, associated infrastructure and all matters reserved except access.

Site: Land opposite and south of pumping station, Aston Flamville Road, Burbage

Date Submitted: 16/08/2023

This is an outline proposal for residential development of up to 343 dwellings with public open space, landscaping and associated infrastructure on around Aston Flamville Road, Burbage. There are no designated heritage assets within the site boundary although there are number within the vicinity of the application site.

Site context and history

The application site comprises of four fields on the eastern edge of Burbage. The site is split into two sections by Aston Flamville Road with three fields to the west of the road and a single field to the east. The larger section of three fields is bound by residential development to the north and west, Aston Flamville Road to the east, and is open to the surrounding countryside to the south which includes at least half of the length of this section. The smaller section of a single field is bound by Aston Flamville Road and Sapcote Road to the north, west and south, whilst the eastern boundary consists of some residential development along the two Roads with small paddocks in between. The field boundaries to the countryside and internal field boundaries largely consist of mature hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees and some livestock fencing. The fields are all currently in pastoral use. The majority of the site is flat before the surrounding topography rises to the west to the centre of Burbage.

The application site has been in agricultural use since at least the medieval period (as informed by the submitted Archaeological Desk Based Assessment) and although some distance from the original village core of Burbage it forms part of its surrounding historic rural landscape. Historic mapping identifies that the current arrangement of the field boundaries has remained largely the same since Enclosure.

Affected heritage assets

An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment and Landscape and Visual Appraisal have been submitted as part of the application. In determining applications, paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. These two documents, in my opinion, provide a reasonable and proportionate assessment of the impact on the proposal upon affected heritage assets and their settings. Paragraph 195 of the NPPF also requires local planning authorities to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal, including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset. That required assessment has been undertaken in the body of these comments.

There are no designated heritage assets within the site itself. The Burbage Conservation Area is located to the west of the application site and includes the historic core of the settlement. At its closest point the grounds of Burbage Hall that form part of the eastern

boundary of the conservation area are approximately 500m from the western boundary of the application site. There are a small number of listed buildings located within the conservation area boundary. All are grade II listed other than the grade II* listed Church of St Catherine and The Old Grange. There is also a conservation area and a small number of listed buildings located within Aston Flamville, approximately 1km east of the application site. These designated heritage assets are located within Blaby District Council so a determination as to whether they are affected by the proposal is left to that local authority.

As there are designated heritage assets located within a proportionate search area around the application site, it must be assessed if the site falls within the setting of these assets. The NPPF (Annex 2) defines the setting of a heritage asset as “the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.” Historic England provide advice on the setting of heritage assets in their Good Practice in Planning Note 3 (2015), this identifies that the surroundings in which an asset is experienced may be more extensive than its curtilage. The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to visual considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part, the way which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other factors such as noise, dust and vibrations from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places.

Historic England recommends undertaking a five-step approach to assessing change in the setting of heritage assets. The first step is to identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected by the proposal.

Within the western section of the application site and when positioned within the site surroundings there are views the spire of the grade II* listed Church St Catherine and physical elements of the eastern boundary and section of the Burbage Conservation Area. The application site is therefore considered to fall within the setting of these designated heritage assets.

Due to either the topography and presence of intervening-built form and vegetation there is no particular or clear inter-visibility between the application site and any of the other grade II and grade II* listed buildings located within Burbage, nor is there any known key historic, functional or other relevant relationships between the application site and these heritage assets. The application site is therefore not considered to fall within their setting and due to the form of the proposal it is considered this position would not be altered following the development.

Significance of affected heritage assets

Step 2 is to assess the degree to which these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset or allow its significance to be appreciated.

Church of St Catherine

The grade II* listed Church of St Margaret is located c.650m west of the application site at its closest point. It comprises of a medieval parish church substantially altered in the 19th century. It is constructed of sandstone and a slate roof and has a west tower with tall spire. It

principally derives its significance from the historic and architectural interest of its built form as an early parish church although the church also embodies communal value as a place of worship and as the social and physical focal point of both the past and present community of Burbage.

The church is located within a large church yard and is surrounded by built form. This immediate setting contributes positively to the church's significance, reinforcing its historic, architectural and communal values. By virtue of the height of the church spire, its hilltop position and the sloping topography of the surrounding landscape the church can also be seen within a much wider setting, particularly to the east of the village core. This reflects the status and role of the church, although its visibility is sometimes incidental and obscured by intervening built form and vegetation. Looking west from within the application site, and when positioned within the surroundings of the site including at publicly accessible points along Aston Flamville Road/Aston Lane and the public bridleway between Aston Lane and Sapcote Road, there are views where varying extents of the church tower and spire can be seen above any intervening vegetation and built form. These views do demonstrate the importance of the church as a visible presence within a wider semi-rural landscape and setting. The application site and its surroundings forms part of this wider setting, where a moderate appreciation of the significance of the church can be obtained from the views due to their extent, despite on occasions there being a considerable intervening distance.

Burbage Conservation Area

Burbage Conservation Area is an area of special historic and architectural interest. The Burbage Conservation Area Appraisal (BCAA) (2011) identifies the interest of the area as its group value of surviving buildings and spaces and local details that collectively and individually give the conservation area a distinctive identity. Looking west from within the application site, and when positioned within the surroundings of the site, the eastern edges of the conservation area boundary are visible and these predominantly consist of clusters of mature tall trees located within the grounds of Burbage Hall, around Manor Farm, and St Catherine's Churchyard. The trees provide the conservation area with a semi-rural character. Other than for the modern house at Manor Farm, which is sited in front of the trees, the trees screen most built form within the conservation area when looking eastwards towards the historic core of the village.

There are occasional glimpses from the public right of way network of the fine rear elevation of the grade II listed Burbage Hall through gaps in the tree line and when vegetation is at a seasonal low, but these views are only available from positions to the west of the application site so as there is no direct intervisibility between this heritage asset located within the conservation area and the site it is considered that it does not fall within the Hall's setting and its significance would not be affected by the proposal.

Looking west from within the application site, and when positioned within the surroundings of the site, including publicly accessible points along Aston Flamville Road/Aston Lane and the public bridleway between Aston Lane and Sapcote Road, there are views of the vegetation along the eastern boundaries of the Burbage Conservation Area. The conservation area has a rural setting to the east and the application site and its surroundings forms part of this

wider setting, where a moderate appreciation of this aspect of the conservation area's significance can be obtained from the views.

National and local policy and guidance

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on the local planning authority when determining applications for development which affects a listed building or its setting to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural and historic interest which it possesses.

Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides the national policy on conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraphs 199-202 of the NPPF require great weight to be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets when considering the impact of a proposed development on its significance, for any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset to have clear and convincing justification, and for that harm to be weighed against the public benefits of a proposal.

Policies DM11 and DM12 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD seek to protect and enhance the historic environment and heritage assets. Policy DM11 states that the Borough Council will protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment throughout the borough. This will be done through the careful management of development that might adversely impact both designated and non-designated heritage assets. All development proposals which have the potential to affect a heritage asset or its setting will be required to demonstrate:

- a) An understanding of the significance of the heritage asset and its setting, and
- b) The impact of the proposal on the significance of the asset and its setting, including measures to minimise or avoid these impacts; and
- c) How the benefits of the proposal will outweigh any harm caused
- d) Any impact on archaeology in line with Policy DM13

Policy DM12 requires all development proposals to accord with Policy DM10: Development and Design. Policy DM12 also states that all proposals for development affecting the setting of listed buildings will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that the proposals are compatible with the significance of the building and its setting, and that development proposals should ensure the significance of a conservation area is preserved and enhanced.

The Borough Council's Good Design Guide SPD (2020) also identifies design objectives for the settlement of Burbage to retain its key characteristics.

An assessment of the proposal against the policies contained within the Burbage Neighbourhood Plan is left to the decision-taker.

The proposal

A development framework plan has been submitted which indicates outline details of the proposal. New vehicular access points are to be located off Aston Flamville Road (consisting of a roundabout) and Sapcote Road with pedestrian access from Dorchester Road. Up to 343 dwellings are proposed within development blocks within each field. Existing field

boundaries would be retained and supplemented by some new areas of tree planting. Along the southern and eastern boundaries and set back from those is a large area for green infrastructure and attenuation ponds.

Impact of the proposal upon the significance of affected heritage assets

Step 3 of the Historic England Good Practice in Planning Note 3 is to assess the affects of the proposal, whether beneficial or harmful, on the significance of affected heritage assets or on the ability to appreciate that significance. Access is the only matter for consideration as part of this application with all other matters reserved (appearance, landscaping, layout and scale), however the details provided including an indicative layout and landscaping proposal do allow for a reasoned assessment of the impact of the proposal upon the significance of the affected heritage assets.

It is likely that some current views and glimpses of the tower and spire of the grade II* listed Church of St Catherine and the eastern edges of the Burbage Conservation Area would be lost by the proposed development when positioned within the areas proposed for dwellings, although the laying out of the development would likely maintain views of these heritage assets when located within the areas proposed for green infrastructure. The views of these assets from within the site are not currently accessible to the wider public but would be more widely available from the green infrastructure area if the proposal was implemented. When located outside of the site, views of these heritage assets would only be lost from a short section of Aston Flamville Road due to the siting of the proposed dwellings.

The application site makes no direct contribution to the significance of the church and conservation area but does allow for a moderate appreciation of the significance of these heritage assets due to its position within their settings. Whilst visibility of these assets will be reduced via the proposed development within their wider setting, the extent of this reduction is limited and an appreciation of the significance of the heritage assets would remain available from their wider landscape including from publicly accessible positions on the public right of way network, and from these positions the appreciation would not be materially affected by the proposal due to the mitigating effects of the green infrastructure area, retention of traditional boundary features, and supplementary planting. As a result the impact of the proposal upon the significance of the grade II* listed Church of St Catherine and the Burbage Conservation Area is considered to be negligible and not adverse.

Summary

This proposal affects the significance of the grade II* listed building the Church of St Catherine and the Burbage Conservation Area by virtue of its location within the wider setting of these designated heritage assets. Overall, the proposal is considered to have a negligible impact causing no harm to their significance. A component of determining this impact is the requirement for an appropriate layout with large area for green infrastructure around the site edges and the retention existing southern and eastern boundary treatments, supplemented where required, all of which must be confirmed at reserved matters stage if the application is to be approved. The proposal is therefore compatible with the significance of the listed building and will preserve the significance of the conservation area, so consequently the proposal accords with Policies DM11 and DM12 of the SADMP, section 16

of the NPPF and the statutory duty of Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Step 4 in the Historic England assessment approach is to explore ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm. As identified above it is considered that the layout and landscaping details included within this application should be delivered at reserved matters stage.

Step 5 relates to making and documenting the decision and monitoring outcomes. Such recommended good practice has been achieved by setting out the assessment stage of the decision-making process in an accessible way in the body of this report.