

From: Ian Gething
Sent: 17 November 2017 15:38
To: David Stockdale <David.Stockdale@southglos.gov.uk>
Cc: Planning Apps <planningapplications@southglos.gov.uk>
Subject: PK17/4552/O

David,

The application site lies to the far south of the Wickwar Conservation Area, beyond the later 20th century expansion and beyond the set of fields recently approved for 80no. dwellings as part of PT16/4006/O. The site contains no heritage assets, and those in the immediate vicinity include the locally listed cottages on Pincots Lane to the south and the Tollgate Cottage on the main road to the north. Further west is the grade II* listed Frith Farm. This particular building is sufficiently distant and visually divorced from the application site such that development would have no impact on its setting. The application site would be a further expansion of the 20th century urban development south of the historic medieval settlement, the impact of which on the setting of the heritage assets closer to the settlement core has already been considered under PT16/4006/O as being outweighed by the benefit of the new residential development. This further expansion will extend the area of residential housing, but it will not introduce any further harm to those assets already identified as being affected by the PT16/4006/O application.

The heritage assets that will be affected are the locally listed cottages to the south along Pincots Lane. It should be noted that the submitted heritage report does not include any assessment of the setting of these non-designated heritage assets, nor an assessment of the potential impact of development on their significance. It is recommended that the applicant addresses this through a revision/update to the document.

The 1840s tithe map show the cottages to be located to the east of an area of open land around which were located small individual gardens (now removed). To the north is a single storey brick building, possibly the same building recorded in the Apportionment as an 'ox house and barton (farmyard)', the mid-20th century Hill View Farmhouse, and a 19th century cottage situated on the bend of the road.

This group of buildings occupies an open area of farmland with extensive views over the surrounding countryside. It is an area of very low density development, it being a cluster of residential and agricultural buildings to the east side of what may once have been part of the communal fields around Wickwar. The development will bring the urban form of Wickwar closer to their northern side although the extensive woodland planting along the southern boundary should mitigate this to a degree over time. The footpaths and hedgerows are retained which is welcomed. The cottages will remain in an agricultural context but it will be one that will no longer have such a clear separation and distinction from the urban settlement edge as it does at the present time. Ultimately, this will have a negative impact on the setting of these non-designated heritage assets (medium significance according to the Heritage report), but the magnitude of harm will be low, resulting in negligible to slight harm to the overall significance of the locally listed building. This may just equate to less than substantial harm in the NPPF, engaging paragraph 135 of the NPPF.

In terms of layout and design, I'd make a few observations for consideration.

Whereas the PT16/4006/O site extended the settlement limits south to a similar extent as the development on the west side of Sodbury Road, this proposal pushes the settlement limit much further, extending it into open fields that are mirrored by similarly open fields on the opposite side of the road. This could lead to an impression of the extension as being 'sprawl' as opposed to well-considered infill or sympathetic expansion. Whilst Wickwar has a linear character, there will be a limit to how far this pattern of development can be taken.

The site would further stretch the modern urban extensions to this historic settlement southwards, limiting an appreciation of the landscape setting of the village on this eastern side. The form of the development provides little relief in its form and density compared to the northern PT16/4006/O site and the same 35dph layout is carried on right up to the sites buffer zone. Whereas the northwest, west and northeast sides of the village have a gentle transition into the surrounding countryside, this extension to the village will have a much harder and solid edge to the residential pattern of development. The buffer zones may help to mitigate this to a degree, but is there potential to consider a more rural, edge of settlement pattern to the development with reduced density and increased spacing between buildings to give a greater sense of openness and permeability? The site is some distance from the built-up centre of the village and is in an area where one would be expecting to see a gradual transition into the open countryside yet the proposal retains a very suburban, close-knit layout with terraces and semi-detached houses (some link-attached via garages). This is quite a contrast compared to the west side of the Wickwar Road where open fields gradually get replaced by detached properties in good sized gardens lining the roadside into the village.

The Design Guide highlights the importance of using good quality materials and detailing in order to reflect local distinctiveness, without resorting to pastiche house styles. This is encouraging, although I'd note that the use of concrete slates and brick are hardly typical of the local vernacular and the commitment to using traditional materials "on a proportion of plots" is not very reassuring. If permission were to be granted, I'd expect a condition securing a more detailed character appraisal to be submitted with any reserved matters application in order to ensure that whatever form the development takes, it reinforces the local distinctiveness of Wickwar and is not a token gesture tacked onto a generic and formulaic housing development. The use of traditional materials should take priority over non-descript brick units.

The Design Guide suggests a number of landmark or focal point buildings to be given greater prominence in the streetscene. According to the accompanying text, this may be achieved through materials, roof articulation or architectural treatment but it also may equate to buildings being raised to 2.5 storeys. From experience, if maximum ridge heights are not controlled through a Design Code, '2.5 storeys' often equates to buildings being equivalent to a full three storey building in height in order to maximise space on the 2nd floor. This leads to poorly proportioned elevations and overly deep footprints so it needs to be controlled. Given the location of this development at the very southern edge of the settlement, might introducing tall landmark buildings be seen as inappropriate and incongruous?

Is there scope to have some of the northern development face onto Horwood Lane and is there potential for additional connections into the PT16/4006/O site?

Boundaries within the site and to individual buildings should also have regards to the rural context of the site. Swathes of close-board fencing or brick walls will not be acceptable. The use of hedges and planting to reinforce boundaries will assist in greening what should be a rural edge development.

There may be other 'urban design' issues and I defer these to whoever is picking up 'Urban Design' at this time.

Thanks,
Ian

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Conservation Officer

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