

**LAND AT SODBURY ROAD, WICKWAR, SOUTH
GLOUCESTERSHIRE
SUMMARY LANDSCAPE PROOF OF EVIDENCE**

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APPEAL BY BLOOR HOMES SOUTH WEST

Status: Exchange

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**Planning Inspectorate Reference:
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P22/01300/O**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 I am Robert Nicholson, a Conservation Officer at South Gloucestershire Council, and I am a Chartered Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and a full member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation.
- 1.2 My evidence sets out the key impacts of the development proposals on the historic built environment in support of putative Reason for Refusal 1.

2.0 SITE CONTEXT

- 2.1 The Appeal site contains no designated or non-designated heritage assets.
- 2.2 The development proposals would however have the potential to impact on the setting of a number of heritage assets and the assets which may experience impacts through change in setting were identified as:
- The Wickwar Conservation Area
 - The Grade II listed South Farm
 - The Grade II* listed Frith Farm.
- 2.3 The circa 7.89 hectare Appeal site is comprised of agricultural land in the form of a pattern of enclosed fields located to the west of Sodbury Road and to the south of the historic market village of Wickwar.
- 2.4 The southern edge of the Wickwar Conservation Area lies approximately 335m to the north of the Appeal site. The Appeal site includes land associated with the Grade II listed South Farm and the farmhouse and its farmstead would be situated directly adjacent to the east of the Appeal site and so there would be clear and direct impact on its setting. To the south-west of the Appeal site, fronting onto Frith Lane is the Grade II* listed Frith Farm. In views from limited upper floor windows within Frith Farm and from its curtilage, the Appeal site is appreciable. There are also tandem views of the Appeal site and the Grade II* listed Frith Farm from the surrounding rural landscape where the scale, style and positioning of Frith Farm can be appreciated.

3.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT & HERITAGE IMPACT ISSUES

- 3.1 In light of the separation distances involved and the intervening structures and other features, the Appeal proposals are not considered to be harmful to the setting and thus character and appearance of the Wickwar Conservation Area.
- 3.2 In respect of the Grade II listed South Farm, while its heritage significance can be considered to be primarily derived from its architectural and aesthetic interest and the historic interest of its physical fabric, I would also consider that the rural setting of South Farm can be considered to make a contribution to its significance.
- 3.3 The functional association between the Appeal site and South Farm is a current but also an historic one. Overall, the contribution the Appeal site makes to the setting of South Farm can be considered to be a simple one in that it plays an important role in providing a wider rural setting in which the historic listed farmhouse can be experienced, an experience that is enhanced by a PROW that runs through the farmstead. This also helps South Farm ensure its functional origins remain legible which adds to the historic interest and in turn significance through the subsequent sense of authenticity its setting provides.
- 3.4 In light of its existing setting and how the farmhouse is experienced from Sodbury Road and the layout and siting of the Appeal proposals, the greater impacts on setting will be felt to the rear. By reason of the loss of its immediate existing rural landscape setting, the development proposals would cause a degree of harm to the significance of the Grade II South Farm through building in its setting.
- 3.5 In regard to the considered magnitude of harm, following the revisions that were made to the proposed layout and landscaping which would see mitigation measures initially proposed enhanced, I am in agreement with the findings of the submitted Heritage Addendum that the harm to the significance of the Grade II South Farm would be towards the lower end of the “less than substantial” category of harm.
- 3.6 In respect of the Grade II* listed Frith Farm, the Appeal site can be considered to form part of its setting and in light of its existing agricultural character, the Appeal site can be considered to make a positive contribution to the setting of Frith Farm. The development proposals for the Appeal site will a dramatic change in landscape character as the agricultural fields that help contribute to the character the setting become urbanised. The existing positive contribution the Appeal site therefore makes to the setting of the Grade II* listed Frith Farm will therefore be lost. The Appeal proposals will therefore result in a loss of setting as the extent of rural landscape that defines the existing setting is eroded and with it also, the existing spatial separation from the main settlement of Wickwar. Along with the intrusive visual impact of the Appeal proposals in views both from Frith Farm towards to Appeal site and in tandem views of the Appeal site and Frith Farm within the wider landscape, the increase in street lighting and noise would also further detract from the existing rural environment.
- 3.7 Overall, in regard to the impact of the Appeal proposals on the setting of Frith Farm, the impact would result in a discernible change in landscape character and relationship between Frith Farm and its rural setting. These changes would result in what can be

considered an overall impact in the context of the wider setting of the Grade II* Frith Farm, and while the changes may be limited, it would be harmful.

- 3.8 In accordance with paragraph 202 of the Framework, there would be “less than substantial” harm to the setting and so significance of the Grade II* listed Frith Farm and in my view, this harm would be towards the lower end of the “less than substantial” category.

4.0 PUTATIVE REASONS FOR REFUSAL

- 4.1 The heritage issues of the Appeal proposals are considered below with reference to national and Local Plan policy.

National Planning Policy Framework (CD4.7)

- 4.2 **Paragraph 199:** *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 (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.*
- 4.3 This paragraph makes it clear that great weight should be given to harm caused to any designated asset and that this great weight increases further where, as here, the importance of the asset is further heightened, given Frith Farm's is designation as Grade II* listed building.
- 4.4 **Paragraph 200:** *Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.*
- 4.5 The relevance of paragraph 200 to this appeal is that regardless of the considered magnitude of harm, a clear and convincing justification is required for that harm to be permitted.

Policies Sites & Places Plan (Adopted November 2017) (CD4.5)

- 4.6 **Policy PSP17** of the South Gloucestershire Policies Sites and Places Plan DPD (Adopted 2017) **"Heritage Assets and the Historic Environment"** looks to ensure any development proposals serve to protect and where appropriate enhance or better reveal the significance of heritage assets and their settings and ensure that any heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. The **"General Principles"** outline within this policy is also of relevance, as it requires *"Alterations, extensions or changes of use to listed buildings, or development within their setting, will be expected to preserve and, where appropriate, enhance those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest, including their settings"*.
- 4.7 In the case of both the Grade II South Farm and the Grade II* listed Frith Farm the Appeal proposals would fail to either preserve or enhance the setting of either designated heritage asset.

5.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 I conclude that the proposed scale and nature of the Appeal proposals would be harmful to setting for both the Grade II listed South Farm and the Grade II* listed Frith Farm.
- 5.2 The loss of rural setting due to the intrusive nature of the Appeal proposals would be harmful to the significance of the Grade II listed South Farm and the Grade II* listed Frith Farm.
- 5.3 In accordance with the Framework, there would be “less than substantial” harm to the setting and in turn the significance of both the Grade II South Farm and the Grade II* listed Frith Farm and in both cases, I conclude that this harm would be towards the lower end of the “less than substantial” category.