

Application number(s):	21/02366/F
Application site:	Wincote, Cow Lane, Steeple Aston
Proposal:	Demolition of the existing dwelling house and the erection of a replacement dwelling house

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|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Listed Building | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Conservation Area | <input type="checkbox"/> | Setting of a Listed Building |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Grade I | <input type="checkbox"/> | Grade II* | <input type="checkbox"/> | Grade II |

Policies

Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (2015)

- Policy ESD15** New development proposals should: Conserve, sustain and enhance designated and non-designated 'heritage assets' including buildings, features, archaeology, conservation areas and their settings, and ensure new development is sensitively sited and integrated, furthermore development should respect the traditional pattern of the form, scale and massing of buildings

Cherwell Local Plan 1996 Saved Policies

- C18** Works to a listed building should preserve the building, its setting and any features of special architectural or historic interest. Alterations or extensions to a listed building should be minor and sympathetic.
- C23** Presumption in favour of retaining positive features within a Conservation Area.
- C28** The layout, design and materials proposed within a new development should respect the existing local character. 'control will be exercised over all new development to ensure that standards of layout, design and external appearance are sympathetic to the character of the urban or rural context of that development.

NPPF – Chapter 16

- 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.
- 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. Substantial harm to or loss of:
- grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;
 - assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly Exceptional.

Paragraph 201. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:
a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

Paragraph 202. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

Paragraph 203. The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Other Relevant Policies and guidance

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Section 16. In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Section 72. With respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

Significance (50 words)

Wincot is a building of historic interest which lies within Steeple Aston Conservation Area. The building makes a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area.

Appraisal (250 words)

Site context

The building lies at the eastern edge of Steeple Conservation area. It is a little unclear from the plan which character area it lies in – potentially Peripheral Areas. 'These areas are set at the extreme edges of the historic core and have a less formal feel to them when compared with the traditional streets. Despite being separated, these entrances to the village are similar in their low-key rural approaches to the historic areas'. The building is set back from the building line along Cow Lane, but is approached from the public footpath leading out of the village.

The building is a non-designated heritage asset in its own right. Research by the Steeple Aston Archive group indicates 'Wincot is in fact two buildings of similar size, butted together and stepped down the site. Expert inspection has revealed the probability that the lower of the two buildings was constructed as an agricultural building, possibly a barn, up against the boundary of the site, probably around 1820. Before 1850 the upper building was then constructed as a dwelling sharing a party wall with the 'barn' which was then converted into more living accommodation. The 'upper' house fits the basic architectural pattern of the village – two storeys high and three bays wide with a central front door and a shallow plan..... The building is essentially in good condition'.

The building is set back from the lane and lies along the northern boundary of the plot and was historically associated with a working orchard. The principal building is a traditional vernacular structure constructed of stone and is in-keeping with the surrounding area.

The site is currently surrounded by mature hedge and trees which screens immediate views of the building, but the building remains in the conservation area and is still considered to make a positive contribution to its character and appearance. The design statement acknowledges s. 'Over the years the orchard has been eroded so that now only a few apple trees remain on the land. Later, landscaping has been introduced, including box hedges and a tennis court, all of which encloses the site and do not take advantage of the topography of the land or the views down the valley' indicating that the intention may be to remove some of the surrounding boundaries, although the intention to retain as many existing trees as possible is also stated.

Planning application

An application for planning (11/00114/F) and conservation area consent (11/00115/CAC) was made for the demolition of the existing historic building and construction of a modern building in its place. The application was withdrawn.

In 21/00311/preapp a pre-application submission was made in relation to the refurbishment and extension of the current building. The pre-app submission made the clear intention to retain the original 'cottage', but to make alterations to or demolish some of the other buildings on site.

It should be noted that the Conservation Team were not consulted on the pre-application submission. The officer's report states 'The existing dwelling on the site is of a substantial scale and massing, having been extended significantly throughout the twentieth century. The proposed scheme would involve part demolition and the erection of two and single storey extensions to the east of the existing dwelling. As a result of these proposed extensions, Wincote would be of the scale of at least two dwellings and it therefore needs to be considered whether this would cause harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area.' and 'On balance, given the siting, scale and design of the existing dwelling, it is considered that the development would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The existing dwelling has a large footprint and the proposed extensions would result in a visual improvement to the appearance of the dwelling. Furthermore, the dwelling is located away from other dwellings so would not be viewed in the immediate context of surrounding dwellings'.

This is not the view of the Conservation Team although some of the existing buildings on the site are of little historic merit there are others which are of clear historic interest and the proposed scale and massing of the building completely alter the character of the building and its position

within the character area. The current principal building which is referred to as a 'cottage', but is in reality a classically proportioned house will become a minimal element of the site as a whole.

Current proposals

The Conservation Team have more significant concerns with the proposals which form part of this current application as the intention is to demolish the original historic 'cottage' as well as the outbuildings. This would result in the total loss of a non-designated heritage asset as well as the impact on the character and appearance of the Steeple Aston Conservation Area from the loss of a building which makes a positive contribution.

There are also concerns about the proposal to 'rebuild' the cottage to modern building standards in terms of the environmental impact. There does not appear to be anything intrinsically wrong with the existing building and the proposal to rebuild ignores the issue of the existing embodied carbon in the existing building; an issue which has been raised recently by both the Royal Institute of British Architects and Historic England.

Level of harm

No Harm

Less than Substantial Harm

Substantial Harm
Total loss to NDHA.

Public Benefit (NPPG)

Yes

No

Comments

The proposed development would lead to less than substantial harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area, but total loss to the non-designated heritage asset of Wincot.

There is no public benefit to outweigh this harm.

Recommendation

No objections

Objections

Engage in preapp

Suggested Conditions

Conservation Officer: Jenny Ballinger

Date:
13/09/2021