**18/00484/OUT**

**Land north and adjoining Home Farm, Banbury Road, Caversfield**

**Outline planning permission for up to 75 homes**

**Understanding the heritage assets affected**

The Environmental Statement for the site identifies Home Farmhouse and St Laurence Church as being the two heritage assets impacted by the proposed development.

Home Farmhouse is a grade II listed building and the site forms part of the original agricultural landholding associated with the farmhouse.

St Laurence’s Church is an isolated rural church and a grade II\* listed building. The church is separated from the site by the main road (B4100).

**Significance**

The Built Heritage Statement and Cultural Heritage section of the Environmental Statement identify that

* the contribution of the wider setting of St Laurence’s Church is limited. The core significance lies in its historic fabric and immediate setting of the surrounding churchyard. This is acknowledged, but the isolated, rural nature of the church should nevertheless be considered.
* The wider setting of the Home Farmhouse historically formed a core part of its significance and the site originally had a functional relationship with the farmhouse as part of the agricultural land surrounding it. The significance has, however, been eroded and compromised by later development in the area and there is now limited inter visibility beteween the site and the heritage asset due to dense tree planting. This is acknowledged.

**Proposals**

The proposal is for outline permission for up to 75 homes and associated infrastructure.

**Appraisal of issues**

The site forms part of a formal allocation of land for housing as part of the Cherwell Local Plan and is identified as an area for housing and open space within the NW Bicester SPD therefore the principle of housing development on the site has been established.

The key issue is whether sufficient allowance has been made to mitigate the impact on the setting of the heritage assets.

The original masterplan for the site shows an indicative ‘buffer’ area to mitigate the impact on the setting of the grade II\* listed building of St Laurence Church and grade II Home Farmhouse. The buffer area shown as part of the outline permission is reduced. The precise dimensions of the buffer zone are considered to be less significant than the role it plays in mitigating the impact on the heritage assets.

The land use parameter plan shows some development in the buffer zone in the form of allotments, car parking, play area and surface water attenuation pond as well as a community orchard.

* The allotments and community orchard are considered to form part of the green infrastructure for the site and are not considered to have a negative impact on the setting of the heritage assets.
* The car parking, play area and surface water attenuation pond will require further detailing at reserved matters stage to ensure their design is suitable and allows the buffer zone to fulfil its function of minimising the impact on the heritage assets.
* There are some concerns with the location of the car park and play area which are in close proximity to St Laurence Church, albeit off-set by a short distance to the north west.It is understood that the car parking is also to be used for parking for the church itself and there is considered to be a public benefit to this. The design, materials and boundary treatments of both the car park and play area will be crucial in minimising the impact on the setting of St Laurence’s Church.
* The water attenuation pond is in close proximity to Home Farmhouse, but will presumably be a ground level feature. It is important that this feature is as natural as possible and not over-engineered.

Consideration will also need to be given at reserved matters stage to the design and materials of the footpath / cycleway and built form around the eastern edge of the development. This will need to be suitable for the rural setting. The use of materials will be crucial and the cycleway should be a simple track and not over engineered.

The proposal for the housing development to be arranged to form a vista towards St Laurence Church is welcome. This is a traditional way of developing around key heritage assets and recognises the importance and significance of the building within its new context.

**Level of harm**

Residential development in the rural setting of heritage assets (in this case a farmhouse and isolated rural church) will inevitably have a harmful impact. In this case the harm is considered to be less than substantial and it is considered that sufficient mitigation has been put in place to minimise the harm. There is considered to be a public benefit to outweigh this harm as the site has been formally allocated for part of the housing allocation for the district.

The mitigation, in the form of the size of the buffer zone, has already been eroded from the indicative masterplan. The application is currently at outline stage and it is fundamental that further compromises to the setting are not made at reserved matters stage.

**Recommendation**

No objection subject to further details of development within the buffer zone at reserved matters stage.

Jenny Ballinger, 7th June 2018