

APP REF: P/OUT/2023/02644

PROPOSAL: Hybrid planning application consisting of:

Full planning permission for a mixed-use development to erect a food store with cafe, plus office space and 2 No. flats above. Erect building for mixed commercial, business and service uses (Class E), (e.g. estate agents, hairdresser, funeral care, dentist, vet). Form vehicular and pedestrian accesses and parking. Form parking area for St. Gregory's Church and St Gregory's Primary School. Carry out landscaping works and associated engineering operations. (Demolish redundant agricultural buildings). Land west of Church Hill. Outline planning permission (to determine access) to erect up to 120 dwellings. Land off Butts Close and Schoolhouse Lane.

LOCATION: Land west of Church Hill, and Land off Butts Close and Schoolhouse Lane, Marnhull

CASE OFFICER: Robert Lennis

SITE VISIT: 11/12/2023

CONSERVATION & DESIGN OFFICER COMMENTS

| | |
|--|----------|
| SUPPORT | |
| SUPPORT SUBJECT TO CONDITION | |
| UNABLE TO SUPPORT | <u>X</u> |
| NO OBJECTION | |
| REQUEST FOR FURTHER INFORMATION | |
| OTHER | |

SUMMARY

Proposals will impact on the significance of at least the following designated/ non-designated heritage asset/s, including any contribution made by their setting:

| | Grade | No harm | Less than substantial harm | Substantial harm |
|---|--------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Church of St Gregory (1172545) | I | | <u>X</u> | |
| Senior's Farmhouse and Attached Barn (1172057) | II* | | <u>X</u> | |
| The Old Rectory (1110415) | II | <u>X</u> | | |
| Orchard House (1324543) | II | <u>X</u> | | |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|--|-----------------|--|
| Marnhull Conservation Area | CA | | <u>X</u> | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|--|-----------------|--|

If harm is identified to designated heritage assets, any public benefits of the proposals which could be considered sufficiently substantial to outweigh the harm caused, along with any other tests etc. set out in the adopted Local Plan and NPPF.

NB: this would also include impacts on the significance of any below-ground archaeology identified in investigations.

SITE DESCRIPTION/ CONTEXT/ SIGNIFICANCE

The affected heritage assets are scheduled below, along with relevant aspects of their significance, including any contribution made by their setting. Where potential impacts are indirect (i.e. affecting setting) only, then only relevant contributory elements of setting are outlined here.

Church of St Gregory [Church of St Gregory] (Grade I, 1172545)

Significance

- Elements of **setting** which contribute to its significance include:
 - spatial and historically functional relationship within the localised extent and context of the village and its encompassing, agrestic local landscape
 - the visual experience, from the building and grounds, that collectively promote the site's discrete (private) and tranquil rural setting
 - the visual experience toward the building within the context of its low-density village setting
 - the visual, static and kinetic, experience obtained from a full village radius of viewpoints toward the building that clearly exhibit the structures elevated prominence as an impressive landmark feature within the settlement boundary
 - Peripheral views that present the building within the wider context of the villagescape setting

Senior's Farmhouse and Attached Barn [Senior's Farmhouse and Attached Barn, New Street] (Grade II, 1172057)

Significance

- Elements of **setting** which contribute to its significance include:

- spatial and historically functional relationship within the localised extent and context of the village and encompassing local, agrestic landscape
- the visual experience, from the building and grounds, that collectively promote the site's tranquil rural setting
- the visual experience toward the building within the context of its low-density village setting
- Peripheral views that present the building within the wider context of the villagescape setting

COMMENTS ON PROPOSAL

The proposed scheme has been assessed, in relation to impacts on special architectural/historical significance and based on proximity, toward the encompassing Marnhull Conservation Area and are addressed further below.

Proposals for this hybrid planning application broadly comprise:

Land west of Church Hill (north)

Full planning permission for a mixed-use development to erect a food store with cafe, plus office space and 2 No. flats above. Erect building for mixed commercial, business and service uses (Class E), (e.g. estate agents, hairdresser, funeral care, dentist, vet). Form vehicular and pedestrian accesses and parking. Form parking area for St. Gregory's Church and St Gregory's Primary School. Carry out landscaping works and associated engineering operations. (Demolish redundant agricultural buildings).

Land west of Schoolhouse Land (South)

Outline planning permission (to determine access) to erect up to 120 dwellings. Land off Butts Close and Schoolhouse Lane.

The application site is situated within a landscape extent classified as "Limestone hills" which forms an elevated, geological sequence closely bordering low-level, undulating, open planes. The extent, located on the upper ridge of the Blackmoor Vale, is characterised by an ancient pattern of small irregular pastoral fields and narrow lanes, interspersed with irregular patches of woodland. Furthermore, the expansive, and generally open, landscape provides opportunity for wide spanning, distant views which incorporate the presentation of mixed farmland, dense boundary hedgerows, stonewalls, and infrequent, steep wooded slopes. Typically, settlements are defined by the adoption of distinctive local yellow limestone with the use of Forest Marble and Cornbrash common. These picturesque and distinctive limestone villages, and concomitant church towers, vernacular dwellings, and scattered farmsteads, are all characteristic of the overall limestone scenery which contributes significantly to the village's rural and agrestic sense of place.

We confirm that there are no designated heritage assets identified within the immediate extent of the application site, thus proposals are not considered to impact directly (physically) on the fabric of any encompassing designated assets. However, varying

degrees of impact are considered likely by way of the scheme's presentation within the neighbouring extents of the Marnhull Conservation Area and broader landscape and, therefore, the setting of encompassing buildings and structures considered of special architectural and/ or historic interest. On this basis, the scheme has been assessed on its affect toward identified heritage assets, in the context of perceived degrees of impact on their setting and thus, associated attributes and their individual and collective contribution toward the significance and appreciation of the asset.

NPPF Glossary: Setting of a heritage asset 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 (NPPF, Annex 2: Glossary).

Based on the unique context of the application site, and its presentation within a notable character area of the localised, historic village extent, assets most likely to be affected by the scheme have been limited in identification to the Church of St Gregory, Senior's Farmhouse and Attached Barn and the Marnhull Conservation Area.

Principally, we reiterate key observations regarding development and the spirit of place, as documented within the North Dorset Landscape Character Assessment 2008, The Strategic Landscape and Heritage Study for North Dorset an The Dorset Landscape Character Assessment for Marnhull:

- ***Conserve and enhance the varied settlement pattern of the different limestone villages and their relationship with the associated surrounding copses/ woodlands***
- ***Maintain the undeveloped character of the area e.g. by resisting intrusive developments on sensitive and exposed hillside locations.***

Furthermore, the intrinsic scenic quality, associated with the character of the limestone hills landscape and, more specifically, Marnhull's overall low-density presentation within both a localised and wider landscape context, promote a strong sense of tranquillity and remoteness. These perceptual and experiential qualities are fundamentally derived from the village's undeveloped rural character which contribute to the distinctiveness and sense of place at a local scale.

Both application sites, as illustrated on supporting indicative plans, are situated outside the extent of the Marnhull settlement boundary which is presented in a distinctive linear format. Predicated on the proposed derivation from preserving the village's historic settlement pattern, our initial concern relates to one of site allocation and, what is perceived to be, cumulative erosion (loss) of the village form through the schemes intent to site, infill, development between the two Marnhull Conservation Area extents.

For ease of clarity and reference, each proposed application site is addressed separately below.

Land west of Church Hill (north)

The village's open farmland to the west of Church Hill has been adopted for agricultural use since the C19 based on the evidence of historical maps. The network of PRow's crossing this area are also considered to represent important routes that connect the village with its history of land use. The extent proposed for the application site currently separates two parts of the village which promote a dispersed settlement pattern and sense of separation considered of principal importance to the setting of the Conservation Area. This distinct, historic settlement reference is currently well maintained despite the modern, postwar development connecting the village to the east of Church Hill. The proposed scheme comprising a food store, business units, and parking would occupy much of the currently unbuilt land, west of Church Hill, which we perceive would directly, negatively challenge the clear relational legibility and presentation between the two sections of the Conservation Area.

St Gregory's Church presents as an imposing and predominant, elevated landmark feature, centrally set, within the uninterrupted skyline of the village radius. The Grade I designated 15th century church tower is widely visible across all open farmland, within the village core, and encompassing landscape. We perceive that the proposed development would fundamentally influence and negatively challenge the setting of the Church by introducing large scale structures, parking, and associated infrastructure into the open, fielded extent of agricultural land.

Seniors Farmhouse and attached barn is a Grade II* designated asset situated directly to the west of St Gregory's Church. Whilst removing the large asbestos agricultural structures, to the northwest, would be considered as an enhancement to the assets setting, proposed development is perceived to erode the building's historic relational legibility with the immediate extent of the encompassing agricultural landscape. Therefore, the introduction of challenging, commercial scale structures to the north are perceived to negatively impact on the setting associated with the asset's distinctive rural environs.

Land west of Schoolhouse Land (South)

Proposals to build 120 houses, occupy the full extent of agricultural land bordered by Chippel Lane and Schoolhouse Lane. From the north approach to the village, St Gregory's Church is clearly presented as a key landscape feature at the convergence point of Chippel Lane and Schoolhouse Lane. This section offers easily obtainable views of the asset across, subtly elevated open farmland, north, toward the foreground of the village's south boundary. Therefore, we consider development would fundamentally alter the historic relationship between the Church and its setting by introducing a densely developed foreground to key views, north, towards the Conservation Area and Church. We acknowledge a degree of mitigation, by way of the scheme's design format, however, perceive that the proposals will negatively challenge and diminish the visual prominence of the tower which further serves to erode the historically open, rural setting of the Church.

Based on the proposed intent of the scheme and relational proximity to the Conservation Area, overall, impact is considered likely by way of negative challenge (harm) to unique

attributes which positively contribute to the setting and, therefore the significance of encompassing designated and non-designated heritage assets. Subsequently, para. 202 of the NPPF is engaged. Predicated on the supporting specificity and justification associated with the scheme, and its incongruous presentation, which is not deemed as a tangible enhancement, within the context of both local and wider environs, we consider, on balance, a resultant conclusion of **less than substantial harm**.

We defer to Landscape regarding the provision of comments relating to the suitability of the scheme's overall proposed presentation within the context of both localised and wider landscape extents.

IMPACTS ON DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

The Council has a statutory duty under section 66 of the 1990 Act requires to 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***”.

In addition, paragraph 199 of the NPPF requires that in considering whether to grant planning permission for any works or development, “***great weight should be given to the asset's conservation***”. Paragraph 200 states that: “***any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset, should require clear and convincing justification***”.

Based on proximity to the Marnhull Conservation Area

The Council has a statutory duty under section 72 of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 that ‘***special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area***’.

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The main issues to consider are the effects of the application on the character and significance of the listed building. In addition, considerations must also be given to whether any harm, that may occur, would be outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal.

Para 199 of the NPPF states; ‘***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. This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss of or less than substantial harm to its significance.***’

Para 202 of the NPPF states; ***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.***’

RELEVANT POLICY/ GUIDANCE

In assessing the proposals, due consideration has been given to the following:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) section 16, paras. 194-208
- Planning Practice Guidance, s.v. 'Historic Environment'
- Section(s) 66/72 of the 1990 Act
- BS 7913:2013, Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings (regarding setting)
- North Dorset Landscape Character Assessment, 2008
- The Dorset Landscape Character Assessment
- The Strategic Landscape and Heritage Study for North Dorset, 2019
- Policy 5 of the North Dorset Local Plan
Dorset Historic Towns Project Historic Urban Characterisation
- Historic England, Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (2008)
- Historic England, The Setting of Heritage Assets, 2nd edn (GPA 3, 2017)
- Historic England, Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets - HEAG279 (2019)
- Historic England, Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (GPA 2, 2015)

SUGGESTED CONDITIONS

N/A

INFORMATIVE

N/A

OFFICER: Tobias Carleton-Prangnell

TITLE: Conservation Officer (Spatial Planning and Majors)

DATE: 15/12/2023