



# Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2002

by T Cookson DipTP MRTPI

An Inspector appointed by the First Secretary of State

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Date

- 4 OCT 2002

Appeal Ref: APP/C1625/A/02/1091754

Site of former Ship Inn, Bristol Road, Stonehouse

- The appeal is made under Section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Gloucestershire County Council against the decision of Stroud District Council.
- The application (reference: S.01/1526), dated 6<sup>th</sup> September 2001, was refused by notice dated 11<sup>th</sup> December 2001.
- The development proposed is residential development (outlines).

Summary of Decision: The appeal is dismissed.

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL  
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DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

### Procedural Matters

1. The appeal site is within the Stroud Industrial Heritage Conservation Area. Accordingly, I am required by Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area when dealing with this appeal.

### Planning Policies

2. Section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act requires that planning applications and appeals are to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan for the area comprises the Gloucestershire Structure Plan Second Review, approved by the County Council in 1999. Policy S.2 of the Plan is concerned with the functions of principal settlements; Policy S.3 establishes that priority should be given to the development of land within the built-up areas; H.4 indicates where most residential in the county will be provided; Stroud/Stonehouse is one such area; NHE.6 seeks to conserve and enhance the distinctive historic environment of the county; and RE.5 encourages the restoration of the Stroudwater Canal.
3. I note that there is no adopted local plan for the area. The Local Planning Authority makes reference to the Stroud District Plan Revised Deposit Version of the Local Plan. However, in view of the fact that the inquiry into objections to the plan is still ongoing, I shall attach little weight to its policies here.

**Main Issue**

4. From my inspection of the site and surroundings and my consideration of all the representations, I am of the opinion that the main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, having regard to the location of the site in the conservation area.

**Reasoning**

5. The appeal site is on the south side of A419 Bristol Road at its junction with Downton Road. This latter road defines the western boundary of the site. An area recently-approved for housing development lies on the other side of this road. The eastern boundary of the appeal site comprises the access road to the Upper Mills Industrial Estate, beyond which is an area of semi-open land comprising mature trees and bushes. The Stroudwater Canal makes up the southern boundary, on the other side of which is a residential area. In the general area on the north side of Bristol Road are the buildings of Wycliffe College. I note that the appeal site lies within the settlement boundary of Stonehouse.
6. The appellant claims that the site is previously-developed land having been occupied earlier by a variety of uses: the Ship Inn public house, the Wharf Crossing Gatehouse, the Nailsworth Branch railway, and as allotments. Now the appeal site consists of a large, rough, grassed area with the odd tree and bush, and is most unprepossessing in appearance. No easily-discernible evidence of these earlier uses remains. Accordingly, I cannot accept that it can be regarded as previously-developed land. According to the definition in Planning Policy Guidance note 3, the remains of any structure or activity that have blended into the landscape in the process of time, as is the case here, cannot be defined as previously-developed land.
7. Although the site is not particularly attractive in its present state it serves as an effective, transitional feature between the open land to the east, outside the settlement boundary of Stonehouse, and the emerging built form on the Wharf site, west of Downton Road, and surrounding development. The site provides also an effective setting in visual and physical terms for the canal and its heritage within the conservation area setting.
8. To build houses on the site would destroy its transitional function, replacing it with a firm, obtrusive urban form at the edge of the settlement. I appreciate that the plans submitted are illustrative, but they do provide a valuable insight into how development could take place on the site. Even with landscaping, and careful design and detailing, I have no doubts that if developed, the visual function of the site would cease, to the detriment of the area. Similarly, residential development would extirpate any reasonable and realistic opportunities to enhance the industrial heritage of the canal and the conservation area. Attempts at incorporating elements of the canal's heritage in a housing development would be merely a palliative.

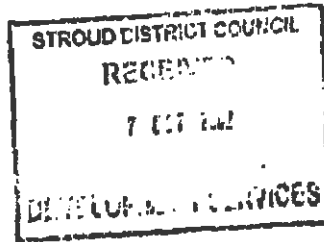
**Conclusions**

9. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed. In reaching this conclusion I have taken into account all other matters raised in the representations, but none is sufficient to outweigh the considerations I deem to be material.

**Formal Decision**

10. In exercise of the powers transferred to me, I dismiss the appeal.

  
INSPECTOR



**Information**

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