

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 September 2016

by J F Powis BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 03 November 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/W/16/3152021

Crookfur Cottage, Newbury Road, Kingsclere, Hampshire RG20 4SY

- 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 Mr Wayne Williams against the decision of Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 15/03144/OUT, dated 28 May 2015, was refused by notice dated 11 May 2016.
 - The development proposed is the erection of two dwellings following the demolition of the existing bungalow.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matters

2. The application was made in outline with all matters reserved for future consideration and I have dealt with the appeal on that basis. The description of development was amended and a number of plans were withdrawn during the Council's consideration of the application. The Council has confirmed that its decision was based on the amended description of development, as set out on the appeal form, and I have determined the appeal on that basis.
3. The Basingstoke and Deane Borough Local Plan 2011-2029 was adopted on 26 May 2016, shortly after the Council's decision in respect of this application. The Council's decision notice refers to saved Policy D6 of the Basingstoke and Deane Borough Local Plan 1996-2011 which has now been superseded and therefore no longer has statutory weight as part of the development plan. My decision is made in the context of the development plan in place at the time of writing.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether or not the site would be a suitable location for the proposed development, having regard to the proximity of services.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is located to the west of the A339 between the villages of Kingsclere and Headley. The proposed development would replace the existing bungalow on the site with two dwellings, resulting in the net addition of one dwelling. The site sits outside of any settlement boundary identified in the development plan.
 6. Policy SS6 of the adopted Local Plan states that small scale residential proposals of a scale and type that meet a locally agreed need will only be
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permitted on land outside of settlement policy boundaries where, amongst other things, they would be well related to the existing settlement and would not result in an isolated form of development. The supporting text to the policy explains that this is intended to maintain the open nature of the borough's countryside and to ensure that new homes are located in areas that enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. This echoes paragraph 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which seeks to avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances.

7. At the heart of the disagreement between the parties is whether or not the proposal would result in an isolated form of development. The site is accessed via a track from the A339 that also serves a garden centre, café and two other residential properties. A small business park is also located nearby, although it has a separate access from the A339. There are therefore some limited leisure and employment facilities in the immediate vicinity of the site. Notwithstanding this, future occupiers of the proposed dwellings would need to travel to nearby settlements in order to access the full range of services and amenities required for day to day living.
8. The closest settlements offering such facilities are the villages of Kingsclere, which has amenities including a primary school, post office and shop, and to a lesser extent, Headley. Kingsclere is approximately 1.5km south of the site and would be accessed via the A339 and the existing track to the site. The appellant acknowledges that most journeys to Kingsclere would be likely to be made by car but contends that it would also be possible to access the village by other means such as bicycle or on foot.
9. The A339 is a main route linking Basingstoke and Newbury. At the time of my visit there was a steady flow of traffic, including HGVs, travelling at considerable speeds. I accept that the route would be suitable for competent cyclists. However, there is no street lighting on the stretch of road between the appeal site and Kingsclere, and for the northern section of the route there is no pavement. Pedestrians would need to use grass verges alongside the road which vary in width and would not be conducive to walking, particularly in poor weather, after dark or for users of wheeled equipment such as pushchairs. Even on the southern section of the route, the pavement is only on the western side of the road, is narrow and runs directly alongside fast moving traffic.
10. Whilst it would be possible to use the existing FP75 public footpath as an alternative pedestrian route for part of the journey from the site south to Kingsclere, I am mindful of representations from the occupiers of the residential dwelling adjacent to the appeal site known as Duke House that these paths become difficult to use in the winter months. Having viewed the path, I am not satisfied that this cross-country route would provide a practical alternative for pedestrians at all times of the year.
11. There are two bus stops on the section of the A339 close to where the access track emerges which appear to be on the route of a regular service between Basingstoke and Newbury via the intervening settlements. I consider that the presence of a regular bus service within walking distance of the site would be a benefit to future occupiers of the proposed dwellings. I note, however, that access to the bus stops on the A339 would require pedestrians to use the existing single width track which has no pavement and is also the only means

of vehicular access to the garden centre. I am not convinced that this would provide a safe and suitable route for pedestrians.

12. The appellant submits that the presence of a bus stop within 500 metres of the site means that the proposal would not fit with the definition of 'isolated' set out within the glossary of the adopted Local Plan. My reading of the glossary definition, however, is that isolation in this context is primarily described as 'where there is a significant separation between the proposed dwelling and the nearest settlement'. Whilst it goes on to discuss proximity to public transport links, it also refers to proximity to services and facilities. It appears that the use of the definition requires a degree of judgement based on the particular circumstances of each case. In any event, the definition does not form a policy of the development plan and the proposal needs to be assessed on the Local Plan as a whole.
13. The Highway Authority's transport sustainability assessment concluded that the site provides only limited accessibility to services by a choice of transport means. Having regard to all the evidence before me, I agree with this conclusion. I consider that future occupiers of the proposed dwellings would be largely reliant on the use of private car to access every day services. As such, the proposals would not be well related to any existing settlement and would therefore result in an isolated form of development.
14. For all of these reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would not be a suitable location for the proposed development, having regard to the proximity of services. As a result, it would conflict with Policy SS6 of the Basingstoke and Deane Borough Local Plan 2011-2029, and the Framework.

Other matters

Benefits of the proposal

15. The proposed development would provide one additional dwelling on the site which would constitute a small contribution to the local supply of housing, bringing social benefits. It would also generate economic benefits in terms of sustaining employment and business activity in the local construction sector. These are matters that weigh in favour of the proposal. However, these benefits are not sufficient to overcome the harm that I have identified in respect of the main issue in this case.

Planning obligations

16. I note that the appellant has provided a section 106 agreement which would secure financial contributions toward a number of community infrastructure facilities. In light of my finding that the proposed development is unacceptable in respect of the main issue in this case, it is not necessary for me to consider the planning obligation in detail because any conclusion I draw would not change my overall decision.

Conclusions

17. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J F Powis

INSPECTOR