
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 April 2017

by Debbie Moore BSc (HONS) MCD MRTPI PGDip

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

Decision date: 12th April 2017.

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/W/16/3164797

Brook House, Barkham Street, Barkham, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 4PH

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Timothy James against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 153323, dated 19 November 2015, was refused by notice dated 19 October 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as: "Demolition of Existing Single Storey Dwelling and Garage/Store and Erection of Single Storey 2 Bedroom Replacement Dwelling".
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for: "Demolition of Existing Single Storey Dwelling and Garage/Store and Erection of Single Storey 2 Bedroom Replacement Dwelling" at Brook House, Barkham Street, Barkham, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 4PH in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 153323, dated 19 November 2015, subject to the conditions attached in the Schedule to this Decision.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area, with particular regard to the setting of the host building and the Area of Special Character.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is an L-shaped parcel of land which forms part of the garden of Brook House. It is occupied by a timber garage/store and an existing single storey dwelling, which was formerly a stable building. The site is outside of any defined settlement area and is in the countryside for development plan purposes.
 4. Brook House is a traditional 19th Century brick built farmhouse which fronts onto Barkham Street. Adjoining the site is a complex of converted farm buildings, formerly associated with Brook House, and the historic 'old granary' lies opposite. There are several commercial units opposite the appeal site. There is open paddock and agricultural land to the south and east. The site is within a small cluster of development but the overall character and appearance of the area is rural.
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5. Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy¹ requires that replacement dwellings in the countryside must bring about environmental improvements, or not result in inappropriate increases in scale, form or footprint of the original building. Although the replacement dwelling would not necessarily bring about an environmental improvement, it is not a requirement of the policy that both criteria must be satisfied. The replacement dwelling would be single storey and would be of a similar height to the building it would replace. The appellant states that it would have a volume of approximately 267 cubic metres, with a gross floor area of approximately 88 square metres. The existing stable building and garage/store have a combined volume of approximately 247 cubic metres with a gross floor area of approximately 80 square metres. The Council does not dispute these figures. On this basis the increase in size, volume and footprint would not be material.
6. There is no explanation given in the policy as to what would be considered an inappropriate increase and further guidance is provided in the Borough Design Guide,² section 8.5.3. This states that generally, replacement buildings will be expected to be sited in the same location as the original building and should not be significantly higher. The replacement dwelling would be sited further to the east than the existing building, but it would still be within the property boundary. The development would not be significantly higher than the existing building. Also, the outbuilding would be removed which would consolidate the built form from two buildings to one. Overall, I conclude that the development would not result in inappropriate increases in scale, form or footprint of the original building.
7. The site lies within the designated 'Barkham Church and Manor' Area of Special Character (ASC). The significance of the ASC is attributed to the traditional vernacular architecture and the scattered 18th and 19th Century buildings. The significance of Brook House, and related former farm buildings, is due to their historic origins as a farmstead. The buildings relate well to the surrounding open farmland, as described in the Barkham Village Design Statement (2007).
8. Although the ASC does not enjoy the statutory status of conservation areas, it is considered to be a non-designated heritage. The National Planning Policy Framework advises in weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly 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. Policy TB26 of the Local Plan³ requires development to retain and enhance the traditional, historical, local and special character of the building or area and its setting. Further advice is provided in the Borough Design Guide.
9. The historic relationship of the farm buildings to the north with the original farmhouse has been compromised to a certain extent by the redevelopment and the formation of separate properties. The converted 19th Century stable building retains its association with Brook House due to its siting, architectural style and materials. However, the stable building in itself is of limited architectural quality and I do not have any evidence that describes the significance of this building, other than its former use in association with the

¹ Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework: Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document (January 2010)

² Wokingham Borough Council Borough Design Guide: Supplementary Planning Document June 2012

³ Wokingham Borough Development Plan: Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (February 2014)

farm. Although the development would require the loss of the building, its significance as a heritage asset is limited.

10. The new building would be located towards the rear of the property boundary and it would be further away from Brook House. However, the development would be contained within the boundary. There is a clear change in character between the appeal site and the countryside beyond, which is marked by a fence and hedging. The development would not encroach over this boundary but would be entirely within the current property boundary of Brook House. Moreover, the development would not be sited further east of the adjoining buildings and it would be seen in wider views as part of the complex of buildings. Consequently, it would not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings.
11. The development would have the character and appearance of a separate dwelling. However, the development would not be prominent due to its siting. Moreover, the scale of the building would be significantly less than the converted barn to the north. Consequently, I do not consider that the development would erode the significance of the farmhouse or the wider ASC, or have an adverse effect on the surrounding countryside.
12. I have considered the appeal referred to by the Council.⁴ The full balance of considerations that informed that decision is not before me and I am unable to assess how comparable it is to the appeal proposal. However, it appears that the Inspector in that case was considering the setting of a listed building, which is a statutory test and not applicable to the appeal proposal.

Other Matters

13. I have considered matters raised by interested parties including loss of privacy and light, increased noise and disturbance and highways matters. The development would be single storey and the bulk of the building would be at a similar distance from the shared boundary as the existing building. There is a close boarded fence along the boundary and a line of conifers, which the plans show would be retained. Any effect on levels of light or loss of privacy is unlikely to be material.
14. The dwelling would be a replacement for an existing dwelling and levels of noise and disturbance are likely to be comparable. Similarly, matters in relation to parking and highway safety are unlikely to be material given that there is already a dwelling on the site.
15. I have considered concerns about flooding and I have imposed a drainage condition to overcome these concerns.

Conditions

16. In addition to the standard time limit condition, I have specified the approved plans as this provides certainty. I have imposed conditions requiring samples of materials and a landscaping scheme, including boundary treatments, surface materials and tree protection, to ensure the development integrates with its surroundings. I have specified that the existing dwelling must be demolished, and that site levels be submitted for approval, to ensure the development is constructed as approved.

⁴ Ref APP/ X0360/D/13/2194861

17. I have imposed a condition requiring a scheme to record archaeological finds as the site has potential for archaeological remains associated with the early settlement.
18. In relation to highways matters, I have imposed conditions to ensure the access and parking areas are laid out and retained, and no gates are erected that would open onto the highway. As explained above, I have imposed a condition requiring a drainage scheme. Finally, I have imposed a condition to ensure the protection of bats as it has been demonstrated that bats are active in the vicinity.
19. Several conditions are pre-commencement, which are necessary to ensure the development respects the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

20. To conclude, I find that the development would not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area. It would meet the aims of Policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy and Policy TB26 of the Local Plan. The policies seek, amongst other things, to secure development that meets the principles of sustainable development and respects the character of the area, has no detriment on important heritage features and protects the separate identity of settlements. The development would meet the aims of the Framework insofar as it seeks to secure good design, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.
21. For the reasons given above, the appeal is allowed.

Debbie Moore

Inspector

Schedule of Conditions

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Site Plans Ref 2287-1 07A, dated November 2015; Plans and Elevations Ref 2287-1 06, dated November 2015; and Plans and Elevations as Existing Ref 2287-01, dated October 2015.
- 3) No development shall take place until samples of all external facing materials have been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing. The relevant works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved sample details.
- 4) The development hereby permitted shall not be brought into use until the existing single storey dwelling on the site has been demolished in accordance with the approved plans and all materials cleared from the site.
- 5) No development shall take place until full details of the finished levels, above ordnance datum, of the ground floor and finished roof heights of the proposed buildings, in relation to existing ground levels have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved levels.
- 6) No demolition/development shall take place until a Written Scheme of Investigation (Archaeology) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Thereafter, works shall be conducted in accordance with the approved details.
- 7) No development shall commence until details of both hard and soft landscape works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These details shall include:
 - i) means of enclosure and retaining structures;
 - ii) boundary treatments;
 - iii) vehicle parking layouts;
 - iv) hard surfacing materials;
 - v) external lighting;
 - vi) species, planting sizes, spacing and numbers of trees/shrubs to be planted, and any existing trees/shrubs to be retained.

The scheme shall include indications of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land, identify those to be retained and set out measures for their protection throughout the course of development.

- 8) All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the buildings or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner; and any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species. Other

landscaping works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details before any part of the development is first occupied.

- 9) The dwelling shall not be occupied until space has been laid out within the site for cars to be parked and cycles to be stored and for vehicles to turn so that they may enter and leave the site in forward gear. That space shall thereafter be kept available at all times for those purposes.
- 10) The dwelling shall not be occupied until the access has been constructed in accordance with the approved plans. The access as constructed shall be retained thereafter.
- 11) Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any Order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), no gates or barriers shall be erected unless set back a distance of at least 10 metres from the highway boundary and so as to open away from the highway.
- 12) The mitigation measures detailed in paragraphs 4.9 to 5.3 inclusive of the submitted Phase 2 Bat Report (Warwick Reynolds Associates, V2 August 2016) shall be implemented in accordance with recommendations. A report demonstrating their implementation shall be submitted to the local planning authority on completion of the development.
- 13) No building hereby permitted shall be occupied until surface water drainage works shall have been implemented in accordance with details that shall first have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Before any details are submitted to the local planning authority an assessment shall be carried out of the potential for disposing of surface water by means of a sustainable drainage system, having regard to Defra's non-statutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems (or any subsequent version), and the results of the assessment shall have been provided to the local planning authority. Where a sustainable drainage scheme is to be provided, the submitted details shall:
 - i) provide information about the design storm period and intensity, the method employed to delay and control the surface water discharged from the site and the measures taken to prevent pollution of the receiving groundwater and/or surface waters;
 - ii) include a timetable for its implementation; and,
 - iii) provide, a management and maintenance plan for the lifetime of the development which shall include the arrangements for adoption by any public authority or statutory undertaker and any other arrangements to secure the operation of the scheme throughout its lifetime.