
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 July 2017

by David Cliff BA Hons MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 17th August 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/V3120/W/17/3175753

The Chippings, Chain Hill, Wantage OX12 8PB

- 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 Mrs S Mudway and Mrs L Mason against the decision of Vale of White Horse District Council.
 - The application Ref P16/V1557/O, dated 16 June 2016, was refused by notice dated 16 November 2016.
 - The development proposed is 'outline application for erection of two dwellings with all matters reserved'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The application is in outline with detailed matters of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved for future consideration. The information submitted with the application includes plans of the type of dwellings the appellant wishes to build on the site. I have treated these drawings as being only indicative or illustrative given that appearance and layout are matters reserved for future consideration.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are whether the proposal is in an appropriate location for new residential development and the impact upon the character and appearance of the area including the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Reasons

4. Since the Council's determination of the application, it has adopted the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (as of 14 December 2016). This now forms part of the development plan along with the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011. The Council also states that it now has a 6.7 years supply of housing land.
5. Core Policy 3 of the Local Plan 2031 seeks to direct the majority of new housing to those settlements which have a good range of services and facilities. The appeal site is located outside of the built settlement of Wantage, and within the open countryside. Policy CP4 of the Local Plan 2031 states that new development will not be appropriate outside of built-up settlements unless it

has been allocated or is supported by other relevant development plan or national policies. Such exceptions are not applicable in this case and therefore the proposed development is contrary to the strategic housing aims of Policy CP4.

6. Although there are some existing buildings and structures on the site, these are generally low profile and generally unobtrusive within the surrounding landscape. The appellant also refers to the untidy nature of the site, though I do not consider that this provides any significant justification for the development now proposed. The majority of the site is open and undeveloped, contributing to the semi-rural character of the site and its surrounds.
7. The proposed development would be located behind existing dwellinghouses and would be partly screened by existing boundary landscaping. Nevertheless, the two proposed houses, along with the accompanying hard surfaces and associated domestic paraphernalia would result in an urbanisation of the appeal site. This would substantially change the appearance of the site, extending the small pocket of existing residential development into the countryside. Whilst the appellant proposes to build small dwellings, such development would still be contrary to the Council's development strategy and would have a considerable impact upon the semi-rural character and appearance of the immediate area. Even should further landscaping be planted providing additional screening, this would not overcome the harm I have identified.
8. A substantial residential development of 85 houses along with landscaped areas has recently been completed on the edge of the main Wantage settlement, to the north of the appeal site. Such development is located with its boundary immediately adjacent to the previous built-up edge of the town. Whilst the appeal site is located near to this existing development, there is clear separation in the form of open space between the respective sites. Although the new development includes an area of public open space to the rear of the appeal site, this appears to be free of significant built development. There is also a significant difference in the character of the appeal site and its immediate surroundings in contrast to the more urbanised character of the area further to the north.
9. Furthermore, the appeal site has a considerably less convenient form of pedestrian access to the town than the 85 dwelling scheme, with no pedestrian footpath on the main road leading to it. In contrast the 85 dwelling scheme has a pedestrian footpath leading from it. Whilst the appellant refers to a safe footpath to a school as part of the leisure area to the rear, it is not clear to me how this would link with the proposed appeal scheme. I do not therefore consider that the recent residential development provides any significant justification for the appeal development.
10. The appeal scheme would result in a significant expansion of the existing small pocket of residential development. It would be detrimental to the semi-rural character of the site and its immediate surroundings and would lead substantial harm to the appearance of the area. Although I acknowledge that it would not be prominent in longer distance views it would still impact detrimentally upon the semi-rural area in the vicinity of the site. For the

above reasons it would also fail to conserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

11. I therefore find that the proposed development, located outside of the built-up settlement, would not accord with the strategic development aims of Core Policies 3 and 4 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1. It would also be contrary to the landscape protection aims of saved policy NE6 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

Other Matters

12. The appellant also refers to a series of other developments permitted within the AONB (in addition to the 85 dwelling scheme considered above). Nevertheless, from the limited information provided of such schemes, they appear to be different in their form and circumstances to the current appeal scheme before me. I have therefore given them only limited weight. Furthermore, I have considered the current scheme on its individual merits against the current development plan, finding harm as identified above.
13. I have considered a previous appeal decision dismissing a scheme for the erection of a bungalow at the appeal site¹. Whilst, the Inspector also found harm to result in that case upon the character of the area, I have only given this limited weight given the change in policy and site specific circumstances that have occurred since that decision was made.
14. The emerging Wantage Neighbourhood Plan is yet to be adopted and I am not aware that it contains any provisions that would weigh significantly in favour of the proposed development.
15. The Planning, Access and Design Statement submitted with the application refers to a shortfall in housing numbers in the district. However, since the adoption of the Local Plan 2031 this appears to be no longer the case and I have no evidence before me that would lead me to consider that the Council does not now have a five year supply of housing land.
16. The proposal would provide two new dwellings, making a modest contribution to the overall supply of housing, I have given this moderate weight but find that this would not outweigh the harm I have identified.

Conclusion

17. The development would be contrary to the development plan when read as whole and I do not consider that other material considerations in this case outweigh the harm arising from the conflict with the development plan. The proposal would not therefore amount to sustainable development in the context of paragraph 14 of the Framework. Therefore, having had regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

David Cliff

INSPECTOR

¹ T/APP/V3120/A/89/120225/P5