



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 February 2020

by Benjamin Clarke BA (Hons.) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: Wednesday, 19 February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/W/19/3241746

Foxley Farm, Foxley Lane, Binfield, Bracknell RG42 4EG

- 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 Brett O'Connor against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref: 191959, dated 12 July 2019, was refused by notice dated 27 September 2019.
 - The development proposed is the erection of four-bedroom detached dwelling and detached triple garage following demolition of existing dwelling and outbuildings. creation of new access to highway.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed

Procedural Matter

2. A revised scheme has been submitted as part of the appeal documents, which has deleted a garage from the proposed development. Given that this amendment would reduce the built form of the development and that appropriate off-road car parking would be provided, I do not believe that it would cause prejudice to any party to consider the appeal with regards to the revised scheme. I have therefore proceeded on this basis.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is relatively large and accessed from Foxley Lane. The site currently contains a bungalow and outbuildings. These are single storey and are constructed with a wooden cladding appearance. The site also contains a greenhouse and outdoor swimming pool to the rear. The land immediately adjoining the site is undeveloped, whereas on the opposite side of Foxley Lane are a number of dwellings.
5. In consequence, the effect of Foxley Lane is to delineate the built-up areas of Binfield and the undeveloped, more rural, areas beyond. It therefore provides a break between two areas of contrasting appearance and character. The appeal site's current layout responds to the more rural character of the immediately adjoining land as the existing buildings are of a low level and constructed from

- materials that are complimentary to the rural surroundings. In consequence, the existing buildings respond to the character of the land that immediately adjoins it, which lacks development.
6. In contrast, the proposed dwelling has a significantly larger footprint than the existing dwelling. Furthermore, and whilst I acknowledge that one of the storeys would be below ground level and therefore not readily viewable, the proposed house would have a significantly greater height than the existing bungalow.
 7. In addition, the proposed house has a notably bulkier design than the existing bungalow and would be constructed from a contrasting palette of materials. This can be demonstrated through the presence of architectural features such as a large porch, front balcony and front projecting gable. In consequence, the proposed development would not be of a design sympathetic towards its immediate surroundings owing to its significant scale and form.
 8. There is some debate regarding the percentage increase in the quantum of development over the existing buildings. However, the proposed dwelling would, by reason of its height and massing, represent a significant increase in the built form. I have therefore based my assessment on the style, size and design of the proposed dwelling.
 9. I acknowledge that the proposal would result in the removal of the existing buildings, and that the quantum of development has been reduced by the deletion of the garage from the development. However, the proposed development would concentrate the built form and massing within a single portion of the site. This is of concern as, owing to the height and built form of the development, it would have a significant level of prominence and would be clearly visible from Foxley Lane. This is concerning as this side of Foxley Lane is characterised by the presence of a more rural and open landscape. As the proposed development would have a significant mass and would be clearly visible over the boundary treatment, it would appear incongruous and strident. This would erode the landscape character of the site and the land that immediately adjoins it.
 10. I have given consideration as to whether a planning condition could be imposed to secure additional landscaping, which would provide a screening effect. However, the boundary treatments of the site and adjoining fields are characterised by the presence of hedges, with trees occurring at irregular intervals. Accordingly, a greater amount of landscaping surrounding the site would erode the more open character of the vicinity. In addition, the screening effect is likely to be variable depending on the seasons.
 11. I acknowledge the presence of other dwellings on the opposite side of Foxley Lane. However, these are viewed against a backdrop of the built-up area of Binfield. They therefore do not have the same impacts when viewed from the more rural areas. This is in contrast to the scheme before me, which represents a significant increase in the built form in the countryside.
 12. I note that the site, or the surrounding area, is not the subject of a form of designation such as an area of outstanding natural beauty, or greenbelt. However, the site and the surrounding area does have a distinctive, open rural character. This would be eroded by the proposed development. As a result, the

development would be harmful to the character of the immediately adjoining landscape.

13. My attention has been drawn to Whitehouse Farm in Foxley Lane. I am aware that there is undeveloped land to the sides of the dwelling. However, dwellings in Murrell Hill Lane are very close. Accordingly, this dwelling can be viewed as being part of the built-up area of Binfield. In addition, Whitehouse Farm has been constructed in a significantly different design to the scheme before me and therefore does not have the same impacts on the character of its surroundings. In consequence, I do not find that the presence of this development requires me to set aside my previous concerns.
14. The proposed development would utilise an existing access with a second access being created nearby. Whilst this would increase the level of built form associated with the development, this element would not be readily perceptible from the majority of Foxley Lane, or the surrounding properties. Accordingly, it would not erode the character of the landscape to a significant degree. Whilst I have found that the access would not harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area, this does not outweigh the harm as previously identified.
15. My attention has been drawn to the fact that the site crosses the boundaries of two Local Planning Authorities, and that one (Bracknell Forest Council) has granted planning permission for the development, with the exception of the garage. Whilst this may be the case, it is incumbent on decision makers to assess a proposal against the requirements of the relevant Development Plan. In assessing this proposal, I have been directed towards specific policies and a Supplementary Planning Document that have been the subject of public consultation on their formation and are specific to the Wokingham area. In consequence, I have assessed the development against different policies to the existing planning permission and in consequence, I have arrived at a different decision.
16. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, including the countryside. The development, in this regard, would fail to comply with the requirements of Policies CP1, CP3, and CP11 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010); Policies CC01, CC02, and TB21 of the Wokingham Borough Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014); and the Wokingham Borough Council Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2012). These, amongst other matters, seek to ensure that new developments maintain a high quality environment; are of a high quality design, massing, and built form; do not result in an inappropriate increase in the footprint of development; that developments accord with the development plan; and do not have an adverse effect on the character of adjacent countryside and landscapes.

Other matters

17. My attention has been drawn to a number of other developments. I do not have the full information regarding their planning circumstances, which lessens the weight that I can attribute to them. However, I note these developments do not appear to be within Binfield and have different layouts, designs and surroundings. On account of these differences, I find that they are not sufficient to overcome my previous concerns.

18. I acknowledge concerns raised by the appellant regarding the way the application was considered by the Council. However, in assessing this proposal, I have limited my considerations to the planning matters before me.

Conclusion

19. For the preceding reasons, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Benjamin Clarke

INSPECTOR