



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 June 2021

by S Leonard BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 July 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/W/21/3267628

Rosebank, Aldermaston Road, Pamber End RG26 5QN

- 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 Matt Taylor (Churchgate Premier Homes) against the decision of Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 19/02441/OUT, dated 16 August 2019, was refused by notice dated 7 August 2020.
 - The development proposed is redevelopment of the site to provide 6 no. detached dwellinghouses.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The application is in outline form, with access to be considered as part of this proposal. I have dealt with the appeal accordingly.
3. The Council's second reason for refusal relates to insufficient information to enable an assessment of the impact of the proposal on protected species (bats) and to demonstrate that the development would achieve a net gain for biodiversity. Following the submission of a Bat Survey Report as part of an amended application for the appeal site, which is currently under consideration by the local planning authority, and the submission of a Biodiversity Metric 2.0 Calculation Report and Calculations Sheet as part of the appellant's statement of case, the Council is satisfied that this matter can be dealt with by means of a condition. As such, it does not wish to pursue the second reason for refusal. On the basis of the information before me, I have no reason to disagree with this. I have dealt with the appeal accordingly.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. The appeal site lies on the southwest side of Aldermaston Road. It is sited within an area of built development comprising part of the hamlet of Pamber End, within open countryside outside the designated Settlement Policy Boundary (SPB). The site is occupied by a detached, chalet style dwelling which fronts onto the road and is set back behind a gravelled parking area. It forms

part of a row of detached dwellings fronting the road, which are arranged in a roughly linear arrangement, set back from the road, and with their own individual vehicular accesses. There is no fixed front building line or building orientation towards the road and there are a variety of dwelling styles, including bungalows, chalet properties and two-storey houses.

6. This informal arrangement of buildings, interspersed with trees, hedges and soft landscaping around site boundaries and within gardens, means that, notwithstanding the built development, this part of the road has a pleasant, green, semi-rural character. The dwellings within the appeal site stretch of the road tend to have long rear gardens which back onto undeveloped fields to the rear.
7. The prevailing character within the vicinity of the appeal site accords with the characteristics of the North Sherborne landscape character area, within which the site lies according to the *Basingstoke and Deane Landscape Assessment* (2001), whose features include dispersed villages and hamlets along lanes and roads, and gently undulating subtle landform with pockets of open arable farmland.
8. The rear garden of the appeal site is predominantly laid to grass. There are outbuildings and domestic garden paraphernalia in the area closest to the dwelling, including decked and paved areas with pergolas and garden furniture. Side boundary landscaping provides an element of enclosure to this part of the garden from the neighbouring gardens.
9. In contrast, the rear-most part of the garden has a much more open, and less domestic character, comprising grassed land with post and rail boundary fencing separating it from surrounding undeveloped fields. Accordingly, the rear part of the appeal site is more akin in nature to the landscape character of the setting of this part of Pamber End, where open fields are a feature of the surrounding landscape.
10. Whilst acknowledging that the proposal is in outline, with only access under consideration, the long rectangular shape of the site, together with its juxtaposition in relation to the linear built development along the road and the open countryside to the rear, means that the replacement of the existing dwelling and outbuildings with 6 detached dwellings would necessarily result in an incursion of built development into this rural environment in a backland position in relation to the existing pattern of built development.
11. As a result of the position of the proposed point of shared access to the development, the linear nature of the site, and the requirement for access arrangements for each dwelling within the site, it is likely that the development would introduce a more formal, suburban type arrangement of built form than that which is characteristic of the immediate area. This is reflected in the proposed site plan submitted with the application, and it has not been satisfactorily demonstrated through the submitted documents, that a less formal alternative to a cul-de-sac type arrangement of dwellings would be possible on the site.
12. Due to the proposed number of detached dwellings proposed, together with associated access, parking and on-site turning arrangements, it appears likely that the site would be dominated by built development, which would extend significantly into the site towards the rear site boundary, to the detriment of its

- existing rural character. This would be in contrast with the prevailing informal, loose-knit, spacious, form of built development where dwellings typically front the road and are set in spacious and soft-landscaped plots, so that built development sits comfortably within a semi-rural environment without being visually dominant.
13. The proposal has not demonstrated that the site could be developed with the number of detached dwellings proposed in a manner that would reflect that of neighbouring built development in the road, nor that the proposed intensity of built development would not contrast strongly with the adjacent open undeveloped fields against which it would be closely located. As such, the proposal would introduce a discordant feature within this edge of settlement location, which would be at odds with the prevailing pattern of development, and would result in a harmful erosion of the landscaped setting of the hamlet within the site vicinity. This would be to the detriment of the intrinsic landscape character of the area.
 14. In coming to this view, I have afforded some weight to the Council's *Design and Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (DSSPD)* (2018), which was adopted, following public consultation, to support the *Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan (2011 to 2029)* (2016) (the Local Plan). The DSSPD advises that new development should respond positively to the spatial structure of the area, and that rural development should have a rural as opposed to suburban character and should reflect the local context.
 15. There are no public rights of way within close vicinity of the site, and longer views towards the site from the south would be screened by a belt of trees. However, it would be possible to view the proposal from the surrounding fields and neighbouring properties, from the access point at Aldermaston Road, and from some locations along Ramsdell Road, particularly during the winter when deciduous trees and soft landscaping would render views of the site more apparent.
 16. The appellant has drawn my attention to a number of other residential developments that have been approved off Aldermaston Road and Ramsdell Road, including a development at Greenacres. On the basis of the evidence before me, I do not find the site circumstances and development details of these schemes to be directly comparable to those of the current appeal, in respect of the layout of the developments proposed, or their relationship with existing neighbouring built development and the road. As such, I am not persuaded that these approvals comprise development that alter the prevailing character of the part of Pamber End in which the appeal site is located to the extent that would render the appeal scheme appropriate. I must determine the appeal on the basis of the particular circumstances of the appeal site and its surroundings and on the merits of the scheme before me.
 17. For the above reasons, I therefore conclude that the appeal scheme would harm the character and appearance of the area, having regard to the location of the site within open countryside. As such, it would conflict with Local Plan Policies EM1 and EM10, which, amongst other things, require new development to be of a high quality, positively contribute to local distinctiveness, the sense of place and the existing street scene, have due regard to the density, scale, layout and appearance of the surrounding area and relationship to neighbouring buildings, and respect, enhance, and not be detrimental to, the

character or visual amenity of the landscape likely to be affected, including the setting of a settlement.

18. For similar reasons, the appeal scheme would be contrary to Chapters 12 and 15 of the *National Planning Policy Framework 2019* (the Framework), which, respectively, require well-designed places and the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment.

Planning Balance

19. The Council has confirmed that, with the addition of a 5% buffer in accordance with the Housing Delivery Test 2020 (HDT) published in January 2021, it cannot demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites as required by the Framework. It has confirmed that it is able to demonstrate 4.44 years of deliverable housing land supply. As such, there is an undisputed undersupply of deliverable housing sites within the Borough. Furthermore, whilst not yet acute, the housing land supply has reduced from a figure of 4.86 the previous year.
20. Paragraph 11 of the Framework sets out that decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development, and that, under criterion d), where the policies that are most important for determining the application are out of date, planning permission should be granted unless: i) the application of policies within the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole. The appeal site is not subject to policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance that provide a clear reason for refusing the development. Given the lack of a 5-year housing land supply, paragraph 11 d) of the Framework is engaged.
21. There would be benefits arising from the proposal. 5 additional dwellings would make a small contribution towards addressing the housing supply deficit, and could be built-out relatively quickly, having regard to paragraph 68 of the Framework. The proposal would deliver economic benefits during the construction of 6 new homes. Additional expenditure by new residents would help support the services in Pamber End and nearby settlements. The dwellings could incorporate sustainable aspects, and the appellant has confirmed that the proposal would include net biodiversity gains. However, as the appeal scheme is only for 5 additional dwellings, these benefits would be modest.
22. The proposed dwellings would not be in an isolated location, having regard to the position of Rosemount within a ribbon of residential built and commercial development which extends along both sides of Aldermaston Road within the village of Pamber End, and the proximity of the site to the services and facilities of the village, including a primary school, public house and garden centre, and the bus service connections with the larger settlements of Basingstoke and Tadley. As such, in the planning balance, any harm arising from the countryside location of the proposed new housing does not significantly or demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal.
23. The Council has raised no objection to the appeal scheme in respect of matters including biodiversity, trees, highway safety, traffic generation, neighbour living conditions, drainage, flooding and pollution. On the basis that I have no cogent evidence before me of harm arising from the appeal scheme in respect of these

matters, neither do I. In terms of the planning balance, I find that a lack of identified harm in respect of the above matters would comprise a neutral factor.

24. Whilst the Framework encourages efficient and effective use of land for new housing, and the optimal use of land where there is a shortage of housing, this is not unqualified, and does not outweigh or justify the harm that I have identified in respect of the main issue.
25. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal scheme would have a harmful effect upon the rural character and appearance of the area. This would conflict with the requirements of the Framework to achieve well-designed places and to conserve and enhance the natural environment, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Having given careful consideration to the balance of factors, I consider that, when assessed against the policies of the Framework taken as a whole, this harm would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposed development. Therefore, the presumption in favour of sustainable development in paragraph 11(d)(ii) does not apply in these circumstances.

Other Matters

26. Under section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, (the Act), I am, as the decision maker, in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest.
27. In determining the application, the Council concluded that no harm would result to the significance and setting of the Grade II listed buildings comprising Pamber Place House and Pamber Place Barn and Stable which are located around 200m to the southwest of the appeal site, on the opposite side of Ramsdell Road. Based on my site visit, which also included a consideration of the separation distance between the appeal site and the listed buildings, and the intervening tree belt, so that the proposal would not be visible to or from the listed buildings, I have no reason to disagree with Council in respect of this matter. I find that this is a matter of neutral consequence in the overall planning balance, and that the proposal is not, therefore, contrary to paragraph 11 d) i) of the Framework in this respect.

Conclusion

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

S Leonard

INSPECTOR