
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 November 2021

by J P Longmuir BA(Hons) DipUD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14TH December 2021.

Appeal Ref: APP/W0340/W/21/3275366

Timberley, Pangbourne Road, Upper Basildon, Reading, RG8 8LN

- 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 and Mrs A Gidden against the decision of West Berkshire Council.
 - The application Ref 20/00723/FULD, dated 18 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 16 December 2020.
 - The development proposed is a new dwelling and relocated access.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal site has been the subject of two previous dismissed appeals¹ for a new house. I have given these consideration, whilst noting that this particular proposal is different in terms of size, design and siting.
3. The Council have made reference to a planning application on Timberley, however I have considered this appeal proposal on its own particular merits.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect on the character and appearance of the area, including the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Reasons

5. The appeal site lies within the identifiable built-up confines of Upper Basildon and within an area of predominately twentieth century development which extends towards Pangbourne. There is linearity in parts although this has been changed by some development in depth notably Elangeni to the west and Knappswood Close to the east. There is also no formal building line as the houses have a variety of set backs. There is also a variety of styles and boundary treatments. Accordingly, there is no set pattern of building.
6. The appeal site includes part of the rear garden of Timberley and shares its access. It includes an area to the rear of the neighbouring dwelling, Southcroft and two large timber clad outbuildings.

¹ APP/W0340/W/18/3196908 and APP/W0340/W/16/3155293

7. The appeal site is within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This is characterised by its undulating downland, open fields and blocks of woodland. The Basildon Village Design Statement notes the chalk influence on the area. There is an open view from Pangbourne Road across the appeal site to the woodland behind.
8. The proposed dwelling would be to the rear of the existing property. In this part of the village, Pangbourne Road does not have a sustained linearity, due to the development behind. I also found no uniformity of building line or styles.
9. The house would be within domestic environs and would not be regarded as encroachment into open countryside. Accordingly, I find that in principle a new dwelling would not be harmful.
10. However, the proposed dwelling would have a significant footprint. It would be sited in direct alignment to the access and in view from the main road. Accordingly, it would be seen in conjunction with the host dwelling. Due to the limited separation distances between the two dwellings, the new dwelling would appear cramped against the existing when seen from Pangbourne Road.
11. I note that both the previous Inspectors concluded that those schemes were harmful in relation to the size of the site. The Inspector determining the 2018 appeal, notes at paragraph 6 of the decision letter: the dwelling as proposed and sited would give the impression of being cramped within the plot by comparison with the prevailing character of the area. The current appeal proposal appears no smaller than the 2018 proposal and would be positioned nearer to the house. It would also be more directly sited into the view from Pangbourne Road.
12. The proposed house would be perceived as overly close to the existing, which would lead to an intensive appearance of development, which would be out of keeping with the village and its landscape setting. It would also erode the outward view to the distant woodland.
13. The proposal would remove the outbuildings, which would increase the openness of the site. However, these outbuildings are clearly recognisable as such and therefore appear subservient, so they are not out of place. Moreover, they are sited away from the house. Consequently, their removal would not offset the adverse impact of the proposed new house.
14. I note that a new hedge and tree would be provided to the road frontage. Whilst these would be beneficial, it would take time for them to establish, particularly as they would be shadowed by the hornbeam tree. The planting would also be unlikely to wholly obscure the new house.
15. I note the submitted urban design rebuttal explains the evolution of the design. Whilst I find that the proposed elevations and materials would be in keeping, this does not resolve the cramped appearance due to its footprint and siting.
16. I acknowledge the rebuttal provides analysis of the plot ratios of some other houses in the vicinity. However, Elangeni is less visible than this proposal and Cardwell Close has a different context being off the village through road and within a cul-de-sac. Whilst the neighbouring houses to the appeal site do not have overly large gardens, they are only occupied by single houses, whereas in this proposal both houses would be seen in conjunction. Indeed, both previous

Inspectors considered these surroundings in reaching their conclusions. The 2018 Inspector comments on the urbanising effect of that particular proposal.

17. I therefore conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area, including the AONB.
18. Policies ADPP5, CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy seek to protect the AONB, promote high quality design that respects the character and appearance of the area and respects landscape character. Policy C1 of the Housing Site Allocations DPD requires new housing to be sensitive. The Council's adopted Quality Design SPD (Part 2), the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan, the North Wessex Downs Position Statement on Housing all promote sensitive design and seek to protect the landscape. The Basildon Village Design Statement provides a detailed analysis of the village's character, including the nature of the buildings and its landscape setting. Paragraph 126 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings. Similarly, paragraph 130 requires proposals are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting. Paragraph 176 places great weight on conserving and enhancing landscapes and scenic beauty in AONBs. The proposal would be in conflict with these policies and guidance.

Other matters

19. The previous Inspectors concluded that the access was satisfactory in terms of visibility and found no significant impact on highway safety. I concur. Similarly, the submitted plans show the access close to the Hornbeam tree but not sufficiently close to jeopardise its health and similarly the neighbouring beech trees.

Planning Balance

20. The proposed dwelling would have economic benefits in its construction. It would also make a contribution to housing land supply. The new dwelling would be a social benefit by providing a new home in the village. However, these benefits would be very limited.
21. The proposal would harm the character and appearance of the village and the AONB. The proposal would conflict with the Development Plan and the Framework and I give this significant weight. I find that the benefits of the proposal would not outweigh the adverse impacts.

Conclusion

22. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

John Longmuir

INSPECTOR