



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 March 2022

by Lewis Condé BSc (Hons), MSc, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: Friday 11 March 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/W0340/W/21/3284910

Oakdene, Andover Drove, Wash Water, Newbury RG20 0LZ

- 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 M Bingham against the decision of West Berkshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 21/01692/FULD, dated 1 June 2021, was refused by notice dated 15 September 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as 'New dwelling on land at Oakdene, including demolition of existing garage and extension of existing driveway at Oakdene'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. Oakdene is a detached property located on a corner plot at the junction of Andover Drove and Wash Water. The dwelling is located relatively centrally within its plot and its garden wraps around the property. The appeal scheme seeks to divide the site's residential curtilage and develop a two-storey detached dwelling, within the existing garden to the north of Oakdene.
4. On my site visit I observed that the surrounding area contains primarily detached or semi-detached dwellings. For the most part, the dwellings in the immediate area do not have a consistent style of design. However, a common feature is that dwellings tend to be sited within generous plots and are typically set back from the highway. The area also has a semi-rural feel, with wide grass verges adjacent to the highway and a general lack of pavements and off-street parking. The presence of significant levels of mature trees and vegetation adds to the semi-rural character.
5. I understand that a previous scheme for a detached dwelling at the appeal site was refused by the Local Planning Authority (LPA), and subsequently dismissed at appeal on the grounds of its impacts on the character and appearance of the area. The main parties have made me aware that the previous Inspector's decision highlighted that the separation distances between the proposed development and the neighbouring properties would have been especially small. It was therefore deemed that the proposal would appear cramped within the plot and not in keeping with the surrounding area.

6. The design of the current appeal scheme has been amended to include a reduction in height and width of the proposed dwelling. Additionally, an existing single storey extension to the north of Oakdene is also proposed to be demolished. The appellant contends that these alterations overcome the previous Inspector's concerns. This is on the basis that the proposal would sit within a more spacious plot and have greater separation distances to the adjacent neighbouring properties.
7. Notably, nearby properties, that display similar separation distances as the proposal, still tend to benefit from wider or more generous plot sizes than the appeal scheme. As such, despite some dwellings nearby being physically close to their neighbours, they still appear to sit comfortably within their plots and alongside one another.
8. In contrast, I find that the appeal scheme would appear as a cramped form of development, in part due to its more limited plot size. Furthermore, I find that the reduction in scale of the proposed dwelling, would result in a somewhat contrived appearance, that accentuates that a dwelling is being squeezed onto the site. This cramped appearance would be especially jarring, given that the streetscene that it would be viewed within consists of rather sizeable dwellings, with particularly spacious curtilages.
9. I recognise that the separation distance between the current appeal proposal and the adjacent properties of Oakdene and Stone Lodge, would not be dissimilar to the spacing that can be found between other existing properties in the surrounding area. I am also mindful that there are a variety of house types and forms nearby. Nevertheless, I find that the proposed dwelling would still be at odds with its immediate surroundings.
10. I acknowledge that the delivery of a new house would make a modest but beneficial contribution to the supply of housing. However, I do not consider this would outweigh the harm that I have identified.
11. Consequently, I find that the proposal would have a harmful effect upon the character and appearance of the area. As such, it would conflict with the objectives of Policies ADPP1 and CS14 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006 – 2026) Development Plan Document (adopted 2012) ('Core Strategy'). Together the policies require development to take account of the character and form of a settlement and demonstrate that new development is of a high-quality design, that respects and enhances the character and appearance of the area. It would also be contrary to the principles within Chapter 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which seek for good design sympathetic to the local area.
12. The LPA's decision notice also refused the proposed development on the grounds of its conflict with policies CS18 (Green Infrastructure) and CS19 (Historic Environment and Landscape Character) of the Core Strategy. However, I have not found these policies to be relevant to my reasons for dismissing the appeal.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above, having considered the development plan, and all other relevant considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Lewis Condé

INSPECTOR