



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 May 2022

by James Blackwell LLB (Hons) PgDip

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 June 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/W0340/W/21/3286450

**The Barn House, Road known as Watery Lane, Hamstead Marshall,
Newbury, RG20 0JH**

- 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 & Mrs D Hadnutt against the decision of West Berkshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 21/01534/HOUSE, dated 28 May 2021, was refused by notice dated 6 October 2021.
 - The development proposed is the partial demolition of existing dwelling and erection of outbuilding.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area;
 - the effect of the proposed development on trees; and
 - the effect of the proposal on the setting of Holtwood Farmhouse, a grade II listed building.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. The appeal property comprises The Barn House, which is a residential property on the southern side of Watery Lane. It is located approximately 1km south of the village of Hamstead Marshall. With the exception of a number of nearby buildings (both residential and agricultural in nature), the appeal site is broadly surrounded by attractive and verdant countryside, which includes both open fields and nearby woodland. This rural setting is commensurate with the property's location within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
4. Whilst much of the property is single storey only, its height does vary between its various component parts, and includes a second storey along its main frontage. The substantive part of dwelling is laid out in a "L" formation, with its northern elevation sitting close to the lane. There is also an attached barn on its eastern side, which runs parallel with the road. This arrangement creates an open courtyard effect just beyond the front access, with only glimpsed views of

the rear projecting element of the house possible from the road. Owing to this layout, there is a distinct sense of openness and space in and around the dwelling, as there are clear views out towards the open landscape and woodland to the rear of the property from the road. This sense of space and openness contributes positively to the character of both the host property and the wider area, reflecting the verdant quality of the wider AONB.

5. The new outbuilding would be sited towards the rear of appeal property, effectively closing off the rear of the "courtyard". In turn, this would undermine the sense of space and openness which characterise the site. Moreover, and irrespective of any nearby public footpaths, the new outbuilding would obstruct the clear views from the road towards the open countryside to the rear of the property, which would further detract from its rural setting.
6. This impact would be exacerbated by the significant size and scale of the new outbuilding. Whilst it would be lower than the main dwelling, the difference in height would be marginal. Moreover, although the outbuilding would occupy a smaller footprint than the main house, it would still be substantial in its own right, accommodating a bedroom, office, games room, studio, bathroom, separate lavatory, garden store and log store. Given these factors, the outbuilding would not appear truly subservient to the host property, and would instead take on the appearance of a separate dwelling in its own right. In turn, its significant scale would dominate the plot, and amplify the loss of space and openness which characterises the property. Once again, this would undermine the rural and scenic beauty of the area, and in particular the quality of the AONB.
7. For these reasons, the development would harm the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area. It would conflict with Policies CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006 – 2026) (Core Strategy), which seek to ensure new development achieves high-quality design, which is appropriate in the context of existing settlement form, pattern and character. The development would conflict Policies C3 and C6 of the Housing Site Allocations DPD (2006 – 2026) (Housing DPD), which requires any enlargements of existing dwellings to be sufficiently subservient, so that they do not dominate the existing dwelling. Finally, the development would conflict with the design objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) (Framework), the Quality Design SPD¹, the Hamstead Marshall Village Design Statement and the House Extensions SPG², all of which promote development which integrates properly with its local context.
8. Whilst the proposed development would have many of the characteristics of a separate dwelling, I have nonetheless determined this appeal on the basis that the development is indeed an outbuilding. I therefore find no conflict with Policies ADPP1 and ADPP5 of the CS, which predominantly deal with the strategy for new housing within the Council's area.

Trees

9. The proposed boundary wall and parking spaces would be located in close proximity to a mature tree at the entrance to the appeal site. The tree has a

¹ Quality Design – West Berkshire, Supplementary Planning Document Series, Part 1, Achieving Design Quality

² House Extensions, Supplementary Planning Guidance, July 2004

large canopy spread which contributes positively to the verdant quality of the road, and therefore warrants protection.

10. Whilst it is acknowledged by the appellant that the boundary wall and parking area will likely occupy part of the root protection area for this tree, no arboricultural report has been submitted to demonstrate how it would be protected. Without this information, I cannot properly assess any potential for adverse impact on this tree, nor consider whether any measures can be employed to mitigate against such impact. I do not consider that this issue can be adequately overcome by condition, as the feasibility of adequate protection should be established before planning permission is granted. It is not for me to comment on any previous approach of the Council on this topic.
11. Without any substantive evidence before me to indicate otherwise, the development would therefore conflict with Policy CS18 of the Core Strategy, which seeks to preserve and protect green infrastructure within the district. The development would also conflict with Policy CS14 of the Core Strategy, which requires development to contribute positively to the landscape character of the area in which it is located.

Listed Building

12. Holtwood Farmhouse, a Grade II listed building, occupies a plot on the northern side of Watery Lane, opposite to the appeal property. The farmhouse is understood to date back to the 17th century. Its significance is primarily derived from its historical value and function as part of a farmstead within the manorial holdings of the Earls of Craven.
13. Whilst the appeal property did historically form part of this farmstead, the two properties are now clearly separated by Watery Lane and the extensive mature screening running along the roadside boundary of Holtwood Farmhouse. Owing to this degree of separation, any visual or spatial relationship between the two properties is now very limited. Moreover, as the appeal property itself has been subject to several alterations and modifications over the years, its importance in terms of any historical link to the main farmhouse has been severely diluted. As a result, I consider that any impact of the proposed development on Holtwood Farmhouse or its setting would be negligible. This is particularly true, as the development would primarily be focused to the rear of the appeal property, where there is no substantive intervisibility between the two properties.
14. On this basis, I am satisfied that the proposed development would not harm the setting of Holtwood Farmhouse. In line with my statutory duty under section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, it follows that the development would preserve this building and its setting. In this regard, the development would also be consistent with Policies CS14 and CS19 of the Core Strategy, which seek to preserve the character of an area, including any heritage assets and their settings. The development would also be consistent with the provisions of the Framework, which places a great emphasis on the protection of our historic environment.

Other Matters

15. Whilst I acknowledge part of the existing dwelling would be demolished to accommodate the outbuilding (thereby reducing the net increase in overarching

footprint), the element to be demolished forms part of the principal dwelling, and is clearly subservient in size and scale. This means it is read as part of the existing property. Conversely, the proposed outbuilding would take on the appearance of a separate dwelling in its own right, which would not appear properly subservient. Its impact would therefore be materially different.

Conclusion

16. Whilst I have found no harm in terms of impact on Holtwood Farmhouse, the development would nonetheless harm the character and appearance of the area, and risks harm to a mature tree which contributes positively to the character of the road. The proposal would therefore conflict with the development plan as a whole and there are no other considerations, including the provisions of the Framework, which outweigh this finding. Therefore, for the reasons given, the appeal should be dismissed.

James Blackwell

INSPECTOR