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# Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 July 2022

**by V Simpson BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 1 August 2022**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/W0340/W/21/3287064**

**Walbury Cottage, Road known as Post Office Road, Inkpen, Hungerford  
RG17 9QX**

- 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. G Wilson against the decision of West Berkshire District Council.
  - The application Ref 21/01745/FUL, dated 29 June 2021, was refused by notice dated 17 September 2021.
  - The development proposed is Removal of existing dwelling and garage. Erection of replacement dwelling and garage; with associated parking, turning, landscaping, private amenity space and access.
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## Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

## Main Issue

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

## Reasons

3. The site is located within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It is outside any defined settlement boundary but within the hamlet known as Upper Green in the parish of Inkpen. The appeal site is the last of a cluster of residential properties on the INKP/47/1 Byway (The Byway) side of Post Office Road. Beyond the site the landscape is typified by open fields separated by hedgerows and trees.
4. The appeal site accommodates a 2-storey house, and two modest outbuildings within a large garden. The house is located within the corner of the plot closest to Benedict House and Old Post Office Cottage. The existing house is an attractive and charming property with varying roof heights. Despite previous extensions, it retains a modest scale and massing.
5. Policy C7 of the Allocations Plan<sup>1</sup> requires replacement dwellings to be proportionate in size and scale to the existing dwelling, and not to have an adverse impact upon the character and local distinctiveness of the rural area or its setting within the wider landscape. The amplification of this policy indicates that the key components of proportionality are the scale, massing, height and layout of a development. Also, that any size increase should be considered on the basis of the impact of a particular property in a particular location.

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<sup>1</sup> West Berkshire Council Housing Site Allocations DPD (2006-2026)

6. Although uncomplicated in form, the proposed dwelling would have a sense of grandeur not found within the existing dwelling. Excepting some small single storey elements, the main bulk of the proposed dwelling would be fully 2-storey. It would have a larger footprint and it would be substantially taller than the existing dwelling. The proposed dwelling would therefore be of a scale, massing and height which is significantly greater than the house it is to replace. It cannot therefore be considered to be proportionate.
7. The prevailing pattern of development on the Byway side of Post Office Road in particular, is of houses which are aligned to the adjacent highway and positioned within the front sections of the plots in which they are located. The houses adjacent to the Byway, including the house within the appeal site conform with this prevailing pattern lending a degree of distinctiveness. They are more closely aligned to the highway than others along Post Office Road, however. The proposal to locate the proposed replacement dwelling further back within the plot and away from the Byway, would not therefore conform with the prevailing pattern of development in the area.
8. External materials including plain clay roof tiles and warm coloured bricks typical of the area are proposed within the development. Other features which are typical and evident within many neighbouring properties include; roofs with the pitch set low on the external walls; first floor ceilings often within the roof space; and/or dormer windows. These are characteristics specifically identified as being predominant in the Inkpen Village Design Statement (IVDS), and contribute positively to the character and appearance of the area. Having a full 2 storey eaves height, a non-interrupted roof, and a significant bulk and massing, the proposed development would not therefore conform with the predominant characteristics of local houses as identified within the IVDS.
9. Unlike other houses along the Byway, the existing house on the appeal site presents a blank gable to the highway. It is accepted that the reorientation of the principal elevation towards the Byway would better reflect other houses in the area. However, this consideration does not outweigh the harms which would be caused to the character and appearance of the area by the introduction of a substantially larger dwelling which would be set further back from the Byway in a more open setting within the garden.
10. I agree that the presence of the tall, well established and non-broken intervening hedgerow between Public Right of Way ref INKP/39/1 (PRoW) and the site, would prevent the proposed development from being visually intrusive from locations along that PRoW. However, given the re-siting of the proposed dwelling, its increased scale, height and massing, and the wider access that would serve it, it will be more visually intrusive than the existing house from both Post Office Road and the Byway.
11. Importantly in this case is the impact of the proposed development on the landscape of the AONB. In such areas great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty within the AONB. The appellants suggest that the construction of a high quality traditionally designed house provides an opportunity to both improve the appearance of the site and the wider AONB, and to contribute towards raising the standard of architecture generally in the local area. However, I consider that the proposed development would detract from the character and scenic beauty of the AONB. This is because it would not conform with prevailing patterns and forms of

development in the area. It is also because the design scale, height and massing of the dwelling would result in a form of development which is more visually imposing from both the Byway and Post Office Road than the existing dwelling.

12. A series of substantial 2-storey houses have been identified within the locality, to demonstrate that the proposed development would not be uncharacteristic of the area. Due to their design, size, massing and/or low eaves height, neither Benedict House or Doyle Farm are visually imposing from the Byway from which they are accessed. They are both also closely aligned to the Byway. Linton House is closely aligned with Post Office Road and has sections with reduced eaves heights and dormer windows. The massing of Meadow House is broken up by its range of roof slopes and heights. Other examples cited are further from the appeal site and have differing site contexts. Therefore, none of the examples provided lead me away from my findings on this case.
13. Reference has also been made to permissions which have been granted for replacement dwellings within 1.57km of the appeal site. I note however that the replacement dwellings granted at Greenacres and Three Ways were sited in the same position as the original dwellings. I do not have sufficient detail in respect of the other cases to fully understand the circumstances leading to the granting of those permissions.
14. For the aforementioned reasons, the proposed development would detract from the character and scenic beauty of the AONB and it would harm the character and appearance of the area. As such, the proposed development would be contrary to policies ADPP 5, CS 14 and CS 19 of the Core Strategy<sup>2</sup> as well as Policies C3 and C7 of the Allocations plan, which seek to ensure that development respects the character and appearance of the area and enhances local distinctiveness and landscape character. It would also conflict with paragraph 130, of the Framework<sup>3</sup> which seeks to ensure that development will; add to the overall quality of the area; maintain a strong sense of place; and be sympathetic to local character.

## Other Matters

15. In coming to my decision, I have had regard to the previous Inspector's decision on the site<sup>4</sup>. I note that the previous proposal was for the provision of an additional dwelling, and that it was therefore assessed against different policy tests, which did not include Allocation Plan Policy C7. I therefore find that the circumstances of that case are not directly comparable with the appeal before me. In any case I am required to determine the appeal on its own merits.
16. I accept that the development would not adversely affect any identified designated or non-designated heritage assets. This is a neutral factor. I also accept that the development would result in the creation of an energy efficient, modern and more accessible family home, which would have a lower carbon footprint than the existing dwelling. However, given that the scheme is for a single dwelling, any identified benefits would be small.

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<sup>2</sup> West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) Development Plan Document

<sup>3</sup> The National Planning Policy Framework

<sup>4</sup> APP/S0340/W/20/3245453

## **Conclusion**

17. The proposed development conflicts with the development plan when considered as a whole and there are no material considerations, either individually or in combination, that outweigh the identified harm and associated development plan conflict.
18. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

*V Simpson*

INSPECTOR