



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 August 2022

by Sian Griffiths BSc(Hons) DipTP MScRealEst MRTPI MRICS

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5TH September 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/J0405/W/22/3295487

**Land Adjacent to Old Manor House, Buckingham Road, Edgcott, Aylesbury
Buckinghamshire HP18 0TR**

- 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 Andrew Biltcliffe against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application Ref 20/04382/APP, dated 21 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 28 January 2022.
 - The development proposed is new 4 bedroom detached house with 3 bay garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. I consider the main issues are:
 - Whether the proposals constitute sustainable development, and
 - The effect of the proposals on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Sustainability

3. The appeal site is an undeveloped parcel of land laid to grass bounded to the north and west by hedgerow and beyond that by Church Lane and to the south by further agricultural land and a timber agricultural storage barn. To the east is the Grade II Listed Lower Barn and its associated garaging. To the north of Church Lane is Rectory Barn, which is also Grade II Listed.
4. Edgcott is a small village to the east of Bicester. It is categorised as an 'other' settlement within the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (2021) (VALP) and in Table 1 (Spatial strategy for growth in Aylesbury Vale) of that plan, such settlements are not subject to housing allocations as part of the spatial strategy.
5. Edgcott does not have any community facilities such as a shop or post office, school, pub, playing fields or village hall with the exception of a church. I note that there are bus stops through the village, presumably providing some connectivity for local people. However, I consider it is very likely that new occupiers of the proposed dwelling would meet the majority of their day to day needs through the use of a private motorcar.

6. Policy S1 (Sustainable Development) of the VALP seeks to support development where it would (amongst other things) minimise the impact on heritage assets, landscapes and biodiversity, making use of the most sustainable forms of transport in locations with access to a number of community services and facilities.
7. Policy S2 (Spatial Strategy for Growth) of the VALP at paragraph (j) states that *'Elsewhere in rural areas, housing development will be strictly limited. This is likely to be incremental infill development and should be principally in line with Policy D5 and other relevant policies in the Plan.'*
8. Policy S3 (Settlement hierarchy and cohesive development) of the VALP sets out how development will be delivered in accordance with the settlement hierarchy shown on Table 2 (Proposed settlement hierarchy and housing development). The policy explains that new development in the countryside should be avoided, especially where it would: a. compromise the character of the countryside between settlements, and b. result in a negative impact on the identities of neighbouring settlements or communities leading to their coalescence. In referring to 'other' settlements, which specifically lists Edgcott, it highlights that such settlements are *'not sustainable locations for development and are places where it is likely that any development would cause harm to the local environment. No allocations for housing will be made and only a very limited amount of development is expected to come forward through neighbourhood plans or through the development management process considered against relevant policies in the Plan'*.
9. Policy D5 (Housing at other settlements) of the VALP sets out that in 'other settlements', where there is no neighbourhood plan, new homes will only be supported where they constitute infilling of *'small gaps in developed frontages'* with one or two homes in keeping with the scale and spacing of nearby homes, and for the replacement of existing homes in their original curtilage. This is subject to there being no adverse effect on the character of the countryside or other planning interests.
10. The appellants, in page 2 of their appeal statement states that the appeal site is 'surrounded on all sides by residential buildings'. I do not agree. The appeal site does not appear to constitute typical 'infill' as described in policy D5. In my view, it is a parcel of land forming part of a larger undeveloped area of agricultural land on the edge of a village.
11. I note the appellant's point about paragraph 78 of the Framework, but the reality for many households is that meeting typical 'day to day' needs such as taking children to school, attending social clubs or buying basic provisions, particularly in bad weather or the winter months is likely to be via a private motorcar in this location. At the site visit, I drove to the village of Grendon Underwood which the appellants statement suggests is the nearest sustainable settlement. Whilst I consider it would be possible to cycle to Grendon Underwood for those with the ability to do so, I do not consider this to be close enough to allow walking and not with young children.
12. I consider that a proposed new dwelling in this location would not constitute sustainable development, and would conflict with policies S1, S2, S3 and D5 of the VALP and the relevant parts of the Framework.

Character and Appearance

13. The appeal site is situated within a low density collection of homes along Church Lane and St Michaels Close, as I have described earlier. These dwellings are of a rural vernacular, broken up by significant areas of hedgerow and landscaping. To the north and west of the access road, it is lined by housing, and to the east, is a large 'farm group' of buildings which have been converted to residential use, together with St Michael and All Angels Church, which is Grade II* Listed, together with its church yard. I agree with the council that the appeal site does not fall within the setting of the heritage assets I have already mentioned.
14. The site is bounded by substantial hedgerow which would need to be removed to facilitate an access. Whilst I visited the site during the summer months, I consider the visibility into the site from the public domain would improve during the winter.
15. The appellants have clearly considered the vernacular context set by the established development in the immediate locality, as a reference for the proposed design and facing materials. However, the appeal proposals are substantial in their scale and would result in a significant change to the site.
16. Policy BE2 (Design of new development) of the VALP requires that new development proposals respect the physical characteristics of the site and surroundings including density, scale, design and materials as well as any natural qualities and features of the area, important public views and skylines.
17. Notwithstanding my conclusions in relation to sustainability, the character of the area is low density and rural. The site is an undeveloped agricultural field on the edge of the village. I consider there would be harm to the character of the area from the development of this currently undeveloped field which positively contributes to the rural character of this part of the village, together with the necessary loss of hedgerow and landscaping in order to facilitate the access into the site. I therefore find that the proposals would be contrary to policy BE2 of the VALP.

Conclusions

18. For the reasons given and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Sian Griffiths

INSPECTOR