



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 August 2022

by Lewis Condé Msc, Bsc, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 October 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/W/22/3294854

**Land at Headley Common Farm, Common Road, Headley, Hampshire
RG19 8LT**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for permission in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Mr & Mrs. D Townsend against Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.
 - The application, Ref 21/01697/PIP, is dated 14 May 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as 'Application for permission in principle for the residential development of 1 no. dwelling'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and permission in principle is granted for the residential development of 1 no. dwelling at Land at Headley Common Farm, Common Road, Thatcham, RG19 8LT in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 21/01697/PIP, dated 14 May 2021.

Preliminary Matters

2. As explained in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) (Amendment) Order 2017 (the Order) is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development which separates the consideration of matters of principle for the proposed development from the technical detail. The scope of the first stage, that is to establish whether a site is suitable in principle for development, is limited to location, land use and amount of development.
3. In respect of residential development, an applicant can apply for permission in principle for a range of dwellings by expressing a minimum and maximum number of net dwellings as part of the application. In this instance, permission in principle has been sought for the erection of a maximum of one dwelling at the appeal site. For the avoidance of doubt, I have determined the appeal on that basis, having regard to the requirements of the Order and the PPG.
4. During the appeal process the Ashford Hill with Headley Neighbourhood Plan (AHHNP) was approved at referendum, while I understand that it is due to be 'made' by the Local Planning Authority on 20 October 2022. In line with the planning practice guidance (PPG), the AHHNP has come into force as part of the statutory development plan. Comments were invited from the main parties in relation to the latest position of the AHHNP and the policy implications for the appeal proposal. As such, neither party has been prejudiced through the change in policy circumstances.

5. Whilst the Council did not issue a decision on the planning application, it has provided a statement setting out the reasons why it would have refused planning permission. This has informed the main issue of the appeal.

Main Issue

6. The main issue is whether permission in principle should be granted bearing in mind the effects of the proposal's location, land use and amount of development on:
 - i) The setting of the Grade II Listed Headley Common Farmhouse; and
 - ii) The character and appearance of the area

Reasons

Setting of Listed Building

7. Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (LBCA) requires the decision maker, in considering whether to grant permission in principle for development which affects a listed building or its setting, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
8. The appeal site is part of a paddock that forms part of the historic farmstead associated with the Grade II Listed Headley Common Farmhouse (the Farmhouse)¹. The Farmhouse and much of its associated land is not part of the appeal site but is also under the appellant's ownership/control. The appeal site measures approximately 0.3ha and is located over 50m from the Farmhouse to its south west.
9. The Farmhouse is an attractive 17th Century timber framed, with brick infill, detached dwelling. It has a hipped, thatch roof, with 'eyebrow' dormers and has been sympathetically extended to the rear. The Farmhouse is set in generous grounds, that surround it to each side. Its significance is derived from its age, architectural detailing and quality of craftsmanship that together result in a high-quality vernacular appearance. In addition to its vernacular features, its relationship with the surrounding undeveloped land also adds to its significance as a historic farmstead.
10. The Farmhouse is set back significantly from Common Road, behind mature vegetation and alongside outbuildings that have a general agricultural appearance. As such, at the time of my site visit the Farmhouse was not highly visible from public vantage points. Nevertheless, some highly localised views of the Farmhouse were available from Common Road, primarily to the north. From my observation on site, and the illustrative scheme submitted with the application, a dwelling is capable of being accommodated on the appeal site without obscuring notable views of the listed Farmhouse.
11. The development of a dwelling at the site is likely to result in some intervisibility with the listed building, however, depending on its precise scale and siting, this could be limited in nature. Furthermore, in principle, the intervisibility between the proposal and the Farmhouse would not necessarily

¹ The listing description notes the property name as 'Staddlestones', however, the appellant and Council both refer to the neighbouring listed building (that is within the appellants ownership) as Headley Common Farmhouse. It is clear from the listing description and my on-site observations that they are the same property.

result in a harm to the setting of the listed building. Notably, the redline for the appeal site has been arranged so that it does not incorporate the entire paddock land. Instead, a significant proportion of the field (also under the appellant's control) would remain undeveloped and continue to maintain its association with the Farmhouse. This arrangement would enable a significant level of separation between the appeal proposal and the Farmhouse. It would also enable the Farmhouse to maintain a spacious setting, continuing to be surrounded by a significant extent of land, that would continue to read as a historic Farmstead. As such the proposal, in principle, would not undermine the setting of the listed building.

12. Whilst at this stage a full assessment of the effect of the scheme on the setting of the listed building cannot be carried out, from the evidence before me, I consider that a scheme could come forward that would have a neutral effect on the setting of the listed building. Consequently, in principle, the development of a single dwelling at the site is considered to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed building. The proposal would therefore accord with Policy EM11 of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan 2011-2029 (adopted 2016) that requires development to conserve or enhance the borough's heritage assets. The proposal is also considered to accord with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and the Council's Heritage Supplementary Planning Document (adopted 2019) in respect of conserving the historic environment.
13. Although not specifically referenced by the Council in its appeal statement, the proposal would also comply with Policy HA of the AHHNP, which has recently become part of the statutory development plan. Policy HA relates to heritage assets and requires that development proposals preserve or enhance listed buildings and their settings.

Character and Appearance

14. The appeal site lies to the west of Common Road and comprises an undeveloped parcel of land, that is largely bound by mature vegetation. Common Road is a long, quiet rural road that is located within open countryside, however, housing development, set out in a generally linear but intermittent form, runs along a considerable extent of it. Although some houses are separated from one another by open fields, this is not a consistent feature along the road.
15. Dwellings are primarily concentrated to the southern area of Common Road, near its junction with Galley Lane. Nevertheless, there are several large, detached properties on the eastern side of the road, near to the appeal site. This includes Headley Common Farm, as well as further dwellings to the north beyond a copse of trees. The properties in the near vicinity of the appeal site tend to be set back from the highway, within sizeable plots, thereby maintaining a semi-rural feel.
16. The proposed development would result in the site and surrounding area having a more domesticated appearance. However, the proposal would only partially fill a gap that is located between residential development, with open paddock land and the copse of mature trees separating the appeal site from the neighbouring built form. The appellant's illustrative scheme also demonstrates that a dwelling could be comfortably sited within the plot, with significant levels of separation capable of being retained between the proposed

dwelling and neighbouring properties. Accordingly, the proposed dwelling, subject to its precise detailing and design, would not contrast with the prevailing pattern of development along Common Road.

17. Therefore, in principle, the development of a dwelling at the site would not be harmful to the semi-rural character and appearance of the area, nor the appreciation of the surrounding landscape. Therefore, it follows that the proposal would not conflict with Policy EM1, which amongst other matters seeks to ensure that development is sympathetic to the character and visual quality of the surrounding landscape. Likewise, the proposal would accord with the aims of the Framework in respect of conserving landscape character.
18. Although not specifically referenced by the Council in its appeal statement, the proposal would also comply with Policy L1 of the AHHNP, which has recently become part of the statutory development plan. Policy L1 relates to landscape character and, amongst other matters, seeks for development to respect, enhance and be sympathetic to the landscape character and visual amenity of the parish.

Other Matters

19. Concerns have been raised by a nearby resident regarding the effect of the proposal, including on highways safety and infrastructure. However, these are not matters which would fall within the scope of consideration for the first stage of the Permission in Principle route. These issues will need to be addressed as part of the technical details stage and there can be no guarantee that just because Permission in Principle has been granted, that approval of technical details will follow. It takes approval of both stages for a planning permission to be secured.
20. Concerns have also been expressed by the nearby resident that the proposal does not reflect matters within the AHHNP. As indicated above, I find that the development complies with the AHHNP policies of most relevance to the appeal in respect of heritage assets and landscape character. The Council has not identified any conflict with the AHHNP, whilst my attention has not been drawn to a specific conflict with the AHHNP by the nearby resident. Accordingly, my decision does not turn on this matter.
21. It has been suggested that the granting of permission in principle for the proposed development would set a precedent for other development nearby. However, there is no significant evidence before me that further similar proposals are likely to come forward, or that significant harm would necessarily ensue. In any event, each case must be considered on its own merits.

Conclusion

22. For the reasons outlined above, having regard to the development plan and all other material considerations, the appeal should succeed.

Lewis Condé
INSPECTOR