



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 July 2022

by Tamsin Law BSc MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 November 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/V3120/W/22/3291413

Crossleys, Road Running through Woolstone Village, Woolstone, Faringdon, SN7 7QL

- 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 Avenell against the decision of Vale of White Horse District Council.
 - The application Ref P21/V2106/FUL, dated 20 July 2021, was refused by notice dated 29 October 2021.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a dwelling with associated parking and provision of refuse and cycle storage facility following the demolition of the outbuilding and a polytunnel.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - Whether the site is a suitable location for the proposed development having regard to the development strategy for the area and accessibility to services and facilities; and
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Location

3. The Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 (2016) (LP) seeks to ensure the delivery of sustainable development by focusing new houses in towns and larger villages which have the greatest availability of services and facilities. It also allows for proportionate development, to meet local need, in specified smaller villages. Whilst Woolstone is a small village, it is not specified under Policy CP3 of the LP, so in terms of current planning policy, Woolstone and therefore the site, is considered to form part of the open countryside.
4. Policy CP4 of the LP sets out that in the open countryside, development will not be appropriate unless specifically supported by other relevant local or national planning policies. No substantive evidence has been presented to demonstrate that the proposal would be supported by relevant planning policies which allow for new housing in the countryside, such as for affordable housing or rural enterprise dwellings. However, as the proposal would be located adjacent to

existing dwellings, it would not be classed as an isolated dwelling in the countryside.

5. I am informed by both the appellant and the Council that public transport is limited, and I saw nothing during my site visit to lead me to a different view. It was also evident from my visit that there are very limited services and facilities in the village and immediate surrounding area. Additional services are provided in Uffington, but this is some 1.25 km from the appeal site along a narrow and unlit road with no pavement. This means that future residents would be highly reliant on a private vehicle to access necessary services and facilities, which is the least sustainable form of transport. It may be possible, on occasion, to walk or cycle to the nearest services and facilities (or those in settlements further afield). However, that is likely to be unwelcoming given the rural context of the site, particularly during inclement weather or outside of daylight.
6. I conclude that the appeal site would be an unsuitable location for new housing, having regard to the local plan and the accessibility of services and facilities. It would fail to comply with Policies CP3 and CP4 of the LP which set out the settlement hierarchy and guide development first and foremost towards larger settlements with a range of services and facilities. It would also not meet the aims of paragraph 8 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) in terms of ensuring accessible services and facilities.

Character and Appearance

7. The site is located adjacent to dwellings that form part of Woolstone on a single-track road which benefits from hedgerows, trees and grass verges creating a pleasant rural character. There is no single character to the immediate area, with single storey bungalows, two-storey dwellings and detached and semi-detached dwellings forming part of the group. Some dwellings are closely grouped with modest plots and others having large gardens. Some dwellings front on to the road running through Woolstone, but others are orientated with their sides facing the road or are tucked behind other dwellings with no immediate road frontage.
8. There is no consistent palette of materials with red brick, render, Tudor panelling, tiles, and thatch roofs used in nearby dwellings and buildings. The appeal site forms part of the garden of Crossleys, a relatively modern detached dwelling set back from the road behind an existing dwelling with a garden area to the front, side, and rear. The rear garden has a number of domestic structures.
9. The layout demonstrates that a dwelling and associated garden and parking area can be accommodated in the rear garden of Crossleys. Crossleys will also retain garden and parking areas to the front, side and back. The submitted plans detail a dwelling set back from the road with garage and parking area to the front. Whilst the proposal would be located on a narrower plot than nearby dwellings, the mixed character of nearby dwellings would mean that this would not appear at odds with the character of the area.
10. There is an established boundary between this area of Woolstone and the neighbouring agricultural land that continues from the appeal site and along the rear gardens of other properties on Marsh Way. The proposal would be contained within the rear garden of Crossleys and when travelling along nearby highways would be seen in the context of existing built form and not as

additional encroachment into countryside. Additionally, landscaping could be provided to ensure that the area retains its rural characteristics.

11. The proposed dwelling would face north, and whilst many dwellings within Woolstone face the historic core, several nearby dwellings, including Crossleys and dwelling in the south of Woolstone, do not. They face their adjoining highway or are orientated with their side elevation facing the highway. As such, it is not uncommon for dwellings to be orientated differently, and the proposed development facing north, would not appear at odds with the wider character and appearance of the area.
12. The Council are concerned that the proposed materials are inappropriate. The proposed dwelling would use limestone, render, and mock oak Tudor boarding. The use of render and Tudor panelling echoes the materials used in Woolstone and would ensure that the proposed development would not appear at odds with the character and appearance of the area.
13. I therefore conclude that the proposal would have an acceptable effect on the character and appearance of the area. Consequently, I find no conflict with Policy CP37 of the LP and the guidance contained within the Vale of White Horse District Council Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2015) (SPD) which seeks, amongst other things, to ensure proposals responds positively to the site and its surroundings. It would also comply with Paragraph 130 of the Framework which seeks to ensure that developments are visually attractive and sympathetic to local character.

Other Matters

14. The Framework sets out that previously developed or brownfield land excludes land in built-up areas such as residential gardens. Regardless of whether the main body of the site can be considered as brownfield land, any benefits of using a previously developed site would not outweigh the lack of policy compliance and harm identified.
15. Whilst I have given the appellant's personal circumstances careful consideration, I am mindful of the advice contained in Planning Practice Guidance¹ that in general planning is concerned with land use in the public interest. It is also probable that the proposed development would remain long after the current personal circumstances cease to be relevant. For these reasons, I therefore find that this factor is not sufficient to outweigh the harm that would be caused contrary to the development plan and the Framework.
16. The appellant suggests that there is a need for housing in the area. Whilst they nor the Council have provided evidence with regard the supply of housing, if this were to be the case, I would be taken to paragraph 11 of the Framework. The most important policies would be out of date. As the erection of one dwelling, the proposal would make a very limited contribution to any housing undersupply. The scale of the scheme would accordingly limit its associated socio-economic benefits. I have found that the proposal would be an unsuitable location for new housing, having regard to the accessibility of services and facilities in the manner I have described above. I ascribe significant weight to these harms which would be long lasting. Therefore, and in regard to the specific circumstances of this case, the adverse impacts of granting a planning

¹ Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 21b-008-20140306

permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. It would not therefore be sustainable development for which the presumption in favour applies.

Conclusion

17. For the above reasons given above, having considered the development plan as a whole, the approach of the Framework and all other relevant material considerations, the appeal should be dismissed.

Tamsin Law

INSPECTOR