



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 January 2023

by J White BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 February 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/C1760/W/22/3305342

Green Gables Farm, Knockwood Lane, Nether Wallop SO20 8EF

- 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 N O'Rorke against the decision of Test Valley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/03438/FULLN, dated 23 November 2021, was refused by notice dated 27 April 2022.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing dwelling and outbuilding, and erection of replacement dwelling (following the withdrawal of 20/02045/FULLN).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises a bungalow with some roof space accommodation, its garden areas, and outbuildings. The bungalow is comprised of painted brick under a tile roof. The appellant owns farmland around the site, including a low height farm building to one side. The property is located in countryside beyond the villages of Nether Wallop and Middle Wallop, with access from Knockwood Lane.
4. From what I saw during my site visit, the landscape visible from much of the site's perimeter is open fields. The site is elevated with expansive views to the west. Also, the intervening rural fields, hedges and trees together contribute to a prevailing sense of separation between the village and the appeal site, and to the rural character of the locality. As such, notwithstanding some diluting influence on local countryside character by the row of semi-detached dwellings along School Lane to the north-east, the appeal site reads on the ground as part of the countryside setting on the edge of the village.
5. A prevailing characteristic of this area of countryside setting is its verdant, less developed nature, with a predominately open and spacious character, and a relative lack of buildings. Dwellings are typically tucked down in the landscape along Farley Street following the Wallop Brook to the west of the site. These features of the local landscape contribute positively to its rural character. A large, mainly verdant, military airfield to the north-east further contributes to a sense of openness.

6. The existing bungalow on the appeal site is relatively plain, functional, low in height and modest in scale and appearance. These factors, together with its established nature, goes some way to help the bungalow visually fit into its setting.
7. I acknowledge that there is a wide selection of building forms, both traditional and modern within the surrounding area, which leads to a diverse architectural style within the village. Also, I appreciate the appellant's intentions to create a dwelling that harmonises with the village of Nether Wallop and notably dwellings along Farley Street. Such a dwelling may be in harmony with its built environs in terms of design and materials, were it to be located in the village. Additionally, the residential development alongside School Lane, which sits taller than 79m AOD, would have a modestly diluting influence on the visual impact of the proposed dwelling. Retained trees and the Beech hedge alongside Knockwood Lane would also provide some visual containment of the proposal.
8. However, the proposed five bedroom detached house with a ground and first floor level would constitute a substantial step up in size and scale of house on the site. The relative modesty of residential building scale and appearance would be lost from the site. In combination with its mass, the house's formality of design, increase in footprint and extensive fenestration would draw the eye.
9. Within the predominately verdant and spacious countryside setting outside the village, these factors would emphasise the proposed dwelling's presence, and result in a visually jarring intrusion of conspicuous built form within the countryside setting of the village. This would erode, and so fail to respond positively to, the area's predominantly verdant, open and spacious rural landscape character.
10. The development would result in the loss of several trees within the site, including notably a group of trees to the south of the position of the proposed dwelling. Whilst the majority of these trees are assessed as having low value, with a mature Cherry being assessed as having a moderate value, they do positively influence the character and appearance of the area. The loss of the trees would therefore be of some harm, even if to a limited extent acknowledging the value attached to the trees and that several trees, including and a 'category A' Walnut tree and two 'category B' trees within the group, would be retained.
11. The appellant has provided a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) which assesses the proposed development from several viewpoints. However, despite the findings of the LVA, as observed during my site visit, the adverse impacts I have found above would be particularly noticeable from a combination of viewpoints, including from the public right of way to the west (viewpoints 5 and 6 of the LVA), from Knockwood Lane (viewpoints 1, 2, 3 and 4), which is strongly characterised as a rural lane passing through countryside, and from within the site.
12. The appellant has advised that, in addition to retained vegetation, additional landscaping both in and around the site boundaries would be carried out. I note the landscape mitigation strategy in the LVA, which includes hedgerow planting alongside the boundary to the public right of way, and re-planting trees within the appeal site. However, given the conspicuous scale and appearance of the proposed scheme and the open character of the site, as well as the potential limitation in screening effectiveness of tree and hedge planting, with potential

seasonal leaf fall, the visually softening effect of landscaping on the proposed development would be limited. Moreover, with any new planting, its longer-term management and survival is not guaranteed. From the evidence available, I am not persuaded that the retained vegetation with further planting would be effective in concealing or significantly softening the proposed development or significantly reducing the visual and perceptible impact.

13. I acknowledge that the proposed scheme includes the demolition of an existing outbuilding that lies next to the bungalow. Although, due to its low height, position and innocuous appearance, this would yield a slight improvement visually, it would not be to such an extent as to justify the proposal, given my findings on this main issue.
14. The appellant refers to the potential to extend the existing dwelling through an upward and single-story extensions following approvals granted by the Council in 2021 (references 21/00736/PDAAN and 21/02586/PDHN). Even if I were to accept that there is a real prospect that these developments may take place, based on the plans supplied with the appeal documents, the single storey extension would be predominantly obscured from view by existing out-shots of the dwelling and the upward extension would be provided over only part of the dwelling, which would likely retain the relative modesty of residential building scale and appearance of the site. As such, it would likely be of less conspicuous appearance in its countryside location than the proposed development. Therefore, I am not persuaded that the fallback position would have a similar impact on the character and appearance of the area compared with the proposed scheme.
15. For the above reasons, I conclude the proposed development would have a significantly harmful effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. In this regard, the appeal proposal would be contrary to Policies E1, E2 and COM12 of the Test Valley Borough Revised Local Plan. Together these policies, amongst other things, seek high quality in terms of design and local distinctiveness that integrates, respects and complements local character and, with respect to replacement dwellings, seeks to ensure that the size, siting and design of the proposal would not be more visually intrusive in the landscape.

Other Matter

16. I have noted the appellant's views that the landscape mitigation strategy in the LVA would offer greater amenity and wildlife habitats. However, the benefits are limited by the scale of proposal and would not outweigh the totality of the above identified harm and the conflict with the development plan.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the development would conflict with the development plan and there are no material considerations identified that outweigh that conflict. Accordingly, the appeal should be dismissed.

J White

INSPECTOR