



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 February 2023

by James Blackwell LLB (Hons) PGDip

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 02 March 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/W/22/3306530

Land at The Farm, Tunworth Road, Mapledurwell RG25 2NA

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant permission in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Warman against the decision of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/00107/PIP, dated 11 January 2021, was refused by notice dated 19 April 2022.
 - The development proposed is Permission in Principle for the residential development for a maximum of 6 dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal is for permission in principle. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The permission in principle consent route has 2 stages: the first stage (or permission in principle stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in principle and the second stage ('Technical Details Consent') is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. This appeal relates to the first of these 2 stages.
3. The scope of the considerations for permission in principle is limited to location, land use and the amount of development permitted. All other matters are considered as part of a subsequent Technical Details Consent application if permission in principle is granted. I have determined the appeal accordingly.
4. Originally, the appeal application sought permission in principle for a maximum of nine dwellings. During this course of the application, the proposed scheme was reduced to a maximum of six dwellings. The description of development therefore reflects the updated scheme.
5. The appeal site is near to a Conservation Area and a listed building. In line with my statutory duty under sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, I have had special regard to the desirability of preserving these heritage assets and their settings.

Main Issues

6. In this context, the main issue is whether the site is suitable for residential development, having regard to its location, the proposed land use and the amount of development.

Reasons

Location

7. The appeal site comprises a vacant field to the northern end of the village of Mapledurwell. It lies outside of any defined settlement boundary, and is designated as open countryside as per Policy SS1 of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan (2011 – 2029) (Local Plan). This Policy sets out the overall settlement strategy for the district, and generally directs new residential development to existing settlements. The Policy does say that residential development may be permitted outside of defined settlements, but only where it complies with exception criteria set out elsewhere in the Local Plan.
8. Policy SS6 of the Local Plan goes on to prescribe a limited set of exceptions, where residential development may be permitted within the countryside. Of most relevance is criterion (e), which permits small scale residential proposals of a scale and type that meets a locally agreed need. However, as per the footnote to this criterion, “small scale residential proposals” is defined as four dwellings or fewer. Given that the proposal seeks a maximum of six dwellings, the development would not fall within this exception. In turn, the location of the development would not be acceptable with regard to the overarching strategy for new housing, as set out in Policies SS1 and SS6 of the Local Plan.
9. Although the proposed dwellings would not be physically isolated, there are very few public amenities within easy walking distance of the site. Whilst there is a nearby bus stop providing access to more built up areas, bus services are limited in this location. This means occupiers of the new dwellings would be likely to remain reliant on private vehicle, at least in part, to access many day to day services and employment opportunities. In turn, the sustainability of the site’s location would be sub-optimal. This means the proposal would conflict with Policy CN9 of the Local Plan, which seeks to ensure new development is able to integrate effectively with the existing movement network in the district, through sustainable design.

Proposed Land Use

10. As mentioned, the appeal site is located towards the northern end of the village of Mapledurwell. Mapledurwell is a small village, which is broadly linear in its arrangement, and is surrounded by agricultural fields, woodlands and shelterbelts. These features are particularly prevalent towards the outer limits of the village, and give the settlement a distinct sense of verdancy and rurality, which contribute positively to its overarching character.
11. The appeal site, which comprises a green and undeveloped field, is surrounded by dense hedgerow. Its green characteristics in this regard help contribute to the attractive and verdant character of the village and its wider setting. Given that there are scatterings of residential development to its north, east and south, the appeal site also constitutes a particularly important gap in built form on the approach to the village, which helps amplify its rural setting.
12. The introduction of residential development in this location would fundamentally undermine the site’s countryside character. Notwithstanding the retention of the perimeter hedgerow, it would give rise to an urbanising effect which would diminish its rural credentials. The development would also

- eradicate the important gap in built form on the approach to the village, which would fundamentally alter the sense of rurality within this aspect of the village.
13. In turn, the development would harm the landscape character of the appeal site and its immediate surroundings. It would therefore conflict with Policies EM1 and EM10 of the Local Plan, which promote development which contributes positively to local distinctiveness and sense of place, through sympathetic design which preserves or enhances the character and visual amenity of the surrounding landscape. The development would also conflict with the landscape objectives of the Council's Landscape, Biodiversity and Trees Supplementary Planning Document (2018).
 14. The site is located immediately to the north west of the Mapledurwell Conservation Area (CA). The Conservation Area Appraisal sets out the significance of the CA, and highlights that its special character "principally derives from the relationship of linear groups of historic buildings located along narrow, verdant lanes". It goes on say that the "prominence of key farm complexes and manors – Manor Farm, The Farm, Mapledurwell House and Gray's Farm is important. It establishes the overriding rural and agricultural character and hence the appearance of the village".
 15. The appeal site sits adjacent to The Farm, and as an undeveloped field, it helps contribute to the rural and agricultural character of this property and its setting. The introduction of residential dwellings in this location would eradicate much of the sense of space surrounding The Farm, thereby diminishing these characteristics. Given that The Farm is located on the northern perimeter of the CA, this would harm its setting. More generally, the development would result in the loss of space and countryside within the backdrop to the CA, which would erode its rural credentials. On account of these factors, the development would fail to preserve or enhance the setting of the CA.
 16. The appeal site is also located in close proximity to Mapledurwell House, which is a grade II listed building dating back to the 18th century. The significance of this building partly derives from its historic setting as a manorial farmstead within a scattered settlement. Irrespective of any direct intervisibility between the two sites, the introduction of additional residential development in such close proximity to the listed building would further urbanise its surrounding landscape, and diminish the scattered settlement pattern which contributes to its significance. In turn, the development would fail to preserve or enhance the setting of this listed building.
 17. These conclusions reflect the view of Historic England, which has objected to the proposal on the basis of harm to the setting of the CA and to Mapledurwell House. Whilst I consider these harms would be less than substantial, as per the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) (Framework), great weight must be attributed to any harm to a heritage asset (in this case, both the CA and the listed building), irrespective of whether such harm is "less than substantial" or otherwise.
 18. The development would therefore conflict with Policy EM11 of the Local Plan, which seeks to preserve or enhance the quality of the borough's heritage assets, in a manner appropriate to their significance. The development would also conflict with the heritage conservation objectives of the Heritage Supplementary Planning Document (2019).

Amount of Development

19. The introduction of up to six dwellings in the location proposed would not be appropriate in terms of location, and would harm the landscape character of the area, as well as the setting of the CA and Mapledurwell House. As such, the site would not be suitable for the extent of residential development proposed.
20. As well as the policy conflicts outlined above, the development would conflict with the overarching objectives of the Framework, which recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and puts great emphasis on its protection.

Other Matters

21. The Council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing, which means its policies relating to delivery of housing are out of date. Paragraph 11(d)(ii) of the Framework (tilted balance) is therefore engaged. Nonetheless, paragraph 219 of the Framework is clear that due weight should still be given to existing policies according to their degree of consistency with the Framework.
22. The concept of sustainable development underpins the entirety of the Framework. Paragraph 130 of the Framework is also explicit that new development should function well and add to the overall quality of an area, highlighting the need for it to be visually attractive and sympathetic to local character and surrounding built environment. Paragraph 189 goes on to highlight the importance of heritage assets as an irreplaceable resource, and says that these should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.
23. The content of the Framework therefore reflects the sustainability, landscape and heritage principles of the Local Plan in terms of new residential development. Even accounting for the Framework's objective of boosting the supply of housing and the Council's housing land supply position, the conflict between the proposal and the relevant policies of the Local Plan should therefore be attributed significant weight in this appeal.
24. The proposal would contribute up to six dwellings to the Council's housing stock. This would be a modest, yet welcome contribution. Nonetheless, in this instance, the adverse impacts in terms of location, harm to landscape character and harm to heritage assets, would significantly and demonstrably outweigh this benefit, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. As a result, the presumption in favour of sustainable development would not apply in this instance.

Conclusion

25. The development would conflict with the development plan as a whole and there are no other considerations, including the provisions of the Framework, that outweigh this finding. Therefore, for the reasons given, the appeal should be dismissed.

James Blackwell

INSPECTOR