



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 January 2023

by Hannah Guest BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26th January 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/W/22/3302589

Tarnagulla, 17 Monk Sherborne Road, Ramsdell, RG26 5PR

- 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 W Gibson against the decision of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/03722/FUL, dated 8 December 2021, was refused by notice dated 28 March 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as the demolition of the metal building and outbuildings and removal of hardstanding, and the erection of two dwellings with associated amenity space, car parking and other associated infrastructure.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on:
 - the character and appearance of the area; and
 - highway safety

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. The appeal site is located between the small rural villages of Ramsdell and Charter Alley within the North Sherbourne Landscape Character Area. This area comprises a patchwork of mixed farmland and woodland with a low-lying and gently undulating landform. The landscape has retained a quiet, rural character, with a network of narrow, winding roads linking the dispersed villages, hamlets, and isolated farmsteads. The landscape character of the appeal sites immediate surroundings is rural, agricultural and both open and verdant.
4. Although relatively close to the edge of Charter Alley, the appeal site is positioned behind an existing dwelling, known as Tarnagulla, which is separated from the rest of the village by White Hart Lane. With the exception of Tarnagulla to the south, it is bounded by large open fields, although to the north there is a small, grassed area before the larger open field beyond. Part of the site is currently used for vehicle storage and the commercial activity is relatively unsightly. However, despite the large barn, modest outbuildings, hardstanding, vehicles, and materials, it has a sense of spaciousness. It is read with the adjacent grassed area to the north, which assimilates with and adds to

the open and verdant character of the surrounding fields. Thus, the site, although relatively urbanised in its current form, has a neutral effect on its wider rural landscape setting.

5. The proposed dwellings would front the rear elevation and parking area of Tarnagulla. They would be visible over many of the existing field boundaries and from relatively far away. Positioning new houses to the rear of existing properties is not a common configuration in Charter Alley or its immediate surroundings. Most of the houses in Charter Alley address the highway, and I saw on my visit that where new houses had been constructed further from the highway, they tend to be positioned to the side of existing properties rather than directly behind them. They were also more closely surrounded by, and related well to, other houses in the village.
6. Tarnagulla can be read as forming part of Charter Alley, particularly in views from Monk Sherbourne Road and long-distance views from the Public Right of Way (PROW) that runs adjacent to the appeal site and then further north. Notwithstanding this, although the appeal site is not considered physically isolated with regards to paragraph 80 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), the proposed dwellings would be much further from the edge of the village and would appear quite detached. As such, they would be incongruous and not in keeping with the established pattern of development. This is particularly the case in views eastward along Monk Sherbourne Road, from White Hart Lane and Deans Lane, and the section of PROW adjacent to the site. From these locations they would not be viewed in conjunction with the built form of Charter Alley, but rather would be seen to sit apart from the edge of the village within the open countryside. While there are some large employment buildings on the other side of Monk Sherbourne Road, which fill some of the gap between Ramsdell and Charter Alley, they have a very different setting to the appeal site. They are enclosed by woodland and set below the highway, which significantly limits any views of them from Monk Sherbourne Road or further afield.
7. The appellant has provided an Arboricultural Survey Implications Assessment and Method Statement as part of the appeal, in response to the concerns raised by the Council and interested parties. The Council considers the documentation to demonstrate the trees on site can be protected and that those trees to be removed are not of significant value to the landscape setting of the site. Given this, subject to a condition securing the tree protection measures set out within the report, it considers the second reason for refusal set out on the Decision Notice to have been overcome. From the evidence before me and my observations on site, I am satisfied that adequate protection of the trees which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the surrounding area could be secured by condition, and therefore no harm would result from the proposal in this regard.
8. Nevertheless, while retaining the trees of significant value would help to conserve the character of the area, it would not fully address the effects of the proposal. Even with the existing hedged boundary and the line of trees along the northern boundary recommended in the Biodiversity Net Gain Report, the proposed dwellings would still be visible from several public vantage points and particularly during the winter months. Furthermore, landscaping should not be relied upon to hide development that would otherwise be unacceptable.

9. The proposed dwellings would have a similar appearance and would use similar materials to other houses within Charter Alley. However, based on the evidence before me, it appears that they would be wider and deeper than Tarnagulla, and therefore, despite only being single storey at the rear, would be relatively large. Given their position on the site, it is not their front, principal elevations that would be most visible, rather their side and rear elevations. The rear elevations of the proposed dwellings would have a similar appearance and effect on the wider landscape as the rear elevations of some nearby properties that back onto White Hart Lane. However, the side elevations would be relatively featureless, particularly the side elevation of the proposed dwelling for plot 2, which would further exacerbate the incongruous arrangement of the proposal and the effect of the proposal on its landscape setting.
10. The proposed dwellings would replace a large existing barn on the site and other outbuildings associated with the lawful use of the site for car storage. It has been put to me that removing the metal barn and replacing it with two dwellings would significantly improve the visual appearance of the area and the character of the village. However, while the barn is visually prominent, it has a simple rural form typical of its countryside location. I saw on my visit that there is another large barn structure set away from the edge of Charter Alley. Thus, the existing barn is in keeping with this. There were two white vans parked on the appeal site at the time of my visit, and while the commercial activity associated with the car storage could intensify, given the temporary nature and low profile of most vehicles, the limited size of the land to which the lawful use relates and the existing boundary hedging, any harm would be limited.
11. For the reasons above, while I am satisfied that the trees of significant value could be adequately protected, the proposal would fail to integrate successfully with the existing pattern of development and thus would be a visually intrusive form of development that would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. It would conflict with policies EM1 and EM10 of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan (2016) (Local Plan) and the Design and Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (2018). These, amongst other things, seek to ensure that development is not detrimental to the character or visual amenity of the landscape and responds positively to the local context. It would also conflict with the aims of sections 12 and 15 of the Framework to create high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places that are sympathetic to the landscape setting and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.
12. Given the trees of significant value would be retained and protected, the proposal would not conflict with the Landscape, Biodiversity and Trees Supplementary Planning Document (2018), which seeks to retain and integrate important trees into development.

Highway Safety

13. The proposal would use the existing site access that joins the carriageway at the junction of White Hart Lane and Monk Sherbourne Lane and runs adjacent to the entrance to the PROW. This currently provides access to the parking area for Tarnagulla and is used for the car storage business. Although the proposal would likely result in an increase in vehicle movements, and I recognise that given the location of the proposal the occupants would be

heavily reliant on the private car, the overall amount of additional vehicle movements is likely to be limited given the modest scale of the proposal.

14. I saw on site that the arrangement at the junction means that a vehicle leaving to travel in either direction along Monk Sherbourne Road would join that road directly. The only time a vehicle leaving the site would need to join White Hart Lane would be to travel along it towards Deans Lane. In this event, the driver would be checking there was no traffic joining White Hart Lane from Monk Sherbourne Road where there are adequate visibility splays. Drivers of vehicles leaving the site would only need to look along White Hart Lane to check for traffic moving towards the junction. This traffic would be moving slowly and preparing to stop. Drivers would also move over to the opposite side of the carriageway from the site access at the junction, which is wider than the Lane itself. This would reduce the risk of a collision. Taking this into account, and that vehicle movements along White Hart Lane appeared to be sporadic and limited, from my observations and the evidence before me I am satisfied that the proposal would not compromise highway safety.
15. With regards to pedestrians accessing the PROW, given the proposal would not alter the current highway arrangement and the increase in vehicle movements would be modest, I am satisfied that the proposal would not lead to unacceptable effects in this regard.
16. For the reasons above, the proposal would not unduly interfere with the safety and convenience of users of the adjacent highway. It would accord with policy CN9 of the Local Plan which seeks, amongst other things, to promote a safe, efficient, and convenient transport system for all potential users. It would also accord with Policy EM10 of the Local Plan, specifically in this regard, and with the aims of the Framework to ensure that development achieves safe and suitable access to the site for all users.

Other Matters

17. At the current time the Council is unable to identify a five-year supply of specific deliverable sites to meet housing needs. Given this, whether or not some or all the site is previously developed land, it is considered that delivery of housing in this location is beneficial and not contrary to the Framework. In view of the housing land supply position, the provision of any additional housing carries significant weight. Nevertheless, the two dwellings in this case would make only a modest contribution to the Council's housing supply.
18. The proposal would have social and economic benefits resulting from construction of the new dwellings and subsequent occupation, as future occupants would be likely to contribute to the viability of the services and facilities in Ramsdell and Charter Alley. It would also have environmental benefits given the significant improvements in biodiversity. Although, the modest scale of the proposal means that these benefits would also be modest.
19. The appellant has brought to my attention the findings of 3 recent appeal decisions¹ and a Council decision² relating to residential developments of up to 9 dwellings in other rural parts of the borough. In these cases, the Inspectors and the Council concluded that when applying paragraph 11d(ii) of the Framework, the adverse impacts of the proposals were significantly and

¹ APP/H1765/W/21/3284682; APP/H1765/W/21/3275067; and APP/H1765/W/20/3161247.

² 21/00427/FUL.

demonstrably outweighed by the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole. However, while I do not have the full details of these proposals before me, there appear to be substantial differences between them and the appeal proposal, particularly in terms of their site circumstances and their impact on the character and appearance of the area. All the cited proposals appear to be more closely related to existing buildings than the appeal proposal, which limits the scope and weight of the harm they have on the wider landscape. As such, these examples are not determinative, and I afford them limited weight in my decision. In any event, I have determined the appeal on its own planning merits.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

20. Given the shortfall in housing supply, paragraph 11d) of the Framework falls to be considered. In this case, planning permission should be withheld only where the adverse impacts of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
21. Overall, while I have found the proposal would not compromise highway safety, it would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal would therefore conflict with the development plan read as a whole. Policies EM1 and EM10 of the Local Plan are broadly consistent with the Frameworks aim to create high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places that are sympathetic to the landscape setting and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Therefore, while the Framework seeks to significantly boost the supply of housing and recognises the important contribution that small sites can make to meeting the housing requirement of an area, in this case the significant harm to the character and appearance of the area would outweigh the modest benefits arising from the provision, construction and occupation of two additional dwellings and the associated improvements in biodiversity.
22. Consequently, when the proposal is assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, the adverse impacts of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh its benefits. The proposal would not therefore benefit from the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
23. For the reasons above, having had regard to the development plan as a whole and all other relevant material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Hannah Guest

INSPECTOR