



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 6 July 2023

by Lewis Condé BSc (Hons), MSc, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th August 2023

Appeal A Ref: APP/W0340/W/22/3311309

Rapleys, Goring Lane, Grazeley Green, Reading, West Berkshire RG7 1LS

- 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 A Pike against the decision of West Berkshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 22/01952/FUL, dated 15 August 2022, was refused by notice dated 10 October 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as 'Erection of a new pool house and terrace to the rear garden of the property known as Rapleys'.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/W0340/W/22/3311315

Rapleys, Goring Lane, Grazeley Green, Reading, West Berkshire RG7 1LS

- 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 A Pike against the decision of West Berkshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 22/01863/FULMAJ, dated 2 August 2022, was refused by notice dated 8 November 2022.
 - The development proposed is described 'Extension of residential curtilage, the erection of a 3 bay garage and new pool house. New building incorporates a new 'bridge link building' from the existing barn to the pool. Integrated solar panel tiles are also to be included to the southern side of the pool roof - This application also seeks permission for the change of use of land from agricultural to residential'.
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Decision

1. Appeal A is allowed and planning permission is granted for the erection of a new pool house and terrace to the rear garden of Rapleys, Goring Lane, Grazeley Green, Reading, West Berkshire RG7 1LS, in accordance with application Ref 22/01952/FUL dated 15 August 2022, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Site and Location Plan (Drawing number 100); Proposed Floor Plan (Drawing number 200); Proposed Elevations and Sections (Drawing number 201 A); and Sections (Drawing number 202).
 - 3) The materials to be used in the development hereby permitted shall be as specified on the application forms. Where stated that materials shall match the existing, those materials shall match those on the existing development in colour, size and texture.
2. Appeal B is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

3. As set out above there are two appeals at this site, albeit the redline denoting the site areas vary. I have considered each proposal on its individual merits. However, to avoid duplication I have dealt with both schemes together except where otherwise indicated.
4. Appeal A refers to the first planning application refused by the Council for a pool house and terrace to the rear of the main dwellinghouse 'Rapleys'.
5. Appeal B refers to a second planning application at the site that proposes a new building to the east of Rapleys that would house a swimming pool and a 3-car garage. The proposed building would link via a 'bridge' to an existing barn on the site. In addition, the scheme seeks to extend the residential curtilage of Rapleys, in part to house the proposed new building.
6. The descriptions of development in the banner heading above are taken directly from the original planning application form. In respect of Appeal B, I understand that the main parties agreed to a revised description of development, namely "*Extension of residential curtilage, the erection of a 3 bay garage and new pool house. New building incorporates a new 'bridge link building' from the existing barn to the pool. Integrated solar panel tiles are also to be included to the southern side of the pool roof - This application also seeks permission for the change of use of land from agricultural to residential*". This more accurately reflects the proposal before me and therefore the appeal has been determined on this basis.

Main Issues

7. The main issue for both appeals is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

8. Rapleys is a large, detached dwelling built in a Tudor Revival style and is set within a substantial plot. The property lies off Goring Lane and is accessed via a long private drive. The surrounding area has a verdant, rural character with the site being surrounded by farmland. There are few neighbouring properties, and they are set some distance away from the appeal property.
9. Being set back a considerable distance from the highway, with mature vegetation along much of its boundaries, results in very limited public views of the existing residential property including its garden space. From my observations, the predominant public views are likely to be from Goring Lane, but these would still be partial views and most likely transient and fleeting in nature.

Appeal A

10. The outbuilding proposed under Appeal A would be substantial in scale. In order to accommodate the proposed indoor swimming pool, the length and width of the building would be broadly comparable to that of the main dwellinghouse. Nevertheless, despite its sizeable footprint the proposed pool house would have a much lower ridgeline than the existing dwellinghouse. Furthermore, it would be set back beyond the rear of the existing dwelling with a notable degree of separation. The position of the proposed pool house would

ensure that the existing dwellinghouse maintains its primacy on site. I therefore find that despite its substantial scale the proposal would still read as a subservient element.

11. Additionally, whilst in a rural location, the appeal site is characterised by its residential use. Notably, Rapleys comprises a rather grand dwelling of significant scale, with a range of associated residential paraphernalia (e.g. tennis court, garage/outbuildings, considerable driveway), that are set within an extensive plot containing large areas of maintained lawn and mature vegetation. The proposed pool house would therefore be read in the context of the existing sizeable residential built form, while ample open space would remain across the wider site. As such, I do not find the proposed development would result in any meaningful urbanising effect.
12. In coming to the above view, I am aware that there is an extant planning permission for a larger garage to be built on the wider site. Nevertheless, I am satisfied that the proposed pool house development would not lead to a harmful proliferation of development across the site, even if built out alongside the extant permission.
13. I conclude that the proposed development under Appeal A would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the area, given its siting, scale and appearance. I therefore find no conflict with Policies ADPP1, ADPP6, CS14, CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 (adopted 2012) (the Core Strategy), and Policies C1, C3, and C6 of the West Berkshire Housing Site Allocations DPD 2006-2026 (adopted 2017) (the DPD). Together, amongst other matters, these policies seek for development to be of an appropriate design and scale that respects and enhance the character and appearance of the area.
14. Likewise, I am satisfied that the proposal adheres to the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) in respect of promoting development that is of a high design quality, which is sympathetic to its surroundings.

Appeal B

15. Turning to Appeal B, I appreciate that the scale of the proposed building is not too dissimilar to that subject of Appeal A. However, the position of the proposed building is such that it would sit largely alongside Rapleys and even project slightly forward of the dwelling's frontage. As such, it would have a more prominent and dominant position in relation to the main dwelling compared to Appeal A.
16. Furthermore, the proposed building would link to an existing barn on the site, which in turn sits in very close proximity to an existing garage that is also located near the main dwelling house. Therefore, despite the proposal being notably lower in height than the dwellinghouse, it would visually result in an extensive sprawl and almost continuous mass of buildings to the side of the host property. This would detract from the character and appearance of the existing dwellinghouse.
17. Additionally, in combination with the existing outbuildings, the proposal would appear as a very large bulk of built form which due to its intimate relationship

with Rapleys would also result in the proposed development not appearing as a subservient element to the main dwellinghouse.

18. I am aware that historically the site contained a range of buildings in the general location of the proposed development. However, the evidence before me suggests that the relationship of these buildings to the main dwellinghouse would have been somewhat different, including greater separation distances between individual outbuildings/and or the dwellinghouse. Additionally, from the evidence provided, I am unable to ascertain whether previous buildings in this part of the site were of an overall comparable scale or appearance as the current proposal.
19. I am also aware that there is an extant permission (ref: 22/01435/FULMAJ)¹ that has seemingly been implemented on the site. Whilst the current proposal shares some similarities with that extant scheme, I find that the building currently proposed significantly differs from the built form approved under that permission. Similarly, I note that the appellant's current proposal is intended to be implemented instead of extant planning permission 22/01436/FUL, which allowed for an existing stone barn on the site to be replaced by a new four bay barn. However, I have limited details of that extant permission, such that an appropriate comparison between the impacts of the schemes cannot be made. Consequently, in this instance, the extant permissions are not suitable justification for the proposed development.
20. I also appreciate that the proposal would not be readily apparent from public vantage points, but this does not negate the need for a suitable high-quality design that respects the existing built form on the site.
21. The appellant questions whether DPD Policy CS6 is relevant to the appeal scheme, indicating the proposed development is for a separate freestanding outbuilding rather than an extension or alteration to the dwellinghouse on site. However, I am not convinced by the evidence before me that the policy is so prescriptive as to not include extensions or alterations to the wider residential built form of a dwelling (e.g. associated outbuildings).
22. Appeal B also seeks for the change of use of land along the eastern boundary of Rapleys to residential curtilage. This is fundamentally required to enable the proposed use of the pool house and garage. DPD Policy C8 sets out that extensions to residential curtilages will only be permitted where there are no adverse impacts on the character and local distinctiveness of the rural area. The policy also specifically highlights that consideration will be given to proposals that involve the provision of parking in the interest of highway safety, or, to realign a garden boundary to achieve similar levels to other nearby dwellings.
23. Although the appeal scheme involves a garage element, it does not appear to be required on highway safety grounds, with extensive parking already available on the site. Additionally, the proposed change of use of the land is not needed to realign a garden boundary for parity with other nearby dwellings. In conjunction with the proposed new pool house and garage building the extension of the residential curtilage would also harm the character and appearance of the area. In coming to this view, I am mindful that previous permission (ref: 22/01435/FULMAJ) has seemingly been commenced on site.

¹For 'New barn forward of house frontage and new access way to cess pit, including solar array for the house'.

However, it remains that the previous permission did not allow for a change of use of the agricultural land.

24. Overall, in respect of Appeal B, I find that the proposed development would adversely affect the character, appearance and integrity of the host dwelling, with consequent harm to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal is therefore contrary to Core Strategy Policies ADPP1, ADPP6, CS14, CS19, as well as DPD Policies C1, C3, C6 and C8. It would also not adhere to the aims of the Framework in respect of promoting development of high-quality design.

Other Matters

25. I note the appellant's frustration with the manner in which the local planning authority dealt with the original applications. However, this is a matter for the Council to address. The appeals have been determined on their own merits.

Conditions

Appeal A

26. The Council has provided suggested conditions in the event that the appeal is allowed, which I have considered against the advice on the use of planning conditions as set out in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).
27. In addition to the standard time limit period for commencement of development, a condition specifying the approved drawings is necessary for clarity and certainty. A condition relating to the specification of materials to be used in the development is also reasonable and necessary in the interest of the character and appearance of the proposal.

Conclusion

28. For the reasons outlined above, having regard to the development plan as a whole and to all other material considerations, Appeal A is allowed, whilst Appeal B is dismissed.

Lewis Condé

INSPECTOR