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# Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 January 2024

**by N Praine BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 10 April 2024**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/W/23/3329309**

**Pye Hill House, Jubilee Road, Finchampstead, Wokingham RG40 3RU**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
  - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs Coles against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
  - The application Ref is 230195.
  - The development proposed is described as the erection of detached garden store and workshop.
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## Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

## Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposed development would be acceptable within the countryside, with particular regard to its effect on the character and appearance of the area.

## Reasons

3. The proposed development<sup>1</sup> lies within the Countryside. Policy CP11 of the Wokingham Borough Council Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2010 ("the Core Strategy") states that in order to protect the quality of the environment, amongst other things, proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted (subject to exceptions).
4. My attention is drawn to an appeal within this borough<sup>1</sup> where it was found that some development may not fall squarely within any of the prescribed exceptions set out by Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy. This other appeal stated that this does not lead to a blanket ban on development in such locations, and development would still need to broadly align with the Policy's objectives of maintaining the quality of the environment.
5. This approach accords with the National Planning Policy Framework ("the Framework") which, inter alia, seeks to enhance the environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside<sup>2</sup>. It is therefore incumbent on me to assess the appeal's impact on the wider landscape and countryside character, and whether such an impact would maintain the quality of the environment.

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<sup>1</sup> Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/W/21/3288075

<sup>2</sup> Paragraph 180 of the Framework

6. The appeal site consists of a dwelling set within generous verdant grounds. Land levels drastically change over the site; and the proposed building would be sited on elevated land accessed by a considerable number of steps. This higher land gives the appeal site a commanding position within the surrounding countryside. Apart from an existing timber store building, a modest amount of hardstanding and some limited chattels, this part of the appeal site comprises broadly undeveloped open fields with rolling grassland punctuated with mature trees, hedging and a woodchip path.
7. There are open long range and shorter-range views across the countryside, through the gaps in the existing trees, with views of fields and hedgerows and a gentle scattering of buildings within the wider countryside. Despite the existing buildings, the rural character of the area and the features set out above give the area a sense of tranquillity. These all contribute toward the intrinsic beauty of this part of the countryside and the high-quality landscape of the Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands.
8. While there would be no loss of trees, the proposed development would introduce an additional detached building of significant width, depth and height set close to the retained timber store building. The proposed development would be sited in a prominent location and would unacceptably encroach into the countryside. Its physical presence would cause an urbanising effect harmful to the existing character, tranquillity, and intrinsic beauty of this part of the countryside.
9. Evidence has also been submitted<sup>3</sup> concerning a former outbuilding. While I cannot be certain that it is an 'original building' for the purposes of the policy test<sup>4</sup>, even if it was an original building, as a matter of fact and degree, the proposed building would be sited away from this former outbuilding. Furthermore, and in the event I am wrong on that point, the proposed development would still lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development for the reasons as given above. Accordingly, this has limited bearing on my findings.
10. Consequently, the proposed development would be unacceptable within the countryside, with particular regard to its effect on the character and appearance of the area.
11. The proposals would therefore fail to comply with the relevant provisions of Policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy, Policies CC03 and TB21 of the Wokingham Borough Council Development Plan Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014 ("the Local Plan"), the Wokingham Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2012 ("the SPD"), and the Framework. These, amongst other things, require development proposals to positively integrate into their surroundings.
12. I have not referred to Policy CC02 of the Local Plan as this relates to development limits and proposals at the edge of settlements. It has not been shown that the proposed development would be at the edge of a settlement or how this policy applies to the appeal scheme.
13. I have included Policy CC03 of the Local Plan as the proposed development would result in the loss of a grassed landscaping area. I have also included the

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<sup>3</sup> Figure 3 and Appendix 2 of the appellants Appeal Statement

<sup>4</sup> Policy CP11, point 2 of the Core Strategy

SPD, while the Council did not originally specify which sections of this document were relevant, the overall thrust of the document requires development to respond positively to development sites and local context. This accords with the Framework and the policies identified in the Development Plan.

### **Other Matters**

14. The appellant suggests that the proposed development would primarily be required for storage which includes vehicles (such as 2 tractors, a mower, a woodchipper and fuel) in conjunction with further equipment, items and space as identified by the appellant. While the need for a secure building and clearance height is noted, the evidence on need regarding the size of the building is vague. It has not been robustly shown why a building of this size would be genuinely required. This does not therefore outweigh the harm I have identified above.
15. There is some dispute between the main parties as to whether the appeal site falls within a residential curtilage. However, having regard to the evidence before me whether the site is or is not within the residential curtilage has limited bearing on the outcome of this appeal. Accordingly, I have not considered this matter further.
16. I acknowledge that neighbouring occupants and the Parish Council did not object to the proposal, however, this does not in itself demonstrate that the proposal would be acceptable in respect of the main issue. I have considered the appeal on its own merits and found that the proposal would cause unacceptable harm.

### **Conclusion**

17. The proposal is therefore contrary to the development plan as a whole and there are no other material considerations of sufficient weight to indicate a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

*N Praine*

INSPECTOR