



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 May 2024

by D Cramond BSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22nd May 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/W/23/3334571

West End House, Mortimer Lane, West End Green, Stratfield Saye, RG7 2DP

- 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 Mayo against the decision of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 23/00468/FUL, dated 22 February 2023, was refused by notice dated 30 October 2023.
 - The development proposed is the erection of 1 no. detached 5 bedroom dwellinghouse, a detached double garage, access and landscaping.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site extends to about 0.2 ha and is a rotated 'L' shaped section of the very large rear garden of the host property, West End House. This is one of three large homes and gardens sited to the east of Mortimer Lane west of which lies the more intensively built part of the small village of West End Green. Given its shape and disposition the proposed plot has a frontage to Green Lane which lies at right angles to Mortimer Lane. Agricultural fields lie eastwards and southwards and land locally is generally level offering a range of long distance views. The proposal is as described above with access off Green Lane.
 4. The Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan 2011-2029 (LP) includes Policies EM1 and EM10 which are relevant to this case. Taken together and amongst other matters these policies seek to ensure that proposals are aesthetically attractive and sympathetic to the character and visual quality of an area whilst respecting and not being detrimental to the character or visual amenity of the local landscape, the local environment, or the streetscene.
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5. With the exception of the corner property, Green Lane could be said to be appropriately named for a long stretch starting at Morlands, past the proposed plot, and on eastwards. It has the qualities of narrow hedge edged lane sitting comfortably in rural countryside. The garden area set aside for the proposed dwelling, because of its nature and scale, fits into and forms a direct part of this rural scene from most angles. Including once one has passed Morlands going east. The garden makes an important and positive contribution to the landscape setting of the more built-up part of very modest West End Green. Contrary to the Appellants' view a, or this, garden does not necessarily form a natural boundary to a settlement. The grain of this settlement would suggest to me Morlands is a reasonable stop to built form protruding eastwards along Green Lane. Open views are important even if there is a mix of garden and agricultural land.
6. Within this context the appeal proposal with its access works involving some loss of cob nut bushes, substantial domestic built form, forward sizeable suburban style garaging, solar panels, and hardstanding as well as inevitable residential and garden paraphernalia would be alien in character and unduly detrimental in aesthetic terms. In my opinion landscape works would not sufficiently mitigate these impacts. This scheme would not satisfactorily integrate into its surrounds and would literally protrude on the scenic quality of the area.
7. Given the above I conclude that the scheme would conflict with LP Policies EM1 and EM10. I would add that both EM1 and EM10 are reflective of the policy stance taken in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

Other matters

8. The Appellants and the Council recite at length their views on the matter of housing land supply (HLS), not least given the 5 to 4-year applicable 'rule change' to the Framework in December 2023. The Council argues the 4-year requirement is met; the Appellant raises strongly held doubts. This is set in the context of whether spatial strategy, settlement boundary and countryside development plan policies (most specifically LP Policies SS1 and SS6) should apply or are out of date and the question of whether the well-rehearsed 'tilted balance' should engage.
9. For my part I have assessed the appeal scheme having regard to LP Policies EM1 and EM10 which in any HLS scenario remain in play. I do not have sufficient information to assess in precise detail present HLS within the Borough. However, if I considered a proposition that the 4-year HLS is not met then the question would be whether the implications of this would outweigh my adverse findings on the character and appearance issue.
10. I see some economic gain during construction and from an additional family in situ but in reality, this would be nominal. The property would provide the social benefit of another household in the locality and of a further home to meet supply in the Borough, albeit numerically any gain would be minimal and there is little evidence that a dwelling here would meet local needs. I deal with a key part of the environmental front above and draw negative conclusions and any ecological gains would be extremely modest. I am not persuaded that new landscape proposed or able to be conditioned would overcome character and

appearance issues. From my perspective the dwelling would not align with the Framework's aim to achieve sustainable patterns of growth

11. Overall, I conclude that the scheme would not represent sustainable development in accord with the purpose of the planning system and the central thrust of the Framework. The adverse impacts on the environment as outlined above would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the economic, social and other benefits including the contribution which would be made to housing land supply whilst the appeal scheme would not accord with the development plan policies which I cite in paragraph 4 above.
12. I have carefully considered the range of planning decisions which have been cited by the Appellants. Some I would certainly not choose to use as a good design benchmark and, anyway, for reasons of variations in locations, proposed development form, policy context, or other planning considerations I do not find any to be directly comparable or grounds for a precedent-type argument. In any event I must assess the case before me on its own merits.
13. I am aware of the Officers' recommendation on this scheme and it must have been disappointing for the Appellants when it came to the Committee decision. I do feel however, that it was reached reasonably and, in this instance, I find it appropriate to align with Members. I do recognise that the Appellants have sought to work with the Council with the aim of overcoming certain potential issues. I note the elevational design change seeking to take cues from the adjoining property. I would agree with the Appellants, and the Council, that there would be a clean bill of health on a number of technical and environmental detailed matters including some specific concerns raised by third parties. However, none of this individually or collectively outweighs the concerns I have over the main issue above.

Overall conclusion

14. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal proposal would have unacceptable effects on the character and appearance of the area. Accordingly, the appeal is dismissed.

D Cramond
INSPECTOR