



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/23/3333020

Land Adjacent The Old Hall, Popham Lane, North Waltham, Hampshire RG25 2BD

- 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 Kevin Casey against the decision of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 22/02432/FUL, dated 30 August 2022, was refused by notice dated 11 August 2023.
 - The development proposed is the erection of 1 no. dwellinghouse with new access from Popham Lane together with car parking and hard and soft 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 0.24 ha and is a small rectangular field or paddock with hedgerow surrounds. It rises slightly to the south east and is somewhat elevated from Popham Lane which runs along its north eastern side. A dwelling, the host property, and one of a small fragmented scatter of buildings, lies to the north west of the site. Beyond this there is undeveloped land and further sporadic dwellings before development begins to cluster in the built-up part of North Waltham. The proposal is as described above and is in the form of a chalet bungalow.
 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. Along the stretch of the appeal site Popham Lane is a characteristic and attractive narrow bucolic country lane with banks and hedges. Notwithstanding the occasional building, the lane around here, and the undeveloped land abutting it, give an undoubted sense of open countryside and a pleasing rural appearance. The locality, including the appeal site, makes an important and positive contribution to the landscape setting of the built-up part of North Waltham from which it is both visually and geographically removed.
6. Within this context the appeal proposal with its hedge and bank-impinging access works and splays, unremarkable domestic built form, and hardstanding as well as inevitable residential and garden paraphernalia would patently be alien in character and unduly detrimental in aesthetic terms. In my opinion the proposed landscape works would not sufficiently mitigate these impacts. This scheme would not satisfactorily integrate into its surrounds.
7. Given the above I conclude that the scheme would conflict with LP Policies EM1 and EM10. It would also run contrary to relevant objectives within the Council's Landscape, Biodiversity and Trees Supplementary Planning Document (2018) albeit I recognise that this document cannot be expected to cover every detailed eventuality. 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 Appellant 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 the dwelling would accord 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 Appellant. 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 do recognise that the Appellant has sought to work with the Council with the aim of overcoming certain potential issues. I would agree with the Appellant, 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. This also applies to the previous appeal (ref APP/H1705/W/20/3265765) relating to this site; I recognise that certain, but not all, negativities within that decision have been satisfactorily resolved. 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