



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 April 2024

by E Pickernell BSc MSC MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6 June 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/W/23/3328743

Land off Baughurst Road, Stoney Heath, Baughurst, Hampshire RG26 5SW

- 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 B Champion Contractors against the decision of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 22/02481/FUL.
 - The development proposed is the erection of two pairs semi-detached houses, amended existing access and landscaping.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Since the determination of the application the Government published a revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) in December 2023. The parties have had the opportunity to comment on the relevance of the revised Framework to the appeal and I have taken these submissions into account in my decision.
3. The site address was incomplete on the application form, so I have used that given on the decision notice and appeal form in the banner heading above.
4. The appellant submitted a new plan and documents with the appeal comprising a drawing entitled Landscape Concept Proposals (Drawing No: BEC01388-10), a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and accompanying written representation. No amendments are proposed to the scheme and therefore I am satisfied that no party would be prejudiced by my taking the plan and documents into account.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, including the setting of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.

Reasons

6. The appeal site comprises a parcel of land in the northwest corner of a large field, adjacent to a semi-detached pair of dwellings. The site is relatively flat and is adjacent to Baughurst Road. To the north the boundary of the site is defined by a row of trees and vegetation, adjacent to a bridleway. For the purposes of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan (2011 to 2029) (Adopted May 2016) (LP) the site is in the open countryside.

7. The site is located within the North Sherborne landscape character area which is characterised by a patchwork of mixed farmland and woodland with low density, scattered development. The appeal site is part of a large open field, beyond which lies an area of woodland and as such the site and the area, are consistent with this character.
8. The site lies within the setting of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (NL). The undeveloped nature of the appeal site and the mature landscaping along its north and western boundaries contribute positively to the landscape and the character and appearance of the area. Para 182 of the Framework states that in such locations development should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.
9. I acknowledge the character of the area is influenced by existing dwellings and farms. However, despite the presence of sporadic development nearby the character of the area is predominantly rural and this is reinforced by large gaps between the pockets of development which exist.
10. The proposed dwellings would be arranged across the site, fronting Baughurst Road. Although the properties would be three-bedroom dwellings, the footprints would be generous and would result in a relatively modest gap between the two pairs.
11. From some vantage points views of the dwellings would be filtered through trees and in long views of the site, interceding landscape features and proposed planting would lessen the visibility of the proposal. However, when viewed from Baughurst Road and the adjacent bridleway the presence and extent of these dwellings would be readily apparent. Consequently, the development would result in the erosion of the open rural character of the area and the substantial loss of the gap between the adjacent properties to the south and Moyglare Farm to the north.
12. The dwellings would be set back further from the lane than those adjacent and a shared driveway, parking and turning areas would be provided to the front of each dwelling. This would result in the introduction of a considerable amount of hardstanding which would appear harsh and incongruous in this rural context, even if the proposed landscaping scheme were to be implemented.
13. In addition to the driveways the proposed dwellings would benefit from large rear garden areas. These would be likely to attract significant amounts of domestic paraphernalia associated with the proposed domestic use of the site, including play equipment, furniture, and garden sheds. This would be in addition to any domestic paraphernalia associated with other dwellings nearby. As such, this would further suburbanise the area, exacerbating the harm to the character and appearance of the area.
14. Consequently, the proposal would have a significantly urbanising effect which would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. Furthermore, it would result in harm to the NL through harmful development within its setting. The proposal therefore conflicts with Policy EM1 of the LP and the Framework which seek to ensure that development is sympathetic to the character of the area and respects the landscape.

Other Matters

15. The Council published a draft local plan under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 on January 2024. The Plan contains housing allocations and a policies map. The Council can demonstrate a housing land supply in excess of 4 years and therefore, as a result of the provisions of paragraphs 77 and 226 of the revised Framework paragraph 11d) of the Framework is not engaged.
16. The appellant contends that the proposal should be considered under Policy SS6(e) of the LP. This allows for small scale (four dwellings or fewer) residential properties of a scale and type that meet a locally agreed need provided a number of criteria are fulfilled. No substantive evidence has been provided which demonstrates a locally agreed need. As set out above, the Council is no longer required to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply. In any event the follow-on criteria of Policy SS6(e) include a requirement that development respects the qualities of the local landscape and is sympathetic to its character and visual quality. As set out above I do not find this to be the case with regard to the proposals.
17. I acknowledge that the proposal would give rise to certain benefits including the provision of green infrastructure including new hedging, planting and a pond which would result in Biodiversity Net Gain in excess of that required by local policy. It would also result in the provision of 4 no. 3 bedroom properties which would widen the availability and choice of homes locally and facilitate working from home for future residents. The introduction of new residents to the area would support local community facilities and boost the local economy. Overall, I attach moderate weight to these benefits.
18. I attach little weight to the energy efficiency of the proposed dwellings, given that it would accord with national Building Regulations.
19. However, I attach great weight to the harmful effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, including the setting of the NL. Therefore, the benefits of the scheme do not outweigh the harm that I have identified.

Conclusion

20. The proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole and there are no other considerations, including the Framework which outweigh this finding.
21. Consequently, for the reasons given the appeal is dismissed.

E Pickernell

INSPECTOR