



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 January 2025

by **Hannah Guest BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22nd January 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/W/24/3344406

Site Adjacent to Summerfield, Hatt Common, East Woodhay, RG20 0NH

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant technical details consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr M Taylor against the decision of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00321/TDC.
 - The development proposed is described as “a Technical Detailed Consent (TDC) for the erection of a single dwelling house, associated outbuildings, access and landscaping following the approval of Permission in Principle (PiP) application LPA REF: 21/01271/PIP.”
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The proposal is for Technical Details Consent following the grant of Permission in Principle. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The permission in principle has established that the location, land use, and amount of development is suitable in principle. The Technical Details Consent that is the subject of this appeal can consider the remaining detailed matters but cannot reopen what has been agreed at the Permission in Principle stage. I have determined this appeal on that basis.
3. As part of the appeal, the appellant has submitted amended plans, which seek to address the Council's reason for refusal by providing alternative options for the external finish to the proposed dwelling. These options also include removing the photovoltaic panels from the front and eastern roof slopes.
4. While these proposed amendments would not fundamentally change the proposal, accepting amendments such as these could deprive parties of the opportunity to comment. In this regard, I am aware that interested parties to the application and appeal, including the Parish Council, have raised concerns regarding the choice of external materials and the number of photovoltaic panels proposed. Thus, taking the amended plans into account could prejudice their interests.
5. The appeal process should not be used to evolve a scheme and does not provide the opportunity to present multiple options to address reasons for refusal. Any amendments that are considered to overcome the Council's reasons for refusal should be made as part of a fresh planning application. I shall therefore determine the appeal on the basis of the plans which were before the Council when it made its decision.

Main Issue

6. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

7. The appeal site is located at one end of a row of four large houses, positioned opposite a garden centre and surrounded mostly by open fields. The houses are all set back a similar distance from the highway. Their generous plots, particularly the front boundaries, are bordered by mature tall trees, hedges, and bushes. This boundary vegetation reflects the roadside hedges and nearby pockets of woodland, helping the properties to blend into the surrounding countryside.
8. The houses vary in their overall scale and massing, as well as their styles, features, details, and materials. I saw on my visit that the overall scale of the houses reduces from Conifers, which is in some parts 3-storeys, to Penrice, which is 2-storey, to Summerfield, which is part 2-storey and part single storey. This reduction in scale allows for a sympathetic and comfortable transition to the adjacent open countryside.
9. Overall, there is a spacious, rural, and verdant character. Visual interest is provided by the diversity of the houses, which integrate well with their surroundings and respect their rural location and the adjacent open countryside.
10. The proposed dwelling would be large. Although it would be a similar width and height to the neighbouring house, Summerfield, it would have a greater depth and the whole structure would be 2-storey. Therefore, its scale and massing would be greater than Summerfield. Overall, it would be the widest two or more storey dwelling in the row of houses. Given this, while it would sit comfortably within its plot, broadly in line with the other houses, and with sufficient separation between it and its neighbour to retain a sense of spaciousness, it would be an obtrusive addition to the street scene.
11. Notwithstanding this, the proposed dwelling would not be as prominent in long views taken from further east along Ball Hill and Tile Barn Row. This is due to intervening roadside hedges and other existing landscaping. Also, because the neighbouring houses, Summerfield, Penrice and Conifers, would provide a backdrop of built form, which combined would be similar in scale and mass to the proposed dwelling.
12. Nevertheless, the scale and massing of the proposed dwelling would be evident in shorter views from Ball Hill. The tallest and deepest part of the proposed dwelling would be positioned adjacent to the open countryside. It would therefore not address the adjacent open countryside in the same positive way that Summerfield does by reducing its scale. It would be much more conspicuous in these shorter views and would create an abrupt and unsympathetic transition to the open countryside. This would adversely alter the context of the built environment, contrary to the advice set out at Guideline 45 of the Parish of East Woodhay Village Design Statement for Woolton Hill and the Hamlets (2005) (Village Design Statement). Accordingly, the proposal dwelling, by virtue of its scale and massing, would significantly harm the character and appearance of the area.

13. This harm would be moderated to a degree by the existing and proposed landscaping, which over time would partly screen and soften the proposed dwelling during the spring and summer months. However, the proposed dwelling would be more noticeable during the winter. I am also mindful that landscaping should be used to integrate a development with its surroundings and not to screen a development that would otherwise be unacceptable.
14. The pattern of fenestration, particularly on the front elevation of the proposed dwelling, which would comprise of reasonably small windows, takes account of the advice set out at Guideline 62 of the Village Design Statement. I saw on my visit that the nearby house, Wimbold Lodge, has reasonably large horizontal voids between the first-floor windows, and this characteristic is supported by some of the images used in the Village Design Statement.
15. Nonetheless, the pattern of fenestration for the proposed dwelling also includes large vertical voids between the ground floor and first-floor windows, which increases the overall void to window ratio. This is not in-keeping with the neighbouring houses, which have a vertical emphasis to their fenestration, and the significant void to window ratio would appear odd and unattractive. Furthermore, the timber cladding would highlight the horizontal emphasis of the fenestration, which would draw attention to the width and depth of the proposed dwelling, visually exacerbating its overall massing and accentuating its bulk. This would be further exacerbated by the shallow roof pitch, despite it helping to reduce the visual bulk of the proposed dwelling by keeping the ridge level low.
16. The inclusion of a vertical window next to the front door, although not a characteristic of the immediate area, is not an uncommon arrangement generally. In my view, it would not result in the dwelling appearing as a public building rather than a private dwelling. However, it is the only window on the front elevation with a vertical emphasis and would not sit comfortably with the pattern of fenestration proposed for this elevation.
17. While the proposed materials would be in keeping with those used on Summerfield, the proportions and location of those materials lack coherence and as a result appear disjointed. The proposed dwelling would also incorporate a significant number of photovoltaic panels on its roof space, which are not a common characteristic in the area. The exact design of these panels could be secured by condition to ensure a high quality, integrated finish. However, the sheer number of panels would make the proposed dwelling even more obtrusive.
18. The appellant considers that the exact materials, their proportions, and location could be secured by condition, as could a reduction in the number of photovoltaic panels. Nonetheless, whether or not conditions could be used to secure an appropriate palette and placement of materials and a reduction in photovoltaic panels, this would only moderate the harm arising from the scale and massing of the proposed dwelling to a limited degree and would not fully address it.
19. For the reasons above, the proposal would result in moderate harm to the character and appearance of the area. It would conflict with Policy EM10 of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan (2011 to 2029) (2016) and Policy HO1 of the East Woodhay Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2029. These policies seek to ensure that all development proposals positively contribute to the locally distinct rural character of the area, as well as the sense of place and the existing street-scene.

20. Notwithstanding the above, there is nothing before me to suggest that this style of dwelling could not integrate well with its surroundings or respect a rural location and the open countryside in the same way that the existing houses do. Nor that the proposed materials would not be of a high quality.

Other Matters

21. The proposed dwelling would have an energy efficient design, which would maximise solar gain and rainwater recycling, as well as use renewable energy sources. This would support the transition to net zero and weighs in favour of the proposal. Nevertheless, while this would be a meaningful benefit, there is nothing before me to suggest that the proposed efficiency measures could not be achieved as part of a dwelling with a less harmful design. As a result, I afford it limited weight in my decision. This would not outweigh the moderate harm I have found to the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

22. The proposal would conflict with the development plan read as a whole. Having had regard to all relevant material considerations, it has not been demonstrated that there are any of sufficient weight to indicate a decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with it. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

Hannah Guest

INSPECTOR