



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 March 2025

by J Heppell BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 4 April 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/L1765/W/24/3352712

Crowhurst Kennels, Sutton Wood Lane, Bighton, Hampshire, SO24 9SG

- 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 & Mrs Richard & Pat Bacon against the decision of Winchester City Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00163/FUL.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of 3 economically redundant kennels buildings and erection of a replacement dwelling, creation of new access, parking and landscaping works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this appeal is whether the appeal site would be a suitable location for the proposed development, having regard to local and national policy.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a parcel of land which forms part of a small cluster of dwellings including the host property known as Woodlands. To the rear of the host dwelling there are a number of single storey redundant kennels which are flanked to the side and rear by woodland and open fields on the opposite side of Sutton Wood Lane.
4. The proposal for a new dwelling would be located beyond any recognised settlement boundary, and therefore, for planning purposes, in the countryside. As such, the main parties agree that the Winchester District Local Plan Part 2 Development Management and Site Allocations (LPP2) is clear that new development in the countryside is only acceptable if it would support an existing agricultural or forestry activity, or other exceptional circumstances such as affordable housing provision to meet demonstrable local needs.
5. The appellants argue that the site is previously developed land; however, policy DS1 of the Winchester District Local Plan Part 1 Joint Core Strategy (LPP1) prioritises the use of previously developed land only in accessible locations. The journeys associated with the proposed dwelling would be similar to those of surrounding dwellings, requiring future occupiers to walk along un-paved roads on narrow country lanes subject to the national speed limit, in order to reach facilities located in Ropley, and bus stops in Ropley Dean which serve higher order centres in Alton and Winchester. The fact that the appellants' surveys confirm that the road is lightly trafficked and that average speeds in the vicinity of the appeal site are below 30mph does not alter this conclusion. Consequently, I am not

persuaded that the appeal site is accessibly located, and therefore the question of whether the site constitutes previously developed land does not arise.

6. Nonetheless, in support of their case the appellants contend that the appeal site does not possess a typically countryside character and that the proposed dwelling would improve its appearance. The kennels have a low visual profile, and their appearance, whilst utilitarian, is not notably at odds with their surroundings. By contrast, the proposed bungalow would have a substantial footprint and require the creation of a vehicular access, paved forecourt, and detached garage.
7. Sustainable construction is cited as a benefit of the proposal, with the scheme supported by a full preliminary Passivhaus assessment. The scheme would deliver limited economic benefits during the construction phase, and increased local spend and council tax revenue from future residents. The appellants' desire to continue to live at this location and improve the site is noted. However, none of these benefits substantially outweigh the harm to the countryside which I have identified.
8. I have also been referred to a number of environmental advantages of a dwelling over the former kennels, relating to ecology, ancient semi-natural woodland, nitrates, noise, traffic movements and general disturbance. However, the appellants have confirmed that the kennel use ceased for viability reasons and that a reinstatement of the use would require new development, and there is no indication that a resumption of the kennel use is a realistic possibility. It follows that many of the benefits which accrue from the cessation of the kennel use have already occurred and are not dependent on the grant of planning permission for a dwelling. Benefits which the proposal would offer directly, such as enhanced landscaping, habitat creation and a reduced impact on ancient semi-natural woodland, are of moderate scope.
9. However, compliance with a range of other policies as outlined by the appellants does not overcome the fact that the proposal does not fall within one of the acceptable categories of development in the countryside. The appellants haven't suggested otherwise or provided evidence to the contrary, and there are no exceptional circumstances to persuade me otherwise. Accordingly, the proposal would be contrary to policies DS1 and MTRA 4 of the LPP1 and policy DM1 of the LPP2, which together limit development to that which is appropriate to a countryside location.

Other Matters

10. I have been supplied with the details of a recent planning permission at Mount Pleasant, Brighton (Ref 24/00939/FUL) for a pair of bungalows to replace an existing dwelling. That site is situated at the end of a continuously developed frontage within the settlement of Brighton, and therefore falls to be judged under a different policy context to the appeal site. As such, the decision does not indicate unqualified policy support for new dwellings in the countryside.
11. My attention has been drawn to a number of other nearby planning permissions for dwellings in the countryside.¹ I have not been provided with full details of these schemes, but I note that three are for replacement dwellings and one is for a new dwelling by subdivision, and consequently the policy implications are not the same as they are for this appeal.

¹ LPA Ref Nos 22/01333/FUL (Cartref), 22/01310/FUL (Hydaway), 20/02399/FUL (Gaywood) and 22/00999/FUL (Rural Hill).

12. The appellants have referred to the support offered by the National Planning Policy Framework for new homes in the countryside which re-use redundant or disused buildings and which enhance their immediate setting, but the proposal cannot benefit from the support of a policy which specifically relates to the reuse of redundant buildings.
13. I note that the National Planning Policy Framework advocates meeting the housing needs of different groups in society, including those wishing to commission or build their own homes, and highlights the importance of small and medium sized sites in meeting the housing requirement of an area. However, these factors do not outweigh the concerns I have identified about the impact of the proposals on the countryside. I note the level of local support for the proposals, including that of the Parish Council, but these benefits do not outweigh my concerns as set out above.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

J Heppell

INSPECTOR