



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 May 2025

by L C Hughes BA (Hons) MTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/K0425/W/24/3354530

Ivy Farm, Lower Icknield Way, Longwick, Buckinghamshire HP27 9RZ

- 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. Christopher and Jeremy Wise against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/06482/FUL.
 - The development proposed is construction of 3 x 3-bed detached chalet bungalows, and creation of associated access from Lower Icknield Way.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Applications for costs

2. An application of costs was made by Buckinghamshire Council against Mr. Christopher and Jeremy Wise. That application is the subject of a separate decision.

Preliminary Matters

3. The Council's decision notice includes four reasons for refusal. The third reason for refusal states that the appeal site is situated in an unsustainable location where residents of the proposed development would be likely to be reliant on the use of the private car, contrary to the principles of sustainable development. During the appeal process the appellants submitted a signed Unilateral Undertaking relating to sustainable transport to address this reason for refusal. I shall return to this below.
4. The Council has also confirmed that in light of comments received by the Lead Local Flood Authority following the submission by the appellants of a Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Management Report, the fourth reason for refusal relating to flood risk has been overcome. I therefore do not address this matter in the reasoning below.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are:
 - whether the appeal site is an appropriate location for housing, having regard to the Council's spatial strategy;
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; and

- whether the proposal would make acceptable provision for sustainable transport.

Reasons

Location

6. The appeal site is located on a field between stables adjacent to Ivy Farm and a dwelling, Meadowbrook House, along Lower Icknield Way. The site is located behind a mature roadside hedgerow. On the opposite side of the road are residential properties. Generally, Lower Icknield Way serves as a physical and visual boundary which separates the main built development of the village of Longwick from the more rural character of the appeal site and adjoining fields. There is further residential development adjacent to Ivy Farm, along with a petrol station and roundabout, which gives this part of Lower Icknield Way a less rural character than the appeal site.
7. The nearby town of Princes Risborough is due to expand. Policy PR4 of the Wycombe District Local Plan 2019 (LP) states that within the main expansion area there is a requirement for a green gap between development and Longwick. The supporting text highlights the requirement for a green buffer to be retained south of Lower Icknield Way as open countryside, to establish a clear green edge to the expansion area and to function as a separation between the main expansion area and the village of Longwick, so preventing the coalescence of the two settlements.
8. The LP defines a settlement boundary and strategic buffer for Princes Risborough. Policy PR5 of the LP requires built development related to the main expansion of the town to be contained within the settlement boundary. LP Policy RUR5 states that development proposals will not be permitted which would encroach on the strategic buffer. LP Policy DM32 states that development must not, individually or cumulatively, result in the actual or perceived coalescence of settlements.
9. Policy A3 of the Longwick-cum-Ilmer Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan 2018 (NP) seeks to retain a rural green gap (a rural identity buffer) between Longwick and Princes Risborough to achieve adequate separation between the two settlements in the context of future growth.
10. The appeal site is located outside the defined settlement boundary for Princes Risborough and within the buffer identified in the LP and NP.
11. However, the supporting text of LP Policy PR5 explains that while the purpose of the strategic buffer is to protect the open and undeveloped character of the area within it, it is not intended that it should operate as an absolute restriction on all development proposals. It indicates that certain small-scale development may be acceptable so long as it is not detrimental to the character, role, and function of the buffer area. Small scale development includes infill between existing buildings.
12. Infill development is not defined in either the LP Policy nor the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and is essentially a question of fact and planning judgement having regard, for example, to the nature and size of the development itself, the location of the application site and its relationship to other, existing development adjoining and adjacent to it.
13. The frontage of the appeal site is wide, and the appeal site provides a generous gap in built form. There is built development either side of the appeal site, but the

verdant nature of the site and its frontage, consisting of mature hedgerows and trees with no footpath, forms a definite visual break between the stables and Meadowbrook House. Meadowbrook House is a single dwelling located adjacent to open fields. The gap in built form contributes positively to the rural character and appearance of the surrounding area, and reinforces Lower Icknield Way as a visual and physical boundary to Longwick. In my judgement the appeal site does not form part of an obvious gap in development that would be infilled.

14. The scheme is for three dwellings. Whilst I consider this to be relatively small scale, particularly in relation to many housing schemes, the supporting text of LP Policy PR5 indicates that certain small scale development may be acceptable if not detrimental to the character, role, and function of the buffer area.
15. The proposed development would introduce built development within the strategic buffer. This would undermine the role of the buffer, which is to prevent the coalescence of settlements. By introducing new housing along this section of Lower Icknield Way, the gap between development and the settlement of Longwick would be eroded, thus undermining Longwick's separate identity. The function of the buffer in providing a green edge to the expanded town of Princes Risborough would also be undermined with the introduction of built development.
16. The proposal would fail to maintain the separation between the village of Longwick and the expanded town of Princes Risborough. It would therefore not be in an appropriate location for housing having regard to the Council's spatial strategy. The proposal would not comply with Policies PR4, PR5, RUR5 and DM32 of the LP and Policy A3 of the NP which seek to protect the rural identity of Longwick and provide a strategic buffer preventing coalescence between the settlements of Princes Risborough and Longwick.

Character and appearance

17. The proposed dwellings would be chalet style bungalows. There is no strong prevailing vernacular in the immediate locality. Rather, there is a mix of house types, size and ages with no uniform design or style of dwelling in proximity. As such, whilst they may not have the characteristics or design features of typical farmhouses or cottage style workers cottages, the proposed dwellings would not disrupt a consistent form or style of design and would not appear as incongruous or at odds with surrounding built form.
18. As chalet style bungalows, the dwellings would not have overly tall ridge heights, and the roofs of the buildings would come down to reasonably low eaves. This would help to reduce the visual impact of the buildings. Their scale and mass would be appropriate, and they would fit comfortably within their plots, maintaining a good degree of natural landscaping.
19. The proposed scheme would have only one access point to the road, to serve the three dwellings. This would appear somewhat at odds with the broad pattern of development in proximity, particularly in relation to the houses opposite the appeal site. However, I note that the newer development at Lammis Close has a similar layout, set behind thick vegetation, and the layout would reflect the general ribbon form of development in proximity. Moreover, it would allow for more of the hedgerow screening to be retained which would serve to soften the proposal's visual impact.

20. The appeal site is not designated for its landscape significance. Nevertheless, the lack of built development contributes positively to the rural character and appearance of the wider area. Notwithstanding their design and layout, the introduction of three dwellings, with associated domestic paraphernalia, would lead to a degree of urbanisation of the undeveloped field. This would be to the detriment of its character and appearance.
21. The aforementioned harm would be localised. However, the proposed dwellings would nevertheless result in harm to the character and appearance of the area and in this regard the proposal would be contrary to Policies CP9, DM32 and DM35 of the LP which seek to ensure that development improves the character and quality of an area, protects and reinforces the positive key characteristics of the receiving landscape and existing settlement patterns and retains existing positive characteristics.

Sustainable Transport

22. The site is close to the village of Longwick but is separated from it by a busy road. The appeal site also has no footway, and there is no formal crossing point across the main road. Whilst there are bus services nearby, the evidence suggests that these are somewhat limited.
23. In order to address concerns relating to the sustainability of the site, the appellants have submitted a completed and certified Unilateral Undertaking (UU) under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This requires the developer to pay a sum to be utilised towards public transport prior to the commencement of development.
24. I am satisfied that the planning obligation would be effective in securing an appropriate financial contribution. Given the location of the proposed development and the likelihood of the future occupiers of the new dwellings utilising private vehicles, I am satisfied that the UU is necessary to contribute to the provision of public transport improvements. I am also satisfied that the UU is fairly and reasonably related to the scale and kind of the development.
25. In my view, the completed UU would resolve concerns relating to the provision of sustainable transport and the need to give people a real choice about how they travel. Whilst the proposal would not strictly accord with LP Policies DM21 and CP3 as regards the location of new housing within defined settlement boundaries, it would accord with Policy DM 33 of the LP which seeks to ensure that development reduces the reliance on single occupancy car trips and increases the use of sustainable transport modes.

Planning Balance

26. The Council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. Given the shortfall in housing supply, paragraph 11d) of the National Planning Policy Framework falls to be considered. Paragraph 11d) and footnote 8 require that permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole.
27. In this instance, the benefits of the proposal include the provision of three new self-build homes that would assist in meeting housing need. Although the proposal is

for only three dwellings, due to the prevailing housing shortfall, I attach moderate weight to this benefit.

28. I have concluded that there would be some harm to the character and appearance of the area. Moreover, I have found that the proposal would fail to maintain the separation between the village of Longwick and the expanded town of Princes Risborough and would be at odds with the Council's spatial strategy. It would be located within a strategic buffer, undermining the buffer's character, role and function. The proposal would also be located outside a settlement boundary, which would undermine the certainty to the public and development industry in knowing where development could occur in principle. I afford significant weight to these identified harms.
29. As a result, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, the adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

Conclusion

30. Consequently, for the reasons given, the proposed development conflicts with the development plan as a whole, and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it.
31. The appeal should therefore be dismissed.

L C Hughes

INSPECTOR