



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 May 2025

by K Reeves BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8th August 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/W/24/3354332

Thursden House, Basingstoke Road, Upton Grey, Hampshire RG25 2RE

- 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 Ms Jean Catherine Ross against the decision of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/02801/FUL.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a single dwellinghouse, together with a garage and associated access, car parking and landscaping.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The Council's third reason for refusal relates to potential ecological impacts from the development and that insufficient information had been provided in this respect. Subsequently, the appellant has submitted a Protected Species Walkover Survey and Enhancement Plan, which concludes that the habitats on-site were considered to be common and widespread and mostly of low ecological value, except for boundary native hedgerows which are priority habitat. Additionally, the report included an outline biodiversity enhancement plan.
3. The Council has confirmed that it no longer wishes to pursue the third reason for refusal. I see no reason to disagree and, subject to the imposition of planning conditions that secure the recommendations for ecological mitigation and biodiversity enhancement, Policies EM1 and EM4 of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan (2011 to 2029) (LP), insofar as they relate to nature conservation, have been satisfied.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - whether the appeal site is a suitable location for new residential development having regard to the requirements of the development plan; and
 - the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, including the effect on trees.

Reasons

Location

5. The appeal site is located on the edge of the settlement of Upton Grey with residential development along two of the site boundaries. However, while it is well related to the existing built form of the settlement, it is located outside the defined Settlement Policy Boundary (SPB). The site is therefore in countryside for the purposes of the development plan.
6. Policy SS1 of the LP sets out the spatial strategy for housing delivery in the development plan area. It generally supports development on appropriate brownfield land and within the SPBs. Residential development outside the SPBs is permitted only where it meets exception criteria set out in the other development plan policies in the plan, or it is essential for the proposal to be located in the countryside.
7. Policy SS6 of the LP lists exception criteria where residential development would be permitted outside of the SPBs. The criterion cited by the appellant as permitting the appeal proposal is criterion (e), which permits small scale residential proposals (up to four dwellings), of a scale and type to meet a locally agreed need.
8. The appeal proposal involves the construction of a single dwelling, and it is therefore below the policy threshold of a maximum of four dwellings. The policy requirement for the residential development to be small scale is therefore satisfied. However, whilst the proposal would help to address the Council's housing delivery shortfall, I have no substantive evidence before me to sufficiently demonstrate that the proposal would meet an identified and agreed local need, rather than helping to meet the general housing need across the district.
9. Upton Grey is a village that has services and facilities that include a village hall, a shop and café, a public house and a church. The relatively short distance to those services and facilities would mean that walking or cycling to them would be a potential alternative to using a private motor vehicle. However, the absence of a pavement and street lighting on the roads from the site to those services and facilities would make walking or cycling to them a less attractive option to using a vehicle. Particularly during periods of darkness or inclement weather. In terms of public transport options to larger settlements, such as Basingstoke, I understand that the bus service from the village is limited. Public transport would therefore not represent a reasonable alternative to using a private motor vehicle to access a larger array of services and facilities, such as educational establishments.
10. Even though on the periphery of contiguous residential development that forms the edge of the settlement and thus not occupying an isolated location, the site falls outside of Upton Grey's SPB. Therefore, on the basis that no individually listed provision of Policy SS6 would be met (for example, small scale residential proposals (up to four dwellings), of a scale and type to meet a locally agreed need), there is identifiable conflict with the Council's spatial strategy for delivering new residential development.
11. For these reasons, having regard to relevant provisions of the development plan, the appeal site, notwithstanding its limited accessibility credentials as outlined above, does not represent a suitable location for new residential development. Consequently, the proposal would conflict with Policies SS1 and SS6 of the LP.

Character and appearance

12. The appeal site is in the southwestern corner of an elongated field that runs adjacent to residential development that is part of the settlement. Whilst there are glimpsed views of existing development from the site, it has a largely rural character due to its undeveloped nature, the mature trees and woodland that border the field and the open views of countryside to the north of the site.
13. The distance of the proposed dwelling from the woodland and other trees would be sufficient to avoid harm to the roots of those trees. Pressure for future works to the trees to safeguard the health and safety of the occupiers of the dwelling would also be avoided. However, the detached garage and the driveway would both be significantly closer to existing trees. I acknowledge that the garage would be a lightweight structure compared to the dwelling, but insufficient information has been submitted to convince me that the garage and driveway can both be accommodated within the site while protecting existing trees.
14. Without any substantive details about construction methods to protect the roots of trees near the garage and driveway, I cannot be satisfied that such methods would be effective in preventing any deterioration of those trees. Given that I have not been convinced that there is an acceptable solution that would resolve concerns about potential harm to the trees, it would not be appropriate for these details to be approved through a planning condition.
15. As such, there is the potential for trees to be negatively impacted by the proposal and this could result in the loss of those trees. Whilst the overall potential loss would be small, this would cause some harm given the positive contribution the trees make to the landscape setting of the village.
16. The residential development bordering the site comprises single dwellings set in spacious plots, in linear patterns fronting on to a road. The proposed single dwelling would be constructed behind existing residential development and accessed via a new drive that emanates from Thursden House.
17. While the design and materials of the development would be in keeping with the local vernacular, its position within the setting of the village would have an urbanising effect and would be at odds with the character and pattern of existing residential development that borders the site. Furthermore, it would result in the partial loss of a field that makes a positive contribution to the rural character of the area and the undeveloped edge of the settlement. The proposal would therefore fail to integrate into the built form of the settlement and would appear out of place within the undeveloped setting of Upton Grey.
18. I note that there is development that is located to the west of the site, which is positioned behind a residential property. However, those buildings are not residential development and have a different character that does not appear out of place within their rural setting.
19. I also acknowledge that the site is not overtly visible from the public realm, but it is also important to note that views of the proposed development would still be easily attainable from the adjacent residential property and from within the appeal site itself. Furthermore, the verdant character of the site and the part it plays in forming a green edge to the village would be significantly impacted on by the proposed development. The construction of the proposed residential development within the

rural hinterland of the settlement would result in harm to the character and appearance of the area.

20. For these reasons, the proposal would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area, including the effect on trees. Consequently, the proposal would conflict with Policies EM1 and EM10 of the LP, insofar as they seek for development to respect the local environment and be sympathetic to the character and visual quality of the area.

Other Matter

21. The appeal site is located within the Upton Grey Conservation Area (CA). In accordance with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) I have a statutory duty under Section 72(1) to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA.
22. As the appeal site adjoins existing residential development and the proposed dwelling would be of a design, scale and material finish that would be in keeping with that existing residential development, the proposal would not undermine the built historic interest of the CA. Furthermore, whilst areas of open land do contribute to the significance of the CA, the relationship of the site to the built environment means that the loss of this area of the field to residential development would not lead to an impact that would result in the significance of the CA being materially harmed. It therefore follows that the development would preserve the character and appearance of the CA.

Planning Balance

23. It is common ground between the main parties that the Council cannot currently demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. In these circumstances, Paragraph 11(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states 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 taken as a whole.
24. The proposal would result in the provision of a single dwelling. It would facilitate the appellant downsizing from Thursden House into the appeal dwelling and allow her to stay in the area. This will principally be a private benefit to the appellant and would be of little public benefit and thus should be given limited positive planning weight. The proposal would also result in the releasing of a residential property to the market. Whilst the evidence indicates that there is a shortfall in housing delivery in the district and the Framework supports boosting housing supply, the proposal would make a limited contribution to the district's housing supply and therefore attracts moderate weight.
25. There would be a temporary economic benefit during the construction process, and there would also be associated social and economic benefits through future residents paying into the local economy and supporting the vitality of the community. Furthermore, there would be new planting and biodiversity enhancements, and the dwelling is described as water and energy efficient. Although these types of benefits are supported by the Framework, given the relatively small scale of the proposal, they are given limited weight in the planning balance.

26. Weighing against the benefits is the conclusion that the appeal site would not be a suitable location for residential development having regard to the locational strategy of the development plan and the unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area, resulting in a conflict with Policies SS1, SS6, EM1 and EM10 of the LP. The proposal may comply with certain policies contained in the development plan, but given the harm that I have identified, the proposal conflicts with the development plan when taken as a whole.
27. The aim to focus development in rural areas to villages and other settlements is set out in the development plan. This approach is consistent with the Framework, which seeks to promote a sustainable pattern of development. Additionally, the Framework sets out that development should be sympathetic to local character, including the landscape setting and add to the overall quality of the area. Recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside are also essential considerations.
28. Overall, I find that the adverse impact of the proposed development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies of the Framework as a whole.

Conclusion

29. For the reasons given above, the proposed development would conflict with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Accordingly, the appeal should be dismissed.

K Reeves

INSPECTOR