
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 September 2025

by **Lewis Condé BSc, MSc, MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/W0340/W/25/3367580

**Rosewood, Longmoor Lane, Mortimer Common, Reading, West Berkshire
RG7 3RP**

- 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 and Mrs Grover against the decision of West Berkshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00575/FUL.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing bungalow and garage and replace with a new detached custom build dwelling and triple garage.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for Costs

2. An application for the award of costs has been made by Mr and Mrs N Grover against West Berkshire District Council. This is subject to a separate decision.

Preliminary Matters

3. Since the determination of the planning application, the Council's Local Plan Review 2022-2039 has been adopted (the LPR). The appeal has therefore been determined based upon the updated development plan policies, while main parties have had an appropriate opportunity to comment on the change in policy circumstances.
4. Given the adopted LPR supersedes the Housing Sites Allocation Development Plan Document (HSADPD), Policy CP7 of the HSADPD that was cited in the Council's reason for refusal is no longer relevant to the appeal proposal.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

6. The appeal property consists of a somewhat dilapidated detached bungalow, with separate garage building, set within a substantial plot. The property is highly enclosed by mature trees and vegetation, whilst the dwelling is set back significantly from the public highway off a long private drive. As such, the existing property is visually discrete and was not appreciable from public vantage points at the time of my site visit.

7. Large, two-storey, detached dwellings lie adjacent to the appeal site, also set back from the streetscene and occupying considerable plots. Meanwhile, the nearby area contains dwellings that vary in scale and appearance but are mainly two-storeys in height.
8. Although located amongst other dwellings, towards the edge of the village of Mortimer Common, the appeal site and immediate surrounding area have a quaint, verdant and highly rural character. Additionally, from a planning policy perspective the appeal site lies in the open countryside as defined under the LPR.
9. LPR Policy DM25 allows for the replacement of an existing dwelling of permanent construction within the countryside, subject to satisfying several criteria. From my reading, each of the relevant listed criteria must be complied with for proposals to be supported by Policy DM25. This includes criteria that replacement dwellings should be proportionate in size and scale to the existing dwelling to be replaced, that the replacement dwelling should be located on the footprint of the existing building (subject to certain expressed exceptions), and that the proposal does not have an adverse impact on the character and local distinctiveness of the area.
10. Policy DM25 does not quantify what amounts to proportionate in size and scale in respect of replacement dwellings, with the supporting text stating that “*there are no rules that can be applied as to the acceptable size of a replacement dwelling. Any size increase has to be considered on the basis of the impact of a particular property in a particular location*”. It is therefore a matter of planning judgement.
11. The existing bungalow is modest in scale. The proposed dwelling, including the separate triple detached garage building, would almost double the floorspace of the existing property. Despite displaying a similar frontage width to the existing bungalow, the appeal dwelling would also be of substantially greater height and mass. The proposed triple garage would also significantly add to the scale of built form at the site. Even though some neighbouring properties are sizeable, it remains that the appeal scheme would be substantially larger than the dwelling that it would replace, as well as most dwellings nearby. I therefore do not consider the proposal to be proportionate in size or scale to the existing dwelling.
12. Given the scale of the appeal plot, the proposed dwelling could be comfortably accommodated on the site without appearing cramped. Additionally, the materiality and precise detailed design of the dwelling would not appear untoward. However, the proposal through its substantial scale and bulk would diminish the rather quaint rural character of the site. The harm to the character of the area would be modest due to the site’s highlighted context, including its lack of visual prominence. However, it remains that harm to an area’s character can occur even when development is not readily visible.
13. The replacement dwelling would be located close to the footprint of the existing dwellinghouse but would not occupy the same position within the site. Although only marginally, it would involve development creeping further into the countryside, away from the main extent of built form within the village.
14. From the submitted arboricultural evidence, the existing dwelling’s footprint is outside the root protection areas of trees to be retained on the site. The siting of the proposed new dwelling would also be more likely to be shaded by trees to be retained. As such, no robust reasons to justify the proposed dwelling’s alternative location have been presented. Based on the submitted evidence, the proposed

siting of the appeal dwelling would not provide any tangible benefit to the countryside. Additionally, there is no reason for me to believe that the environmental benefits that the scheme may deliver could not be achieved by a replacement dwelling located on the existing building's footprint.

15. Bringing the above together, the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area. Due to the context of the appeal site, the level of harm would be modest. Nonetheless, the proposal would conflict with the requirements of Policy DM25 of the LPR.

Other Matters

16. The proposal would provide socio-economic benefits associated with the delivery of the replacement dwelling. There are also likely to be environmental benefits associated with the delivery of a more modern constructed dwelling that utilises more sustainable design or renewable energy features. These benefits have not been specifically quantified, but given the proposal would result in a single replacement dwelling are likely to be limited.
17. Policy DM18 of the LPR offers support in principle to schemes that will provide a diverse mix of housing and cater for new and emerging housing models and innovative products, including self-build and custom-build products. This is in line with the Framework, which also provides support for self-build housing as it is seen as making an important contribution to the Government's agenda of increasing the supply of new housing.
18. The Council currently has a wait list on its self-build register, reflecting a need in the area. However, and notwithstanding the Council's concerns regarding whether the proposal would amount to a self/custom-build scheme, there is no appropriate mechanism before me to secure this. Moreover, even if, I was to accept that the appeal scheme amounts to a self-build or custom-build, the proposal would not add to the housing stock given that it would replace the existing dwelling on the site. As such, whilst the appeal scheme may attract some support from Policy DM18 and the Framework, it is significantly tempered due to the precise nature of the proposal.
19. Together the above matters therefore do not outweigh the identified conflict with Policy DM25 of the LPR.
20. The appellants have also expressed frustrations with the Council's approach to determining the application, particularly considering previous pre-application advice issued. The appeal scheme has though been determined on its own planning merits, whilst the appellants' procedural concerns are dealt with separately as part of my decision on the associated costs application.

Conclusion

21. For the reasons given above, the appeal scheme conflicts with the development plan, and the material considerations raised do not indicate a decision should be taken other than in accordance with it. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

Lewis Condé
INSPECTOR