



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 31 July 2025

by **O Tresise MSc MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/W0340/D/25/3365375

Oakingham House, Bere Court Road, Pangbourne, Reading RG8 8JU

- 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 J Ray against the decision of West Berkshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00123/HOUSE.
 - The proposed development is described as 'Detached ancillary leisure building with associated landscaping'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Council's Decision Notice and Officer Report quote the policies of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) and the West Berkshire District Council Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (2006-2026), which were adopted in July 2012 and in May 2017 respectively. However, these policies have been superseded by the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023 to 2041 (LPR), which was adopted during the course of the appeal process and now forms part of the statutory development plan for the area. The main parties were able to comment on policies of the LPR that would be relevant and I have based my decision on these policies rather than those which were originally quoted in the Decision Notice.
3. The appeal site is situated within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (NWDNL). Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended) (the CROW Act 2000) requires me to seek to further to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of National Landscapes.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the proposal on the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (NWDNL) with particular regard to the character and appearance of the area; and
 - whether the appeal proposal is tantamount to the creation of a separate dwelling.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

5. The appeal site includes a two-storey detached dwelling, a single storey detached building, and a tennis court situated in countryside within the NWDNL. It lies to the south of Bere Court Road, and the northwestern boundary of the site is bordered by some mature trees. The land to the south of the appeal site slopes gently, gradually revealing a valley beyond. The landscape is characterised by agricultural fields, bordered by hedgerows and scattered among clusters of mature trees, which collectively impart a sense of tranquillity and natural beauty. Several properties, like the appeal site, are present in the area, typically of considerable size and set within generous plots. These contribute to an overall sense of openness and spaciousness, reinforcing the area's rural character within the National Landscape.
6. Policy DM28 of the LPR supports extensions or alterations provided, amongst other things, that the scale of the enlargement or outbuilding is subservient to the original dwelling and conserves and enhances the character and local distinctiveness of the surrounding area. Policy SP2 of the LPR seeks conservation and enhancement of the special landscape quality of the National Landscape.
7. The main dwelling benefits from a generously sized garden, and the proposed single storey building would be sited on the area currently used as an outdoor tennis court. It would be at a lower level than the dwelling and smaller in size. However, it would be located a substantial distance from it, and this would be emphasised by the considerable length of the path between the buildings. The impression of separation would be exacerbated by its position beyond the mature hedges that define the formal part of the garden which is most closely associated with the main dwelling. Notwithstanding its scale, these factors mean that the development would be an incongruous addition that would not be read as a subservient structure associated with the dwelling.
8. Moreover, while the development may be smaller than the host dwelling, it would nevertheless be of considerable overall scale with a pitched roof design that would add significant bulk and mass. It would accordingly have a substantial physical presence which would result in a significant increase in the spread of built form and a significant reduction in openness on this part of the site.
9. Although the design incorporates traditional barn elements with a brick plinth and materials including natural oak cladding, clay tile, and timber windows, these architectural features do not outweigh the harm that I have identified. Indeed, the strong domestic appearance would exacerbate the impression of a separate dwelling rather than a subservient outbuilding to the host property.
10. There are some mature trees along Bere Court Road. Although these would offer some screening and I note that the proposed outbuilding would sit at a lower ground level, screening would not be complete so as to fully mitigate its visual impact, particularly during the winter months when foliage is reduced. Furthermore, the development's elevated position relative to the land to the south of the site mean that it would be likely to be visible as a prominent and discordant feature within the landscape.
11. As a result, I find that the proposal would have a marked urbanising effect, and it would notably diminish the rural character and visual cohesion of the area to the detriment of the landscape and scenic beauty of the NWDNL.

12. Overall, I conclude that the appeal proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area, including the landscape and scenic beauty of the NWDNL. It would conflict with Policies DM28 and SP2 of the LPR. It would also be contrary to paragraph 189 of the Framework which advises that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes.

A separate dwelling

13. Policy SP1 of the LPR seeks to focus development on settlements with existing facilities and services and restricts development in the open countryside. Policy DM1 of the LPR sets out the exceptions of residential development, which will be permitted in the countryside.
14. The appellant states that the proposed outbuilding is intended to provide leisure facilities, as the original facilities in the main dwelling were converted into kitchen/dining and family room.
15. I have given this issue considerable thought, and my balanced assessment is that the proposal would be tantamount to the creation of a separate dwelling. The proposed outbuilding would have a domestic appearance, and it would also be large enough to accommodate essential facilities that enable occupiers to meet day-to-day living needs. In addition, it would be located at a considerable distance from the main dwelling, and it would also include its own parking area and courtyard, which could be used as a private outdoor amenity space. Accordingly, the proposal would provide sufficient facilities to be tantamount to a separate dwelling.
16. The appellant indicates that there is no intention to subdivide the planning unit and suggests that a condition could be imposed to secure ancillary use of the proposed outbuilding. Given however that it appears that very limited if any physical changes would be required to enable occupation as a separate dwelling and the position of the outbuilding apart from the host dwelling, I consider that compliance monitoring and enforcement of such a condition would be onerous and impractical. I am not therefore convinced that such a condition would be appropriate in this case. Furthermore, there is no compelling evidence that the proposal would meet any of the criteria for new residential development in countryside outlined in LPR Policy DM1.
17. I conclude that the proposal, in this regard, would be tantamount to a separate dwelling. The proposed development would therefore conflict with Policies SP1 and DM1 of the LPR. These policies, amongst other things, seek to direct new housing development to settlements with existing facilities and services, and to limit new dwellings in the open countryside.

Conclusion

18. The proposal conflicts with the development plan when taken as a whole and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

O Tresise

INSPECTOR