

CHIEVELEY 18/02691/FULD Pins ref: 3222543	1 Elm Grove Cottages Down End Chieveley Newbury RG20 8TS	Conversion of the existing outbuilding to a separate one bedroom detached dwelling.	Dele. Refusal	Dismissed 18.06.2019
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Main Issues

The main issues are:-

- i) whether the proposal would represent development which would be acceptable in terms of principle and sustainability; and
- ii) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the locality.

Reasons

The outbuilding forming the basis for this appeal is at the end of the parallel-to-the-road garden of a semi-detached cottage which lies in a rural area close to an assortment of generally agricultural related buildings. The site is within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and lies well outside Chieveley which is the nearest settlement with a boundary defined by the Council. The outbuilding is a simple modest structure of rural style with a ground floor space and room in the roof and was erected following a 2005 planning permission (05/00590/HOUSE) for a garage with storage area above. The proposal is as described above and would embody an additional dormer window, use of an existing shared parking area and some garden space being reallocated from the main host property to the planned dwelling.

In terms of relevant planning policies: Core Strategy (CS) Policies ADPP1 (Spatial Strategy) and ADPP5 (North Wessex Downs AONB) seek to direct development to the most sustainable locations within the district, and conserve and enhance the special landscape qualities of the AONB. CS Policy CS1 calls for new homes to be located in accordance with the settlement hierarchy and area delivery plan policies. Policy CS14 of the CS requires new development to demonstrate high quality and sustainable design that respects and enhances the character and appearance of the area and contributes positively to local distinctiveness and sense of place. CS Policy CS19 aims to conserve and enhance landscape character and environment and ensure that new development is appropriate in terms of location, scale and design given wider context. Housing Site Allocations DPD 2006-2026 (HSA) Policy C1 sets out that there will be a presumption against new residential development outside of the settlement boundaries, subject to some prescribed exceptions.

Principle and sustainability

The site does not lie within a settlement boundary; there is no disagreement between the parties over this. On the detailed front, one must consider the prescribed exceptions in HSA Policy C1. If one were to consider that the site lay within say Down End, as a settlement with no defined boundary, then 4 infill requirements would apply. However, contrary to the case made by the Appellant the site simply does not lie within a cluster of 10 or more existing dwellings (Inspector's underlining) and thus there is no purpose in assessing the other 3 detailed criteria relating to infilling.

Outside settlement boundaries and not in a hamlet or village with no defined boundary HSA Policy C1 emphasises the presumption against new residential development with a few exceptions. Only one of these is put forward by the Appellant – conversion of a redundant building. However, to the Inspector's mind, the building is not redundant. Firstly, at the time of his visit, there was some storage of furniture evident. Furthermore no information is put

forward as to why if garaging was required for the property in 2005 it is no longer needed. Car ownership has not decreased in the round and no extra parking, garaging or significant storage provision has been provided. The separation off of the premises from the rental arrangement with the present tenant might strike one as contrived and is not a demonstration that the building is superfluous for the purposes it was built. Finally, an empty, or part empty, building is not an unequivocal sign of redundancy, a bigger picture has to be considered and a convincing case on redundancy is simply not made by the Appellant or aligned with his observations.

The Appellant suggests that the site is in a relatively sustainable location pointing in particular to the impressive range of facilities and services to be found at Chieveley. However it is a fact that these are not readily to hand and given distances, availability of public transport and the nature of the highway links it is a safe assumption that the vast majority of journeys to these facilities and services would have to be undertaken by car. The reality is that this is a rural site in the countryside and a dwelling here would not accord with the reasonable policy aim to apply a logical spatial strategy and to direct development to sustainable locations within the district with the clear focus being to settlements in accord with their hierarchy.

Given the above, the Inspector concluded that there would be unacceptable conflict with the pertinent development plan policies cited in paragraph 4 above. The scheme would not be acceptable in principle and would not be sustainably located development; these factors carry significant weight in his eyes.

Character and appearance

The site is in the countryside and AONB and it is important that landscape qualities are conserved and enhanced, that there is a positive contribution to local distinctiveness, and that that character and appearance are respected and ideally enhanced.

To the Inspector's mind, the scheme would run contrary to these objectives. There would subdivision of garden space in to two smaller elements and increased external parking. Additional domestic paraphernalia would inevitably arise with a further household on this spot.

The frontage would be altered with two residences occupying it and the planned home would be at odds visually with the traditional type of dwelling found in closest proximity.

A new dormer window would increase the scale of the property, give it a more domestic appearance and blur the intended and appropriate subordination of the outbuilding relative to the host cottage. The appearance would also increase in domesticity with the addition of other further windows, a front door, and with removal of the outside staircase. The property would change from being relatively low-key subordinate outbuilding with a rural influence and a clear ancillary purpose to a (albeit small) chalet bungalow out of place in the countryside.

The scheme would unduly impinge upon the landscape qualities and character of the area and not accord with the objectives he referred to in paragraph 9. The Inspector concluded that there would thus be conflict with the pertinent development plan policies on this matter cited in paragraph 4 above. There would be environmental harm to which he gave significant weight.

Other matters

Third parties query the access arrangements and the accuracy of the plans. The Inspector had to agree that the plans and certificates do not indicate the availability of unhindered vehicular access to the public highway for this scheme. Furthermore it did seem to him that the submitted plans rather mis-represent the scale and/or siting of the subject building and some of its surrounds. This all adds to his concerns over the main issues.

The Inspector understood the Appellant's wish to create a home here and appreciate that this could bring some social and minor economic benefit. He had assessed the other cases drawn to his attention but found none to be directly comparable given site circumstances, location or detail of the development. In any event, the Inspector must determine this case on its own merits. He had carefully considered all the points raised by the Appellant but these matters do not outweigh the concerns which he had in relation to the main issues identified above.

The Inspector confirmed that all relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework have been considered and the development plan policies which he cited mirror relevant objectives within that document.

Overall conclusion

For the reasons given above, the Inspector concluded that the appeal proposal would represent unacceptable development in terms of its principle and sustainability and would have an undue adverse effect on the character and appearance of the locality. Accordingly the appeal was dismissed.

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