Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 October 2025

by J Pearce MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12th November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Z3825/W/25/3370636
Roundabout Place, Common Hill, West Chiltington, West Sussex RH20 2NR

- 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 Remmus Homes against the decision of Horsham District Council.
- The application Ref is DC/24/1881.
- The development proposed is the erection of a 3No. bedroom dwelling with associated landscaping, parking and the retention of the existing access arrangements.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The West Chiltington Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan (NP) is at the examination stage. No emerging policies were referred to in the reason for refusal. In the absence of any further information, including whether there are any unresolved objections and the degree of consistency with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), the weight I can attribute to the NP is limited.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the West Chiltington Lanes Conservation Area (CA) and the effect of the proposal on the significance of the non-designated heritage asset (NDHA).

Reasons

4. The appeal site is within the West Chiltington Lanes CA, which was designated in April 2024. As required by Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 I have paid special regard to preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. Paragraph 212 of the Framework states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation, and that this is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

5. The style and design of the dwellings create a strong sense of place. Dwellings in the area were individually designed by Reginald Fairfax Wells and represent a vision of interwar development influenced by the Arts and Crafts Movement. The Wells Cottages were positioned on lanes without pavements or streetlights and are

predominantly set back from the roads. The retained hedgerows and soft planting to the frontages of properties create a verdant and spacious rural character. The Wells Cottages each comprise one of the five standard models initially conceived by Wells. Whilst the cottages have been altered, they are considered to be of local historic and architectural interest and make a positive contribution to the CA. The Wells Cottages are identified as being locally listed buildings and are therefore NDHAs.

6. The existing dwelling at Roundabout Cottage is identified as a Wells Cottage and there is no dispute that the dwelling is a NDHA. Paragraph 216 of the Framework states that a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

7. Roundabout Cottage is set back from Common Hill beyond the site and the frontage planting, restricting its visual relationship with the road. The subdivision of the land and the development of the area, including the dwelling at Roundabout Place, has eroded the spacious setting of Roundabout Cottage. This partly reflects the considerable change that has occurred within the CA where the larger plots comprising the Wells Cottages have been subdivided, and infill development has resulted in a more homogeneous, yet primarily dispersed, pattern of development. Nevertheless, given the extent of planting to the frontage boundaries of properties and the limited frontage development within Common Hill, this part of the CA largely retains a spacious, rural, sylvan streetscape character.

8. The proposal is for a detached dwelling set back within the site to the rear of the existing frontage planting. The dwelling would occupy a position between Common Hill and the existing dwellings to the rear of the site and would encroach upon the spacious frontage and would further diminish the verdant and sylvan character of this part of the CA. The considerable size of the dwelling and its position closer to the road would result in a visually intrusive development that would urbanise the site. While development in the area is arranged in a largely dispersed pattern, the presence of a substantial dwelling occupying a position forward of existing development in the area would demonstrably erode the verdant, rural character of this part of the CA.

9. The asymmetrical design and incorporation of dormer windows would partly reflect the architecture of development in the area, including the Wells Cottages. However, the angular design would jar with the softer, organic design of the Wells Cottages, including Roundabout Cottage. The contemporary design and extent of built form would add further, albeit limited, harm the appearance of the CA.

10. The level of harm identified would be partly restricted through the retention of the existing boundary planting, which would screen the development from Common Hill. A scheme of landscape planting would further soften the urbanising effect of the development on the area. Nonetheless, given the scale of the dwelling and its elevated position relative to Common Hill, the retention and addition of landscape planting would not provide meaningful screening of the development, particularly if the vegetation is not in leaf.

11. The site is to the front of the NDHA at Roundabout Cottage, which is set back from Common Hill. Although the dwelling would be positioned away from the front elevation of Roundabout Cottage, it would nonetheless have an unsympathetic relationship with the NDHA. This would be accentuated by the scale of the

proposal, which would dominate the area forward of Roundabout Cottage. The NDHA has a limited relationship with Common Hill, but the proposal would further erode the previously spacious surroundings. Consequently, the development would diminish the setting of Roundabout Cottage and would harm the significance of the NDHA.

12. The harm to the significance of the CA would be less than substantial and must therefore be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme, in accordance with paragraph 215 of the Framework. Moreover, in respect of the NDHA, paragraph 216 states that a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

13. The scheme would provide one dwelling, making a positive contribution to housing supply. This is particularly the case given the Council's acute housing supply position. The Framework explains that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area and are often built-out relatively quickly. There would also be associated social and economic benefits during the period of construction and once the dwelling is occupied. However, the contribution of one dwelling to meeting housing need in the District and the associated benefits would be limited by the scale of development proposed and would not outweigh the harm identified to the CA and the NDHA.

14. The appellant has drawn my attention to development at Ling Heath comprising a dwelling to the front of a Wells Cottage, which was allowed at appeal[1]. While the appeal proposal similarly occupies a position forward of a Wells Cottage, the dwelling at Ling Heath is of a smaller scale and its set back position partly retains the spacious, verdant character of this side of Common Hill. Moreover, the development at Ling Heath pre-dates the designation of the CA. The appellant has also referred me to development at other sites in West Chiltington, including Windways and Ragmans Cottage. Nonetheless, I have not been provided with sufficient information of these developments to allow me to make a suitable comparison with the scheme before me. In any event, each proposal should be considered on its individual merits and with appropriate regard to the development plan and any material considerations, which is what I have done in this case.

15. I conclude that the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA and would unacceptably harm the significance of the NDHA. The development therefore conflicts with Policies 32, 33 and 34 of the Horsham District Planning Framework 2015 (PF), which collectively expect proposals to complement locally distinctive characters and heritage of the district, ensure that the scale, massing and appearance of the development is of a high standard of design and layout and where relevant relates sympathetically with the built surroundings and reinforce the special character of the district's historic environment.

Planning Balance

16. The Framework does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. The proposal is not in accordance with the aforementioned policies of the PF. The proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole and should be refused unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

[1] APP/Z3825/W/17/3174615

17. The Council concedes that it is unable to demonstrate at least a five year supply of housing land that the Framework requires. The appellant's assertion that the Council can only demonstrate a one year supply of housing land has not been disputed. Paragraph 11. d) of the Framework indicates that permission should be granted unless the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed. Footnote 7 of the Framework details that this includes policies relating to designated heritage assets.

18. The proposal would make a positive contribution to housing supply with associated social and economic benefits during the period of construction and once the dwelling is occupied. This is particularly the case given the Council's acute housing supply position. Nevertheless, the contribution of one dwelling to meeting housing need and the associated benefits would be limited and would not outweigh the harm identified.

19. Given that the proposal would harm the CA, which the identified benefits would not outweigh, the application of the policies in the Framework provide a strong reason for refusing planning permission for the development proposed. When considered as a whole, the proposal does not conform with the presumption in favour of sustainable development outlined in paragraph 11 of the Framework.

Sussex North Water Supply Zone

20. The appeal site draws its water from groundwater abstraction in the Sussex North Water Supply Zone, which affects the Arun Valley Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar sites. The SPA, SAC and Ramsar sites are European sites protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the Habitats Regulations). Under the Habitats Regulations, an Appropriate Assessment is required in relation to the effect of the development on the integrity of the sites. This responsibility falls to me as competent authority in the context of this appeal.

21. Natural England's 'Position Statement for Applications within the North Sussex WSZ Interim Approach September 2021' (PS) indicates that it cannot be concluded that existing abstraction within Sussex North WSZ is not having an impact on the Arun Valley SPA, SAC and Ramsar sites and advises development within this zone must not add to this impact. However, given the harm that I have identified and that I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons, it is not necessary for me to consider this matter further and in light of the provisions of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) as it could not alter my decision.

Conclusion

22. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

J Pearce

INSPECTOR