

APPEAL DECISION REPORT

Ward: Caversham Heights

Appeal No: APP/E0345/W/21/3277933

Application Ref: 200718

Address: Pumping Station Adjacent 20 Chazey Road, Caversham, Reading,
Proposal: Demolition of the pumping station and the construction of a new dwelling

Case officer: Julie Williams

Decision level: Delegated. Refused 29 January 2021

Method: Written Representations.

Decision: Appeal dismissed

Date Determined: 9th June 2022

Inspector: LJ O'Brien BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

1. Background

1.1 The appeal site is adjacent to an area of woodland on north side of Chazey Road. The site currently houses a small, single storey, pumping station. The proposal was for the demolition of the pumping station and the construction of a new dwelling.

1.2 There were 4 reasons for refusal and these are summarized as:

- **Size of plot leading to cramped development and impact on the character of the surrounding area;**
- **Impact on the adjoining woodland;**
- **Impact on biodiversity and ecological concerns;**
- **Lack of S106 to secure contribution towards off site affordable housing.**

2. Summary of the decision

2.1 The Inspector considered the main issues to be:

- the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, including the effect on the adjacent Major Landscape Feature; and
- whether or not the proposal would maintain, protect, consolidate, extend or enhance the green network or protect the priority woodland habitat.

2.2 In respect of the Council's case that the proposal would appear cramped and out of character the Inspector agreed that in the context of other properties on Chazey Road the new dwelling would appear visually jarring and "would occupy a significant proportion of the plot and would in this context appear as a cramped addition to the street scene which would fail to assimilate well with the sense of spaciousness which characterises the area".

2.3 On the Council's concerns for the threat to the adjacent woodland the Inspector confirmed that given "the close proximity of the proposed dwelling to the woodland I consider it likely that future pressure [to fell or prune or from invasive species] could be such so as to cause undue harm to the integrity of the woodland. As such, in my view, the proposal would have an adverse effect on the integrity of the woodland."

2.4 On impact on biodiversity, the Inspector noted that the woodland is a priority habitat and a Reading Biodiversity Action Plan habitat and that a green link crosses the site. This means that the woodland is considered to be a significant ecological asset and an important part of Reading's Green Network. The Inspector considered the appellant's case but found in favour of the Council's arguments and decided that

“the cumulative effect of these considerations would, in my view, cause the degradation of the adjacent priority woodland habitat. For these reasons I consider that the proposal would not maintain, protect, consolidate, extend or enhance the green network or protect the priority woodland habitat as required by Policy EN12”.

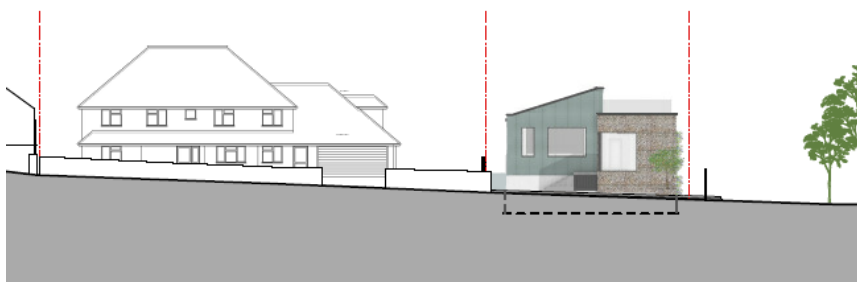
2.5 Overall, the Inspector concluded that all the Council’s reasons for refusal (apart from failure to provide for affordable housing, which was met by submission of an acceptable agreement during the appeal process) were supportable and dismissed the appeal.

3 OFFICER COMMENTS

3.3 Very pleased with the conclusions reached by the Inspector, which was that “the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area and would fail to maintain, protect, consolidate, extend or enhance the green network or protect the priority woodland habitat”.

3.4 Officers particularly welcome the reference to National Guidance when it was stated at Para 16. “The development would also fall short of the expectations of The National Planning Policy Framework which promotes the protection and enhancement of sites of biodiversity and expects development to minimise impacts on, and provide net gains, for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures”. This endorses the Council’s policy protection for Biodiversity matters.

LOCATION PLAN



Street scene

Case Officer: Julie Williams