
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 January 2016

by Jameson Bridgwater PGDipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 10 March 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/L3245/W/15/3138995

Home Farm Barns, Home Farm Lane, Leighton SY5 6RR

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Malcolm Corrie against the decision of Shropshire Council.
 - The application Ref 14/02326/OUT, dated 2 May 2014, was refused by notice dated 1 June 2015.
 - The development proposed is described as 'outline application for the redevelopment of Home Farm to provide for 5-8 residential dwellings'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary matters

2. Since the original decision was made the Shropshire Council Site Allocations and Management of Development Plan (SAMDev) was adopted by the Council on the 17 December 2015. In light of the advanced stage of its preparation, this document was referred to in the reasons for refusal along with policies from the Shropshire Core Strategy (CS). As indicated in their statement, the appellant was clearly aware of the preparation of this document and the 'Final Comments' stage gave both parties the opportunity to address any implications arising from the adoption of this document. Accordingly the SAMDev, whose policies have been found to be sound, along with the CS, form the statutory development plan for the area. I have considered the appeal on this basis.
3. The appeal application was made in outline form with all matters reserved for subsequent approval.

Main issue

4. The main issue in the appeal is whether the proposal would help deliver a sustainable pattern of development, with particular regard to location.

Reasons

5. Located on the B4380, Leighton is a small rural settlement with limited facilities and services (public house, church and village hall). Leighton has a limited bus service which links the village to Telford and Shrewsbury, key centres for employment in Shropshire. The appeal site is a part of an agricultural unit and contains a series of agricultural buildings that were in active agricultural use at the time of the site inspection. There are residential properties either side of the site.

6. Paragraph 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) indicates that isolated homes in the countryside should be avoided unless there are special circumstances. Further, it is common ground that the appeal site is not within an identified Community Hub or a Community Cluster Settlement as set out by Policy MD1 of the SAMDev. Policy CS5 of the CS and MD7a of the SAMDev, seek to strictly control new open market housing in the countryside and Green Belt. Both policies limit new housing in the open countryside to that which is needed to house essential rural workers, affordable housing to meet local needs, and for the replacement of existing dwellings. The proposal is for new build open market housing and, therefore, would not be the type of scheme that would normally be permitted under these policies.
7. The proposed development would provide some economic and social benefits. It would bring short term employment benefits during its construction phase, in addition to its residents contributing to the local economy. The proposed development would also result in a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payment, the New Homes Bonus, and payment of Council Tax. However, given the scale of the scheme, these benefits would be limited.
8. I accept that future occupiers of the proposed dwellings would to a limited degree strengthen and sustain the local community by using facilities such as the church, village hall and public house. In this respect the scheme would help to enhance the vitality of the local community. However, the contribution the development would make to the vitality of the community and support it would give to the limited local services would be very modest. I therefore attribute limited weight to any economic or social benefits in regard to sustaining the viability of the community.
9. The appellant has argued that the proposed development would result in environmental benefit by way of the re-use of a brownfield site in close proximity to existing housing and increase opportunities for biodiversity. However, the Framework is clear that land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings is excluded from this definition. I therefore attribute limited weight to any potential environmental or biodiversity enhancement.
10. I have carefully considered the proximity of the bus stop to the site. However, the frequency and travel times of the bus service limit access to employment opportunities along the route. Further, many of the services and facilities identified by the appellant are dispersed and whilst some would have a degree of accessibility by utilising the bus service, others are not conveniently served by public transport. Consequently, given the distances involved and the dispersed nature of services/facilities identified by the appellant, I find it likely that future occupants would still be highly reliant on the need to travel by private motor vehicles in order to access services, employment and facilities. This is consistent with the appellant's statement.
11. Having come to the conclusions above, it follows that the appeal site does not amount to a sustainable location. Such a conclusion is not altered by the social, environmental or economic considerations advanced by the appellant. Consequently the proposed development would be contrary to policy CS5 of the CS, Policy MD7a of the SAMDev and paragraph 55 of the Framework.

Other considerations

12. The appellant in support of their statement has referred to a number of previous appeal and Council planning decisions which pre-date the adoption of the SAMDev by the Council. However, I have limited information about their histories, but inevitably their contexts would differ to that of the scheme before me. I have therefore considered the appeal before me on its individual merits against the criteria of the Development Plan and the Framework and any other material considerations.
13. Local residents have raised a number of additional issues in relation to this appeal including highway safety, loss of local employment and drainage. However as I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons, the decision does not turn on these matters.

Conclusion

14. For the above reasons and having carefully considered all other matters raised including the representations made by local residents I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Jameson Bridgwater

INSPECTOR