
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 October 2020

by John Wilde CEng MICE

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

Decision date: 23 October 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/L3245/W/20/3244695

Site to the east of the School House, Furlong Cottage Junction to Hopton Cangeford Junction

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Wiggin against the decision of Shropshire Council.
 - The application Ref 17/04421/FUL, dated 13 September 2017, was refused by notice dated 19 December 2019.
 - The development proposed is the erection of two dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are whether or not the proposed development would be in accordance with the development plan in respect of spatial strategy and also the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is part of a slightly undulating field in the rural hamlet of Hopton Cangeford, within the Shropshire Hills area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB).
4. In development plan terms Hopton Cangeford forms part of a Community Cluster along with Stoke St Milborough, Cleestanton and Cleedownton. Policy S7.2(iii) of the Shropshire Council Site Allocations and Management of Development Plan (SAMDev) is specific to this cluster. It makes clear that new housing in the cluster is allowable in the form of infilling and conversions on small scale sites to meet local demand for housing, with an expectation to deliver ten additional dwellings in the period up to 2026. It also requires that new development is sympathetic to the character and setting of the settlements.
5. The site is exceedingly rural in nature. To the west, across a minor lane, is a property known as the Old School House. However, the areas to the east and south of the site form part of the same field, whilst to the north is a further field beyond a belt of mature vegetation. There are existing buildings (the old vicarage, now known as The Gables, and the Old Church) some way to the south-east, but these can barely be seen beyond another very mature belt of

vegetation. I acknowledge the presence of dwellings further to the south, beyond the public highway, but these are a considerable distance away.

6. To my mind, taking into account the above, the proposed development cannot, under any reasonable definition, be classified as infill. I accept that Hopton Cangeford is so sparsely developed that to find a site that could reasonably be classified as such is difficult. Conversely however, to accept too liberal a definition would be likely to be prejudicial to the outcome of future decision making, and I am obliged to assess the proposal against the adopted plan as it is written.
7. The proposed development would therefore be seen as encroachment into what I have already deemed to be a very rural landscape that is part of the AONB. Consequently, there would be conflict with policy S7.2(iii). I acknowledge that at one time there was a property (possibly a former vicarage) within the appeal site. However, this has long since disappeared and is barely discernible above ground level.
8. Policy S7.2(iii) also requires that any proposed housing should meet local demand. The appellant notes that there was strong support from the residents of Hopton Cangeford for a small number of open market houses in a Parish Plan questionnaire. However, such a contention falls a long way short of proving a local need for two four bedroom houses that would justify putting aside the identified conflict with policy. I also note that, within the Community Cluster, there have been two housing completions and that there are a further ten sites with planning permission. I accept that these haven't as yet been built out, and are not within Hopton Cangeford itself, but nonetheless their existence would seem to indicate that the current policy is working and providing the necessary housing within the Community Cluster as a whole.

Conclusion

9. Whilst the proposed development would provide limited social and economic benefits, these do not outweigh the conflict with policy and intrusion into the AONB that I have identified. Therefore, having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

John Wilde

INSPECTOR