

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 January 2015

by David Fitzsimon MRTPI

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

Decision date: 4 February 2015

Appeal Ref: APP/L3245/A/14/2228146

The Gorstings, Bings Heath, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY4 4BZ

- 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 Ms Lisa Bateman against the decision of Shropshire Council.
 - The application Ref 14/01992/OUT, dated 2 April 2014, was refused by notice dated 18 July 2014.
 - The development proposed is 4 no. bungalows.
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Procedural Matter

1. The application was made in outline with all matters reserved for subsequent consideration.

Decision

2. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in this case are whether the proposal amounts to a sustainable form of development with particular regard to its location, along with its effect on the character and appearance of the local area.

Reasons

Sustainability with regards to location

4. The appeal site comprises a small field which sits adjacent to but beyond the small hamlet of Bings Heath and within the open countryside for development plan purposes. Bings Heath has no services other than a hairdresser. A bus service operating between Market Drayton and Shrewsbury stops about a five minute walk from the site, but the walk is along unlit narrow lanes which are not pedestrian friendly and I understand that it is a limited hourly service.
 5. According to the appellant's figures, the appeal site is about 1.6km from Astley, which has some limited facilities, around 2km from the County Town of Shrewsbury and 2.5km or thereabouts from the 'Community Hub' of Shawbury. With these distances in mind, combined with the limited bus service, I find it highly likely that residents of Bings Heath broadly rely on private motor vehicles to access supermarkets, services, schools and employment.
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6. In light of the above, I conclude that the appeal site does not amount to a sustainable location, as it is highly likely that future occupiers of the proposed dwellings would be reliant on private motor vehicles to go about their daily business. As such, the proposal conflicts with one of the key principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Character and appearance

7. The cul-de-sac of bungalows which sits directly opposite the appeal site broadly marks the southern boundary of residential development within Bings Heath. The appeal site amounts to the start of the countryside beyond which has an open, rural and largely undeveloped character. Whilst the design and siting of the four bungalows proposed is not before me, the introduction of such development could only radically alter the open and undeveloped character of the land and the effect would be urbanising. This would harm local distinctiveness, contrary to policies CS5, CS6 and CS17 of the adopted Shropshire Core Strategy.

Other considerations

8. In reaching my decision, I have considered the additional concerns raised by third parties. I am satisfied that the site could be adequately served by the adjacent highway and there is no technical evidence before me to suggest that any drainage issues could not be adequately resolved.
9. There is dispute between the parties as to whether the Council is able to demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites, as required by the NPPF. I note the Council has provided an extensive statement and evidence to support its position. Even if there was a recognised shortfall, the four dwellings proposed would have a negligible impact on it. Further, as I have found that the location of the appeal site is not sustainable, the question of whether or not the development plan policies referred to by the Council in its refusal Notice are 'up to date' is largely inconsequential.
10. The proposed development would make an economic contribution during the construction phase, and future occupiers might use services in Shawbury and Shrewsbury. These benefits would, however, be quite limited.
11. I appreciate that the proposal would increase the supply of bungalows and that the dwellings would incorporate energy efficient and renewable technology. I also note that charging points for electric cars would be installed, but there can be no guarantee that occupiers would have access to such vehicles. In any event, these positive aspects of the scheme do not outweigh its failings.

Overall Conclusions

12. The proposed development would not represent a sustainable form of development both in terms of its location and also its detrimental effect on the open and rural character of its setting. The arguments advanced by the appellant in support of the scheme do not outweigh its significant failings and therefore the appeal does not succeed.

David Fitzsimon INSPECTOR