



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 April 2024

by Samuel Watson BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21 May 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/C3430/W/23/3331947

Hawkshutt Farm, Watling Street, Ivetsy Bank ST19 9QU

- 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 Mr Bernup Cambridge against the decision of South Staffordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is 22/00475/FUL.
 - The development proposed is the change of use from agricultural unit to a single 4 bed dwelling house.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the location of the appeal site is suitable for a new dwelling.

Reasons

3. Core Policy 1 of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (December 2012, the CS) sets out the spatial strategy for the area, directing residential development primarily towards identified service villages. It does also support some residential development outside of service villages where these would be for affordable housing or supporting tourism, the rural economy, or rural diversification. However, this policy relates primarily to new development whereas the proposal before me is for the conversion of an existing building. Therefore, and although I am mindful of the overall strategy with regard to protecting the attractive rural character of the countryside and seeking sustainable development, I find CS Policy EV6 to be more relevant.
4. CS Policy EV6 relates more specifically to the re-use of redundant rural buildings and supports their re-use as residential dwellings, subject to controls, where it is demonstrated that they cannot be used for economic purposes.
5. The appeal site is part of a cluster of buildings that consists of one residential dwelling and two holiday lets. It is clear that the appeal site is outside of any settlements and is within the open countryside. I am content that the appeal building, a large, brick barn, is a redundant rural building that is capable of conversion without demolition and rebuilding or substantial reconstruction.
6. I am also content that the alterations proposed would not have a detrimental impact on the building's character, appearance or setting and surroundings. Although, as the host building is in a good state of repair and is clearly

agricultural in appearance, the proposed domestication of the host building would not enhance its rural setting.

7. However, the policy is clear that prior to assessing whether a residential conversion would be acceptable consideration must first be made as to whether the host building could be used for economic development, such as tourism. No submissions have been made by the appellant as to the potential use of the building for economic purposes. Lacking any demonstrable evidence, I cannot be certain that an alternative use, such as a dwelling, would be preferable.
8. Given the appeal site's location outside of any service villages, Core Policy 1 of the CS would not support the proposal unless for specific purposes as outlined above. I note the appellant intends to use the proceeds of selling the proposed dwelling towards the existing agricultural business. Nevertheless, as no details of the agricultural business, or the way in which the funds raised would be used, have been provided I cannot be certain that the proposal would necessarily support the rural economy or its diversification.
9. Furthermore, the appeal site is some distance from Brewood, the nearest settlement. Given the nature of the highways between Brewood and the appeal site I consider it would be unsafe for pedestrians or cyclists to use them to reach their daily needs. This would be especially so for more vulnerable users or when traveling in inclement weather or the hours of darkness. Also, lacking any public transport future occupiers would be reliant on private motor vehicles to reach services, facilities, employment and education. Therefore, and although within a small cluster of buildings, I consider the appeal site to be within an isolated location.
10. Although, on a plain reading of the policies, residential development can be supported within the countryside according to certain circumstances, the details before me are not sufficient to demonstrate that the proposal would meet the requirements of the spatial strategy more generally, as set out in Core Policy 1 of the CS, or more specifically for re-use as set out under Policy EV6.
11. Therefore, in light of the above, the appeal site would not be a suitable location for a new dwelling and the proposal would conflict with CS Policies EV6, Core Policy 1 and Core Policy 3. These collectively, and amongst other matters set out the spatial strategy for the plan area, directing development to identified settlements and sustainable locations, unless exceptions are met. The proposal would also conflict with Paragraph 84 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which seeks to resist the development of isolated homes other than where they meet certain exceptions.

Other Matters

12. The appellant has suggested that the Council have changed their interpretation of the term 'sustainable development' and that there has been precedent set by previous decisions within the area. However, I have not been provided with any details or facts of these decisions. Whilst other planning and appeal decisions are capable of being material considerations, all decisions turn on their own particular circumstances based on the facts and evidence before those decision-makers or Inspectors at the time. Therefore, I cannot make any meaningful comparisons to the appeal scheme before me, which I must consider on its own merits.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

13. The Government's objective is to significantly boost the supply of housing and the proposal would provide one new dwelling. It would also lead to a small and time-limited economic benefit during the construction phase. Given the small scale of the proposal these matters would at most attract moderate weight. Whilst the proposal may not result in any character and appearance harm, this lack of harm is not a benefit in itself. I therefore attach this neutral weight in my consideration.
14. Conversely, the proposal would result in harm by way of conflicting with the Council's spatial strategy in conflict with the development plan taken as a whole. This attracts significant weight and outweighs the benefits associated with the proposed development.
15. The proposal would therefore conflict with the development plan and there are no other considerations, including the Framework, that outweigh this conflict. Therefore, for the reasons outlined above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Samuel Watson

INSPECTOR