The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 December 2016

by Olivia Spencer BA BSc DipArch RIBA

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

Decision date: 17 January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/R3325/W/16/3158619
Land between Highfields Farm and Hollyhock Cottage, Barton Road, Barton St David

- 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 G Attwell against the decision of South Somerset District Council.
- The application Ref 16/01818/OUT, dated 25 April 2016, was refused by notice dated 26 May 2016.
- The development proposed is the erection of 2no. semi-detached dwellings.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matters

2. The application that led to this appeal was made in outline with access to be considered at this stage and all other matters reserved for later consideration.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposed development would occupy an accessible location.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is former garden land between existing dwellings that lies outside the main cluster of houses in Barton St David between this village and the larger community of Keinton Mandeville. Neither village is identified in Policy SS1 of the South Somerset Local Plan (LP) 2015 as a rural centre and they are thus considered to be within the open countryside for the purposes of Local Plan Policy.

5. Barton St David has a public house, church, pre-school, sports and recreation ground and a village hall. Keinton Mandeville has other facilities including a shop and hairdresser. Both villages thus have two or more of the key services listed at paragraph 5.39 of the supporting text to LP Policy SS2: Development in Rural Settlements. However, the appeal site is located at a point on Barton Road where there is no footway or street lighting. Whilst the Highway Authority did not raise any objection to the proposal on highway safety or capacity grounds, the lack of a footway and lighting which continues for some distance towards Keinton Mandeville would make it a very unattractive route

for pedestrians. To access the facilities in Barton St David, future occupiers of the development would similarly need to walk along an unlit road for approximately 100 metres before they reached a paved footway. The public footpath which runs from close to the site towards the church is not surfaced and on the day of my visit was muddy. Neither would provide a suitable route for someone pushing a buggy, or for those walking in low light conditions or inclement weather.

6. A public bus service passes the site and would provide access to both the villages and to the towns of Wincanton and Street. However, it is not frequent and there is no evening or weekend service. As a result, and in view of the poor walking access to facilities in either village, I consider future occupiers of the development would be largely reliant on the use of private vehicles to meet their day to day needs and to access health, employment and social facilities.

7. I am not aware of the particular planning or policy circumstances of the permission granted for housing in Laurels Drive and can draw no direct comparison therefore with the proposal before me which I have considered on its own merits.

8. I conclude the proposed development would not occupy an accessible location within a rural settlement. It would not therefore accord with the requirements of LP Policy SS2 which seeks to strictly control develop in rural settlements, providing for development in villages only where it increases the sustainability of the settlement.

Planning Balance and conclusion

9. The Council acknowledges that it is unable to demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites. LP Policies SS1 and SS2 direct housing to larger settlements and restrict development in rural areas. I consider they are therefore policies for the supply of housing. In these circumstances paragraph 49 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that the policies should not be considered up to date.

10. The development would make a contribution towards meeting the housing shortfall in the District and widening the choice of homes. This is a positive benefit of the scheme. However, it would provide just 2 dwellings, and although they would be relatively small and thus more affordable than other larger houses, the weight I give to this benefit is therefore only moderate.

11. I note that the proposal received no objections from the Highway Authority, or from Landscape and Ecology consultees and that it would not result in any significant additional burden on local services. A lack of harm in these respects does not however amount a positive benefit in favour of the proposal. And whilst I note the intention of the appellant to construct the houses with a level of thermal insulation and performance in excess of Building Regulation requirements, I have no evidence of how this will be achieved.

12. Some economic benefit would arise from employment during construction and from occupiers' use of local shops and facilities. However, given the small size of the development, I give only little weight to this benefit.

13. The Framework sets out three dimensions to sustainable development that are mutually dependant: economic, social and environmental. The environmental role includes mitigating and adapting to climate change including moving to a

low carbon economy. One of the core principals of the Framework is to support the transition to a low carbon future, and the Framework promotes the use of sustainable transport. For the reasons given I consider the proposed development which would occupy a location where occupiers would be largely dependent on private vehicles would run counter to these objectives.

14. I conclude that the adverse impacts of the proposed development would therefore significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. Having regard to paragraph 14 of the Framework and LP Policy SD1 which reflects it, I conclude overall therefore that the appeal should be dismissed.

Olivia Spencer

INSPECTOR