
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 April 2017

by Debbie Moore BSc (HONS) MCD MRTPI PGDip

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

Decision date: 12 May 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/B3410/W/17/3168549

Cliff House, Dovecliff Road, Stretton, Staffordshire DE13 0DJ

- 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 Cameron Homes against the decision of East Staffordshire Borough Council.
 - The application Ref P/2016/00235, dated 9 March 2016, was refused by notice dated 17 November 2016.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing buildings and erection of 5 No dwellinghouses, landscaping and associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. Normally, the name of the person making the appeal must appear as the applicant on the planning application form. In this case, the application was made by Mr I Burns, whereas the appeal was made by Ms Emma MacDonald. However, it is clear that both applicant and appellant are representatives of Cameron Homes, and the company name is specified on both forms. I have dealt with the appeal on the basis that the appellant is Cameron Homes.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the site is suitable for residential development, having regard to its location and access to facilities and services.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located to the rear of a two-storey house, known as Cliff House, and comprises several buildings and areas of hardstanding. The appellant states that the buildings were last lawfully used as a farm shop and meat processing plant. To the east of the site lies Cliff View Business Park, containing a number of single-storey units which, I understand, are in B1 and B8 uses. There is a pair of semi-detached houses on the opposite side of the road.
 5. The appellant accepts that the Council can currently demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. Consequently, the relevant policies of the development plan are considered up-to-date and carry full weight.
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6. The site lies some distance from the settlement boundary of Rolleston on Dove. For development plan purposes it is treated as being within the open countryside where, under Policy SP2 of the Local Plan,¹ development will be permitted only in exceptional circumstances.
7. Policy SP8 of the Local Plan is a restrictive policy that seeks to prevent development outside settlement boundaries, except in certain circumstances. One such circumstance is where the development is necessary to secure a significant improvement to the landscape or the conservation of a feature of acknowledged importance.
8. The appellant asserts that the site would benefit significantly from wholesale demolition, site clearance and redevelopment. During my site visit I saw that the site was overgrown, with piles of rubbish and other debris scattered amongst the buildings. Whilst I agree that the buildings are in need of repair, I do not consider that the site is blight on the landscape, as described in the appellant's statement. The buildings on the appeal site are screened from public viewpoints by trees and shrubs, and by Cliff House itself. The buildings are visible from the neighbouring business park and the open fields to the rear, but the site is not prominent and does not stand out in the landscape as an area which necessitates significant improvement.
9. I appreciate that the built form of the development would be comparable to the existing development on the site. The removal of rubbish would be a marginal improvement and there would also be an opportunity to remove the hardstanding and strengthen the landscaping, which may have a positive impact on biodiversity. It is further suggested that the site clearance would remove any potential sources of contamination. Nevertheless, the existing buildings are not in such a poor state of repair that their replacement with a development of five houses and garaging would represent a significant improvement. Although there would be some benefits, as described above, I am not satisfied that it has been demonstrated that the proposal would meet the policy test, that the development is necessary to secure a significant improvement to the landscape. In view of this finding, I am not required to consider the proposal against the further criteria set out in Policy SP8.
10. The Council is concerned that the site is not well located with regard to access to facilities and services and, therefore, the development would be in conflict with Policy SP1 of the Local Plan. The appellant asserts that the site is only a short distance from the village and there is a safe and convenient route to local services, and links to the local and strategic highway network. I appreciate that it would be possible to access the facilities in Rolleston on Dove without using a private car. Nevertheless, given the distances involved, and the relatively limited range of facilities in the village, it is likely that future occupiers would be dependent on the private car to access work places, shops, education, health, recreation and community facilities.
11. I accept that the lawful use of the site has the ability to generate traffic. However, I have no information on the likely traffic movements associated with the lawful use and I am unable to make a comparison with the traffic movements which would be generated by the residential development.

¹ East Staffordshire Borough Council Local Plan 2012-2031, adopted October 2015

12. The Council states that the development would not satisfy paragraph 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), in particular because it would be isolated. Whilst the site is not isolated in the sense that there is other development adjoining it, there is open land separating it from the edge of the village and it is unrelated to the settlement. Consequently, it is isolated from the village and its facilities.
13. Although future occupants of the houses may support the local facilities, it is equally as likely that they would travel further afield. The development would include two and three bedroom houses but there is no evidence that this would meet an identified local housing need. Consequently, it is not evident that the residential development would enhance or maintain the vitality of the rural community.
14. The appellant advises that the Council has indicated it would support new build of small scale commercial or agricultural uses. However, the appellant argues that any such development would be constrained by the requirements of Policy SP8 of the Local Plan. I appreciate that the development would make use of previously developed land, and it appears that its lawful use is not attractive to the market at present. Nevertheless, this does not justify the development, which would be in conflict with the Council's development strategy as set out in the recently adopted Local Plan.
15. The development would make a small contribution to the local housing supply, and there would be an economic benefit during construction. However, these benefits do not outweigh the harm that would result from the development, as set out above.
16. The Council accepts that the layout and design of the development is acceptable. I note that there are no concerns in relation to highway safety, neighbour amenity or flood risk, and noise issues could be mitigated. However, these are neutral factors that do not weigh for or against the proposal.
17. To conclude, the development would be located outside of the settlement boundary and it is likely that future occupiers would be dependent on the private car for access to facilities and services. There is no evidence that the housing would meet an identified local need. The other considerations advanced by the appellant do not outweigh the harm which would result from the location of the development. Consequently, the proposal would not be sustainable development and would be in conflict with Policies SP1, SP2, SP4, SP8, SP16 and SP18 of the Local Plan which, in combination, seek to direct residential development towards the most sustainable locations, and secure an appropriate mix of dwellings to meet local need.
18. For the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

Debbie Moore

Inspector