The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Inquiry held on 5, 6, 7, 8, 12 and 13 September 2017
Site visit made on 11 September 2017

by Kevin Gleeson BA MCD MRTPI

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

Decision date: 15 November 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/H1840/W/17/3167269
Poultry Houses, Beckford, Worcestershire GL20 7AE.

- 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 Neal Dale, ECV Partnerships (Beckford) Ltd against the decision of Wychavon District Council.
- The application Ref W/16/01013/OU, registered by the Council on 28 April 2016 was refused by notice dated 16 September 2016.
- The development proposed is described as proposed demolition of existing intensive poultry unit buildings and other structures and the development of a Care Village comprising (up to) 145 assisted living and close care units (C2 use class); a core building containing domiciliary care provision, reception, treatment room, cafe/dining area, wellness suite, kitchen, administration offices, and other common/shared amenities; together with access, parking and external amenity areas.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for Costs

2. At the inquiry an application for costs was made by the appellant against Wychavon District Council (the Council). This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Preliminary Matters

3. The application was submitted in outline, with only access for determination at this stage. All other matters were reserved for future consideration. Except for the Drawings for Approval listed in Document ID21 which included a Landscape Proposals / Strategy Plan and a Parameters Plan I have treated any submitted details concerning layout, appearance, scale and landscaping as being illustrative only.

4. A Unilateral Undertaking (UU) pursuant to Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990 was discussed at the inquiry and a signed and dated UU was provided following the inquiry. This contains obligations in respect of the provision of affordable care units, the occupancy of care units and affordable care units, additional provisions relating to affordable housing, the delivery of care, access to communal facilities, the provision of a village transport service, staff transportation and highway works. I shall return to these matters later in my decision.

5. Beckford Future Group sought to present a petition in opposition to the proposed development. However, in doing so it was indicated that people who signed the petition had not necessarily been aware that their personal details would be made public. Consequently, I decided that it would not be appropriate to make the petition available to the Council, Parish Council or appellant and therefore I have not accepted it as an inquiry document.

Main Issues

6. In the light of comments made at the inquiry I have modified the main issues which I outlined at the start of the inquiry. I now present them as:

- Whether the proposed development would meet the needs of older people for extra care accommodation taking account of:
    - Whether the proposed development offers an adequate choice of sustainable transport modes to future residents, visitors and staff;
    - Whether the proposed development provides acceptable access to healthcare and other community facilities;
- Whether the scale of the proposed development is acceptable in the context of the size, social fabric and character of Beckford and the availability of infrastructure and the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, having particular regard to the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Reasons

Meeting the Needs of Older People

7. The Development Plan comprises the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) which was adopted in February 2016. The plan period extends to 2031.

8. Policy SWDP20 of the SWDP addresses housing to meet the needs of older people. Part B indicates that where housing for older people (within Class C2 of the Use Classes Order) is proposed, permission will be granted subject to three tests, two of which are applicable to the appeal scheme. The first test is whether or not there is evidence of a requirement for that type of accommodation. The reasoned justification to Policy SWDP20 indicates that specialist housing needs will be delivered primarily in Worcester and the towns but also in other sustainable locations. It also recognises that within the SWDP there is currently an under supply to address the need.

9. The Worcestershire Extra Care Housing Strategy (WECHS) identified the need for extra care housing in Wychavon as 1,118 units from 2012 to 2026 with 817 of these to be for ownership and the remainder for rent. The Council indicated that since 2012 planning permission had been granted for 419 extra care units for sale equating to approximately 51% of the requirement, thereby resulting in a shortfall of 398 units.

10. The appellant challenged the figure of 398 and indicated that the under supply was 812 units when genuine extra care and enhanced sheltered accommodation were considered. The appellant's estimate also recognised that the WECHS identified need only for persons aged over 75 and therefore,

as the need for persons in the age group 65-75 was not addressed in this figure, the total need for extra care was likely to be greater than 1,118.

11. Whilst the Council and the appellant disagreed about the scale of the unmet need it is clear that there is an evidenced requirement for extra care accommodation within the District as a whole.

12. The Council's view was that reasonable progress was being made in meeting the need which could be addressed through granting permission on windfall sites. As such it argued that it would not be necessary to rely upon land within the AONB to achieve this. The appellant's position was that there was a very substantial unmet need for specialist housing for older people and therefore it could not rely on only developing sites outside the AONB.

13. The Council also accepted that it was reasonable for the need for extra care accommodation arising in a rural area to be met in an appropriate location in the rural area. Whether or not the appellant's assessment of the scale of unmet need across the District and its consequences is correct, it is necessary to consider the need for the scheme in its proposed location.

14. The appellant estimated the need for extra care housing within a five mile radius of the appeal site based upon it being at the centre of a rural area between the towns of Evesham, Tewkesbury, Upton upon Severn and Pershore. Adopting the approach of the WECHS, the appellant initially estimated that by 2031 the need within Wychavon in wards within five miles of the site would be for 258 units of extra care. The appellant used the same basis of calculation to estimate a need for 340 units applied to those parts of Tewkesbury District within five miles resulting in an overall need of approximately 600 spaces.

15. Subsequently the appellant excluded the proportion of the population within relevant wards which was outside the five mile radius and excluded wards which more properly formed part of market towns which were within the five mile radius. According to the Council this would result in the need for Wychavon reducing to 52 units and that for Tewkesbury reducing to 49 units resulting in an overall requirement of 101 spaces. The appellant's calculation indicated the need to be 164 units, which like the Council's assessment, was based upon those aged 75 and over and therefore excludes those aged between 65 and 75 but also took into account general population growth.

16. If the Council's position that the estimate of need is for 101 units is accepted the proposal for 145 units would indicate that the demand is exceeded. If the appellant's position that there is a need for 164 units is accepted, it would indicate that the proposal for 145 units is not too large to meet the rural need.

17. However, it does not appear appropriate to me, when considering the need for a care village in Wychavon, to apply to Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire the assumptions made in the WECHS relating to Worcestershire, or the requirements of Policy SWDP20. In addition, whilst the appellant's revised assessment has reduced the numbers significantly I remain unconvinced that the demographic analysis of wards which led to the estimate of need is robust because rural locations closer to higher order settlements are more likely to be served by local towns rather than by developments in rural communities. Furthermore, the possibility arises that the proposed development would draw residents out of towns to a less accessible rural location.

18. There is evidence of general need for extra care accommodation in the District and on balance I conclude that there is evidence of need within Wychavon for the proposed development at this location, based on the fact that the appellant's assessment considers people only over 75 years. However, because it would not be appropriate to take account of any need within Tewkesbury on the same basis as that identified in Wychavon the need for the development in this location has not been demonstrated in this case.

19. In considering sites where planning permission had been granted for extra care housing my attention was drawn to a site within Wychavon where permission was granted on appeal[1] for a development including a mixture of market and *'affordable (housing with care) units'*. However, the scheme as subsequently approved has more characteristics of sheltered housing rather than extra care accommodation. In this case, although the site is within the AONB, the Council did not at the time, have a five year supply of housing land which it has now. In addition, part of the site was subsequently allocated within the SWDP for housing whilst the village within which the site is located, Broadway, is much larger than Beckford. Consequently, I see little in that decision to support the current appeal.

Whether the Proposed Development Offers Adequate Sustainable Transport

20. The initial test of Policy SWDP20 B (ii) is whether the proposed scheme has good access to public transport. Beckford is served by the 540 bus which connects Evesham and Tewkesbury and has an hourly service with the bus stop close enough to the appeal site to support the proposed use. However, there is no service after 6.00pm on weekdays and no service on Sundays.

21. The Village Facilities and Rural Transport Study, 2012 (VFRTS) which formed part of the evidence base for the SWDP, described Beckford as having a medium public transport provision. On this basis Beckford, as a Category 2 village, had a similar public transport service to many other Category 1 and Category 2 villages. Many villages and settlements did not have any categorisation in the VFRTS or any public transport. As the highway authority indicated, the bus service *'offered a good level of service for a rural bus service'* but that does not equate to good public transport when considered in the context of the settlement hierarchy as a whole and the test of Policy SWDP20 B (ii).

22. Having found that the appeal site does not have good access to public transport, Policy SWDP20 B (ii) requires consideration as to whether the scheme would provide tailored transport services to meet the needs of residents.

23. Where public transport is not a realistic choice the proposed Village Transport Scheme (VTS) is intended to provide a transport service for residents of the care village. The UU sets out that the VTS would be based on a minimum of three vehicles but the Framework Travel Plan (FTP), produced as part of the appellant's inquiry evidence, would be the means to review the provision of the service. In addition, the VTS would support a fleet of wholly electrically powered vehicles which would mitigate emissions and provide a more sustainable option than using petrol or diesel vehicles.

[1] APP/H1840/A/14/2224292

24. Travel planning would consider the potential for the use of the VTS ensuring that there was a wide variety of measures to maximise sustainable travel. The FTP would also allow for the number of vehicles in the VTS fleet to be increased where there was a demand or it was necessary to meet targets. Car sharing would also be encouraged, providing a further element of sustainable transport.

25. The UU establishes that priority for the use of the VTS would be given in the order of residents of the care village, staff, residents of Beckford village with care needs or mobility difficulties and their carers and residents of Beckford village without mobility issues accompanying residents of the care village. Remaining residents of Beckford village would be able to use the VTS at the appellant's discretion assuming that there is spare capacity.

26. Whilst there are mechanisms through the UU and FTP to compensate for the limited public transport provision through the VTS I am not convinced that the levels of car ownership by care village residents would decline significantly. The experience of the appellant elsewhere is that car ownership decreases as a village matures and that the miles driven by older people is on a downward trend. However, in my view, in the absence of any controls over car ownership, because of the relative remoteness of the site, the levels of car ownership would remain higher than for similar sized sites with the likelihood that cars would be used more than on sites which are more sustainable. Evidence from a care village at Bishopstoke Park near Eastleigh indicted that half of drivers made trips in their car on a daily basis. Most higher order shopping and services needs cannot be met in Beckford and therefore will need to be undertaken by car. It does not appear likely to me that residents will easily give up their cars even with the opportunities which the VTS would provide.

27. The highway authority accepted that sustainability could be enhanced by development which resulted in savings in distances travelled by non-sustainable modes. Accordingly, there would be considerable mileage saved if domiciliary carers no longer had to carry out home visits to the elderly population but instead those services were provided at the care village. Furthermore, there would be mileage saved by residents of the care village and potentially residents of Beckford having various services close by rather than having to travel some distance to access them. However, most of these savings in mileage would occur wherever a care village was located and therefore would not be a benefit of the scheme in its proposed location.

28. To provide the necessary pedestrian access, the scheme proposes alternative pedestrian routes from the care village into Beckford although these contain a lack of detail and make assumptions about design speed which have not been tested. It is presently unclear whether further mitigation would be required to address road safety matters although the Council and appellant have agreed a condition which could bring about access improvements and which I consider would appropriately address this matter.

29. The appellant also intends to reduce the need for staff to travel by private car. As the highway authority indicated, a distance of 2,000m is generally recognised as covering the area where people are content to make regular walking trips.

30. Whilst the quality of the walking environment will influence whether or not staff choose to walk, the provision of dedicated pedestrian access between the centre of Beckford and the care village and enhancements to the route to the Beckford Inn and Little Beckford would support walking as a travel option. However, were these improvements to be implemented, because of the likelihood that most staff would not live locally, I consider that the numbers of staff walking to work would be small.

31. The appellant's position with regard to employing staff indicates that approximately 25% could be from a five mile radius. This contrasts with the 75% of staff living within a five mile radius of Bishopstoke Park which is more sustainable location. Consequently, a similar level of locally sourced staff could be achieved from locating in a higher order settlement. The size of Beckford and its hinterland would indicate that 25% from within a five mile radius may be ambitious.

32. In spite of the flexibility of the appellant to change shift patterns, staff would not necessarily use existing bus services with confidence because of the lack of a return bus service at certain times. On Sundays, with no bus service staff would be reliant upon the VTS. However, the likelihood of staff using the VTS would be enhanced by the fact that the service would be provided at no cost to them unlike the regular bus service, assuming that there is a realistic choice between the two.

33. As main settlements are outside of the generally recognised cycle commuting distance of 5km cycling would not appear to be a realistic travel option for many staff. Cycling from Evesham or Tewkesbury would be outside of the 5km radius but the appellant argued that cycling from such towns would not be unrealistic based on the site being located on both a National Cycle Network route and a Local Cycle Route and generally cycling would be supported through the provision of cycle sheds and changing facilities. Nevertheless, the countryside location of the appeal site means that cycle routes are generally less safe and convenient than in larger settlements where there is street lighting and greater route choice or dedicated routes.

34. For visitors, the lack of a nearby train station and the limited bus services indicate to me that most trips by visitors will be by private car which would not necessarily be the situation in a location with better access to public transport.

35. The difficulties of coping with multiple trips for Beckford residents without providing additional vehicles, which in itself would reduce the sustainability benefits of the scheme, has not been fully demonstrated. Consequently I find that the VTS would not provide a significant benefit to Beckford residents irrespective of the limitations on usage.

36. These shortcomings do not address the fundamental concern about the accessibility of the site. In his rebuttal Mr Hawley referred to *'Delivering Travel Plans through the Planning Process'* which indicates through the travel plan pyramid that the foundation for good accessibility begins with identifying an appropriate location for development.

37. Consequently I find that the appeal site does not have good access to public transport and the scheme would not provide tailored transport services which met the needs of residents. The proposed development would also fail to minimise the demand for travel and offer genuinely sustainable travel choices.

Whether the Proposed Development Provides Acceptable Access to Community Facilities

38. The further requirement of Policy SWDP20 B (ii) is whether the scheme would provide good access to healthcare, shopping and other community facilities. The VFRTS informed the settlement hierarchy by assessing the sustainability of rural settlements of the SWDP in terms of accessibility to services in addition to the level of public transport provision.

39. The VFRTS showed that Beckford was fourth equal among villages in terms of access to services in 2012. Whilst some of the facilities which the study records as being present within Beckford at the time of the survey may not have existed, others are no longer present. On this basis Beckford would now be lower in the ranking but at the same time other settlements are also likely to have seen changes in their service provision. Consequently, the VFRTS needs to be treated with caution and as a snapshot in time.

40. Nevertheless, the VFRTS provides an appropriate basis on which to consider the question of accessibility to services. Since 2012 Beckford has lost its satellite GP surgery and therefore the village currently has no medical facilities. Its facilities include a church, a village shop, Beckford Stores which incorporates a Post Office and cash machine, the Beckford Inn, a range of facilities associated with the village hall and a bistro / coffee shop at Beckford Silk. Consequently with two key services, namely a shop / Post Office and village hall Beckford remains a Category 2 village.

41. Table 11 of the VFRTS ranked sustainable rural settlements in South Worcestershire based on criteria measured in terms of service and facility provision and levels of public transport provision. This shows four settlements with very high levels of sustainability and 16 settlements with high sustainability. Beckford is in neither of these categories and is ranked with a group of 52 settlements with medium levels of sustainability. A further level lists settlements with low levels of sustainability.

42. The categorisation of Beckford as having a medium level of sustainability reflected the fact that the VFRTS only took account of the sustainability of villages and therefore the conclusions about sustainability relate to rural areas. When a comparison is made with other settlements in the District, including urban areas I conclude that Beckford does not have good access to healthcare, shopping and other community facilities.

43. Having found that Beckford does not have good access to services the proposals must be considered in terms of whether there would be significant benefits to the local community arising from the scheme in its proposed location.

44. Policy SWDP20 does not specify what is meant by *'the local community'* but the appellant's suggestion that it varies according to the nature of activity and relationships seems reasonable to me. Moreover, I consider that the local community benefitting from the care village could extend further than the village of Beckford.

45. With regard to benefits, the Parish Council's position that these should be something which the community needs but does not already have seems a sensible approach.

46. The proposal would provide the opportunity for extra care for residents of the surrounding rural community. As a result family homes would be released onto the property market although not all of these would necessarily be local homes. This is unlikely to impact on Beckford to a great degree because of the wide catchment of the care village and in any event the benefit does not derive from being in its proposed location.

47. The care village would provide some basic forms of healthcare in residents' homes and for more intensive needs there would be 23 close-care units providing a level of care normally associated with a residential nursing home. Trips to higher order centres for hospital level care could be undertaken using public transport or the VTS. The time taken to reach such services from a rural location may not be greatly different from a multi-bus trip within an urban area but using the VTS would be a less sustainable means of travel.

48. The appellant proposes to reinstate the GP surgery but there is no confirmation from the surgery that they would reinstate the service notwithstanding the appellant's commitment to provide new accommodation. Moreover, the reasons why the surgery left the village were not simply because of the standard of previous accommodation. Without the provision of a GP surgery the residents of the care village would need to access existing resources in Bredon, or elsewhere, adding to vehicle journeys.

49. Whilst satellite GP surgeries may be a common feature of care villages, I recognise the reluctance of GPs to commit to them until they are built. Accordingly, it is not unreasonable to find that at this stage of the proposal there is no firm commitment and it remains only a possibility that there could be a satellite GP service as part of the care village. Nevertheless, because of the uncertainty over whether a GP service would be provided on site it would not be appropriate to accept this as a benefit.

50. With regard to local employment opportunities, the estimate of 25% of staff being recruited within a five mile radius based on the experience of other developments would indicate that approximately 13 FTE jobs would be generated locally. However, such jobs could be created in any location and therefore, taking account of the sustainability disadvantages of Beckford this is not a benefit derived from it being in its proposed location. In addition there are likely to be opportunities for local businesses to provide goods and services to the proposed care village.

51. The appellant indicated that the proposed care village would result in significant benefits to the local economy on the basis of a study of the Bishopstoke Park care village. This indicated that the mean average weekly spend per capita in local shops and facilities was over £90. It appears very unlikely that this figure could be replicated in Beckford or other local shops within the area, taking account of the Parish Council's survey which indicated that the existing average spend in local shops was approximately £17. This also indicates that local residents travel out of the village to buy most of their goods, a situation which would be likely to be replicated by residents of the care village. Overall therefore, I consider that the economic benefits of the scheme would be modest.

52. The proposed provision of function rooms, a shop and bistro/restaurant would generally provide additional choice to the provision of existing services within the village. Whilst accepting the appellant's wish to avoid competing with the

local shop there can be no guarantees that in the medium to long term the village would be able to maintain two retail outlets such that the retail offer would be greater than at present. Similarly, the provision of a library and craft room would appear to replicate what is already provided for within the village. Consequently these benefits would also be modest.

53. The provision of a swimming pool and gym as part of the proposed wellness centre, whilst aimed at the age cohort of the care village would be available to the local community as would the treatment rooms and hairdresser. There is little evidence that these services are required in the village and therefore I afford the benefits only minimal weight.

54. I also attach minimal weight to the proposed repairs and improvements to the footpath linking the centre of the village to the Beckford Inn because, whilst a benefit, the need for such improvements is not great, based on the likely number of users of this route.

55. It is possible that there would be increased patronage by care village residents of existing village facilities and community groups and potentially a new pool of volunteers. There would also be an enhanced opportunity for improvement at Vale Wildlife Centre and improved biodiversity habitat, enhanced access to wildlife and landscaped gardens. The village already provides allotments and I have no evidence that there is any unmet demand which could not be satisfied by the Parish. In the context of the village providing very good public access to the countryside through public footpaths and to the Local Nature Reserve this benefit carries little weight.

56. With regard to the appellant's claim that flood risk would be reduced and water quality enhanced as a result of the scheme I have taken account of the concerns raised by local residents. Evidence was presented of historic flooding in the village, particularly in 2007, with the concern that the proposed development would lead to further flooding but I have no evidence that this was fluvial, that it was from the Carrant Brook as a result of run-off from the appeal site or that the proposed development would exacerbate the problem.

57. Concern was also raised about how foul water would be managed using a water treatment plant and the use of reed beds. The evidence I heard from the appellant demonstrated to me that these concerns were unfounded because they did not properly reflect the proposals for the site and that the measures to manage water and discharges were appropriate.

58. The appellant's case was that there would be three areas of benefit to the community with regard to these matters. The first was that contamination associated with the former poultry farm would be removed and the land quality improved. Secondly there would be the removal of buildings from the flood plain resulting in reduced downstream flood risk and potential wildlife enhancements and thirdly there would be controls over runoff from the site through a Sustainable Urban Drainage System which would compare favourably with the existing situation where no such runoff controls exist. Whilst I find that the proposals would result in reduced flood risk and enhanced water quality in run-off, as these measures are largely in order to make the proposal acceptable in planning terms, as benefits they carry only modest weight.

59. Although local residents would have to pay for some of the facilities which would be available at a discount to the care village residents this should be

seen in the context of the service charge which care village residents pay. Consequently this does not reduce the weight I attach to these benefits to the local community.

Conclusion on the First Main Issue

60. There is a general need for extra care accommodation for older people within the district as a whole which both the Council and the Parish Council accept and I attach considerable weight to this need. I have also found that within Wychavon there is evidence of need within the appellant's identified catchment for the care village but it would be wrong to apply the same policy test to the neighbouring district in Gloucestershire in order to justify the proposal. I therefore find that the evidenced requirement for the accommodation has not been demonstrated and so the proposed development would be contrary to Policy SWDP20 B (i).

61. The location of the appeal site does not provide good access to public transport, healthcare, shopping and other community facilities. There would be some benefits to the local community from the scheme, in its proposed location and the scheme would provide on-site services and facilities but taken together the benefits would not in my judgement be significant. Although the tailored transport service seeks to meet the needs of residents, having found that it is unlikely to result in a significant reduction in the use of private vehicles I consider that its effectiveness would be limited.

62. Similarly, the available transport modes for staff and visitors would not provide an effective choice of sustainable transport modes and would not adequately support the proposed development in this location. The scheme is likely to be overly reliant on the private car and less sustainable modes of transport and the proposals do not minimise the demand for travel nor offer genuinely sustainable transport choices. As a result, the proposals would be contrary to Policies DC1, DC4 and DC5 of the Worcestershire County Council Local Transport Plan which together seek to promote sustainable development, maximise the use of existing transport infrastructure and services and deliver accessible development.

63. On this basis I find that the proposals would be contrary to the transport requirements of Policy SWDP20 B (ii) and would conflict with Policy SWDP4. The location of the appeal site is not a sustainable one having regard to public transport, healthcare, shopping and other community facilities. The benefits to the local community would not be significant and therefore the proposal would be contrary to Policy SWDP20 B (ii) as a whole.

64. In terms of Policy SWDP2 which establishes a development strategy and settlement hierarchy for the plan area, as the appeal site is outside of settlement boundaries, Part C of the Policy applies. Here development will be strictly controlled and limited to a number of forms including development specifically permitted by other SWDP policies including SWDP20. Accordingly the proposal is also contrary to Policy SWDP2.

The Effect of the Proposal on the Size, Social Fabric and Character of Beckford, Infrastructure and Character and Appearance

65. Policy SWDP2 F requires development proposals to be of an appropriate scale and type with regard to the size of the settlement, local landscape character

(with a reference to Policy SWDP25), location and the availability of infrastructure.

66. The parish of Beckford comprises the village of Beckford as well as the area of Little Beckford and the hamlet of Grafton. The parish as a whole has approximately 600 residents with estimates of between 275 - 284 dwellings. The village of Beckford, contained by the development boundary, has approximately 130 dwellings and a population of approximately 260 people.

67. The appellant's position is that Beckford is not simply the area within the settlement boundary for SWDP purposes but includes the historic core, edge of core developments such as the village hall and tennis club, the appeal site, the manor house and other dwellings on Back Lane, development off Station Road and Little Beckford to the south of the A46.

68. Based on my visit to the appeal site I consider it to be physically separate from the village and within open countryside. The site does not adjoin the development boundary and the existing buildings are remote from the settlement.

69. As a former agricultural enterprise the appeal site does not contain any residential use but this would not mean that it could not be considered to be part of the settlement. It is the separation of the poultry buildings from the village which leads me to conclude that the appeal site does not form part of Beckford. In reaching this view I am aware that Little Beckford is even further from the village core than the poultry buildings and separated by the A46. For this reason I consider Little Beckford to have a separate identity as its name suggests.

70. The proposed care village would comprise up to 145 assisted living and close care units. This would result in approximately 170 additional residents which would increase the population of the Parish by approximately 28%. However, when the comparison is made on the basis of the population within the village development boundary the increase would be very much higher. I consider that this would be a scale of development which would be a disproportionately large addition for a settlement the size of Beckford and in terms of Beckford's suitability to accommodate such growth. The extent of the proposed building footprint east-west would be of a similar width to the existing village and would therefore fail to respect the wide, open agrarian landscape.

71. When the scale of development proposed for this scheme is compared with the allocations for Class C3 residential development within the SWDP, the largest allocation on any single site in another Category 2 village is for 120 dwellings at Fernhill Heath which has a population of over 3,000 people while Drakes Broughton, with a population of over 1,300 has allocations of 129 dwellings over two sites. Other than these two villages, most Category 2 villages have allocations of 8-70 dwellings with most having allocations of less than 30.

72. Increases in population of 21-28% would arise from SWDP allocations for the villages of Inkberrow and Kempsey respectively which, like Beckford, were ranked equal fourth in the VFRTS. However, these villages have much larger populations than Beckford, being 2,600 and 1,552 respectively. Furthermore, the fact that Beckford is the only one of the 25 most sustainable villages in the SWDP area not to have any housing allocation does not support the case for expansion here.

73. Policy SWDP2 F indicates that developments should also be of an appropriate type. The Parish Council argued that the creation of a 'village within a village' would not be an appropriate type of development. As the new care village would be close to but not immediately adjacent to the core of Beckford there would be potential for social connectivity whilst maintaining the separate character of the existing village. The evidence from Bishopstoke Park indicated a lack of social cohesion between the host settlement and the new community.

74. At Letcombe Regis in Oxfordshire, a post occupation survey undertaken four years after the opening of a care village indicated that non-care village residents considered that the care village had been of benefit to the existing village and there were also signs of mutual integration. Since this application was submitted in outline I consider that it would be possible to design a development of this type to fit in with the surrounding area but the location and scale of the proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. Nevertheless, this does not provide sufficient reason to conclude that the proposal would be of an inappropriate development type.

75. Not only does Beckford lack basic health infrastructure but it is not close to any settlement providing a reasonable degree of medical support. This situation contrasts with Letcombe Regis, where the care village was developed within an AONB but the proximity to the town of Wantage with a range of heath infrastructure provided a very different context from that of the current appeal. Consequently, I find there would be a lack of social infrastructure in Beckford to support the proposal.

The AONB

76. According to the Council approximately 7% of the land area of Wychavon is within the Cotswolds AONB. In terms of the appeal site approximately 70% of the site is within the AONB whilst the remainder falls within the setting of the AONB. The appellant estimates that approximately 40% of the built form of the proposed development would be within the AONB.

77. Policy SWDP23 requires an assessment as to whether or not the proposed development would have a detrimental impact on the natural beauty of the AONB. It states that any development proposals within an AONB must conserve and enhance the special qualities of the landscape and also requires development proposals to have regard to the most up to date AONB Management Plan. In this case the relevant plan is the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan, 2013-2018 (the Management Plan). Natural beauty, as defined in the Management Plan encompasses both settlement character and landscape.

78. Policy SWDP25 requires development proposals and their associated landscaping schemes to take into account the latest Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and to demonstrate that they would be appropriate to, and integrate with, the character of the landscape setting, and would conserve or enhance the primary characteristics defined in LCAs.

79. Policy DTP1 of the Management Plan requires decisions to be taken having regard to the Management Plan and Landscape Strategies and Guidelines as well as a range of criteria. These include the distinctive character of the location, respect for the settlement pattern and the impact on tranquillity including dark skies.

80. Policy LP1 of the Management Plan seeks to ensure that the key characteristics, principal elements and special qualities, including tranquillity, which form the natural beauty of the landscape are conserved and where possible enhanced. Policy LP2 advises that development proposals both within and outside the AONB should take account of guidance and advice published by the Cotswolds AONB Conservation Board.

81. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment submitted with the planning application did not have regard to most up-to-date management plan which introduced the requirement to have regard to the impact on tranquillity and dark skies, and the need to protect and where possible, enhance landscape.

82. At the national level of LCA the appeal site is within a settlement pattern described as dominated by nucleated towns and villages, and predominantly nucleated but not exclusively so. At the County level the appeal site is within the Principal Village Farmlands Landscape Type characterised by rolling landscapes with a nucleated pattern of expanded rural villages. Whilst Beckford has been expanded beyond the defined settlement boundary this does not in itself detract from the overall character of Principal Village Farmlands.

83. The AONB LCA identified the appeal site as being within the Unwooded Vale Landscape Character Type and the Vale of Evesham Fringe Character Area. The AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (the Landscape Strategy) indicates that the Unwooded Vale Landscape Type is highly sensitive to change and the effects of large scale built development particularly when viewed from elevated vantage points. It indicates that the expansion of settlements should avoid the erosion of distinctive settlement patterns and the loss of the distinctive nucleated settlement patterns with associated low dispersal of settlement in between existing villages.

84. As I have found that the appeal site does not form part of the settlement of Beckford the proposed development would expand the settlement and therefore would be contrary to the guidelines of the Landscape Strategy. The proposed development would change the existing nucleated settlement pattern of Beckford with the creation of a satellite settlement, distinct from the main village core. Whilst a range of other identified important features of the Principal Village Farmlands would be enhanced, as accepted by the Council, this does not overcome the harm to the landscape which I have identified.

85. The appellant estimated that the proposal would result in a reduction of about 40% of built form on the appeal site. When considering the overall landscape impact of the proposed development, the removal of a large scale detractor in the wider landscape, as acknowledged by the Council, has to be considered alongside the impact of new development, including elements of landscape enhancement. The landscape mitigation indicated the introduction of woodland planting which would not be characteristic of the local area but this could be replaced with a more appropriate habitat without a detrimental impact on biodiversity.

86. The existing poultry sheds are typical of the rural landscape associated with agricultural holdings in spite of the AONB LCA identifying large scale, conspicuous visually intrusive cattle sheds on an industrial scale as a concern. They are, as the Council pointed out, unattractive but not necessarily uncharacteristic. Furthermore, the Landscape Strategy raises concerns about deteriorating farm buildings.

87. In visual terms I consider that the site is fairly well contained in views from the east, south and west. However, the site would be viewed from elevated land to the north and north-west by people using public footpaths within the AONB including the Wychavon Way. Users of such footpaths are likely to be focussed on the landscape and views, within and across a valued landscape, would be an important part of the experience of the most sensitive receptors. The site would also be experienced by people using Ashton Road where the proposed residential blocks would be seen, at least until screening vegetation became effective, as separate from Beckford and the church tower, reinforcing the point that the settlement had expanded. This would demonstrate change to the identified nucleated settlement pattern but the visual impact of the proposed development would be mitigated by the replacement of a limited number of large buildings with a greater number of smaller buildings.

88. The existing buildings on site have prominence when seen from Ashton Road due to the recessive dark grey colour. I can see no reason why materials used in the roof of any new buildings would be likely to be more visually obvious than existing materials when such a matter could be controlled by a planning condition which would assist in mitigating visual impact.

89. The replacement buildings would not necessarily be more prominent or harmful in visual terms than the existing buildings because their height would be no greater and the domestic scale of architecture would present less mass and bulk than the existing buildings. Planting between buildings would further mitigate the impact. In order to control the height and visual impact of the development, the appellants proposed that a Parameters Plan could be the subject of a suitably worded planning condition. Were I to allow the appeal, this would in my view appropriately address the concerns over height.

90. In assessing the impact of the development on tranquillity and dark skies I find that the scheme would introduce lighting and that the effect would be difficult to control as lighting would be determined within individual residences. Other external lighting would also be provided around the site. Additionally, the impact would most likely be experienced by the most sensitive receptors using public footpaths.

91. The Council suggested that the proposed buildings would be viewed in what would otherwise be an unlit rural landscape. However, at less elevated positions the lighting would be less visible than from longer views because of screening. Any views from elevated positions would not be experienced as part of an unlit rural landscape but in the wider setting of the villages where lighting would also be seen. Whilst the AONB Conservation Board raised concerns about the impact of the development on dark skies, the Management Plan does not prohibit any additional light sources in the AONB. Therefore, whilst these light sources would be visible I do not consider that there would necessarily be a harmful effect on the dark skies of the AONB. A condition could require the provision of a lighting design strategy to address this matter were I to allow the appeal. Similarly, I consider that the development would have an impact on tranquillity, recognised in the Management Plan as *'a feeling of being away from it all'* but the proposed screening would prevent views of activity and the anticipated level of noise generated would not in my view be harmful.

92. As the vast majority of the site is within the AONB it is a valued landscape in terms of paragraph 109 of the Framework and should therefore be protected

and enhanced. Paragraph 115 of the Framework advises that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.

93. The Council and the appellant agree that the proposal amounts to 'major development' in terms of paragraph 116 of the Framework. This states that planning permission should be refused for major developments except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that the proposal is in the public interest.

94. Consideration of applications for major development should include an assessment of the need for the development and the impact of the decision on the local economy, the scope for developing elsewhere thereby meeting the need in some other way and any detrimental effect on the environment and the extent to which that could be moderated. The outcome of the assessment is not determinative of exceptional circumstances and it is necessary for all relevant matters to be taken into account.

95. Whilst acknowledging that there is an unmet need for extra care housing in the district it has not been demonstrated that the need cannot be met through windfall developments and within the time horizon of the development plan without resorting to more sustainable locations outside of the AONB.

96. In terms of the scope for developing elsewhere outside of the AONB I find that the appellant's evidence of the alternative sites lacked rigour based on a lack of viability appraisals for the excluded sites, the lack of consideration as to the sites' suitability for C2 use more generally and the failure to investigate whether landowners would have been prepared to promote other sites. Furthermore, the removal of sites from further consideration on the basis that the 2015 SHLAA identified constraints, without considering whether those constraints could be mitigated indicated that the requirement to address the possibility of developing sites outside of the AONB was not met.

97. With regard to the test as to whether there would be any detrimental effect on the environment, landscape and recreational opportunities I have found that there would be a considerable detrimental effect on the character of the landscape which would outweigh the opportunities for enhancement.

98. Whilst recognising the growing need for extra care housing including in the rural area and the reasonable expectation that need should be addressed in the place it arises, it has not been demonstrated that the scope for meeting need cannot be addressed outside of the AONB. Other benefits which I have acknowledged including a net gain in biodiversity and landscape enhancements, a reduction in flood risk and enhanced water quality in run-off, footway improvements, local economic benefits and additional community facilities are not significant and together these factors do not constitute exceptional circumstances.

Conclusion on the Second Main Issue

99. Although I have found that extra care housing is a use that could be accommodated in the village, the proposal would not be of an appropriate scale or adequately served by social infrastructure. Consequently it would be contrary to Policy SWDP2 F. The proposed development would fail to respect

the characteristic nucleated settlement pattern identified within LCAs at national, county or AONB scales and would adversely impact upon the characteristic nucleated form of Beckford. Consequently, it does not comply with Policy SWDP25.

100. The proposals do not have proper regard to the AONB Management Plan, Landscape Strategy or Policy SWDP23 and would cause harm to the scenic beauty and landscape of the AONB which would neither be conserved nor enhanced as a result. Given the importance attached to AONB I attach substantial weight to this adverse impact. I have reached this finding whilst recognising that the visual impacts of the proposed development would be limited and could be effectively mitigated through detailed design work. I have also had regard to the fact that through landscaping proposals some characteristic features of the Principal Village Farmlands would be enhanced. However, these benefits would not outweigh the harm to landscape character.

101. The proposal would be contrary to paragraph 109 of the Framework recognising the status of protection afforded to AONB in paragraph 115. The finding that there are no significant benefits to the local community from the development supports the conclusion that there are no exceptional circumstances to support granting planning permission under paragraph 116 of the Framework. A contribution to meeting the needs for rural extra care housing and enhancing features which make up the special quality and character of the AONB do not provide the means to justify the proposal in the public interest.

Other Matters

102. With regard to community consultation, documentation before me indicates that the appellant sought to engage with the local community prior to the submission of the planning application, throughout the application process and during the appeal process. The Parish Council was careful to avoid taking into account or passing on inaccurate information but I find no evidence that the Parish Council was unhelpful or unprepared to engage in a dialogue with the appellant.

103. I have had regard to other appeal decisions referred to by the appellant and the Council largely relating to the interpretation of policies and matters of sustainability. The circumstances of these cases are not directly comparable with those which apply in this appeal. I have in any event, reached my own conclusions on the appeal proposal based on the evidence before me.

Unilateral Undertaking

104. In their UU the appellants have undertaken to provide 15 affordable care units. In the event that a Registered Provider or Council nominee is not willing to accept these, the appellant or its successor would let the units on equivalent affordable terms to qualifying persons. The Council raised concerns about the practicalities of such provisions and that affordable care provision is not the subject of a specific policy within the SWDP. However, Policy SWDP20 requires consideration of community benefit, Policy SWDP1 supports proposals to improve social conditions and paragraph 116 of the Framework requires consideration to be given to the public interest. On this basis the offer of 15 affordable care units can be considered to be compliant with Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Regulations, 2010.

105. The UU confirms the means by which domiciliary care would be provided to qualifying occupiers of the care village and how community facilities would be provided. Such provisions would ensure that the scheme provides the extra care intended and that facilities in the care village can be available to the wider community.

106. The Council and appellant agreed that the off-site highway works could be subject to a Grampian condition, whereby development permitted by a planning permission could not be undertaken until other actions, in this case the highway works, were carried out. There appears to be a reasonable prospect of the highway works being implemented within the lifetime of the planning permission and therefore the proposed condition would be in line with the advice within Planning Practice Guidance. The UU commits the owner and successors in title to enter into a section 278 highways agreement if required by the County Council. I consider that this would be an effective way to address the proposed pedestrian improvements.

107. The UU and conditions, acting together would ensure that the provisions of the VTS and the Travel Plan would be effectively introduced and managed.

108. I am satisfied that these provisions would be necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, directly related to the development and fairly and reasonably related to the development. Accordingly they are consistent with Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Regulations, 2010 and the advice of the Framework and Planning Practice Guidance. I have therefore taken account of them in reaching my decision.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

109. I have found that there is a general need for the type of extra care accommodation within the district which, together with the provision of 15 units of affordable accommodation carries considerable weight, but the particular need to develop at the proposed location has not been demonstrated. The appeal site does not provide good access to public transport and I have found that measures to improve the transport accessibility of the site would not provide an effective tailored transport service to residents.

110. Existing access to healthcare, shopping and community facilities is not good and whilst the proposals would result in some benefits to the local community, these benefits would not be significant either alone or in combination. As a consequence I have found that the proposed development would not comply with Policy SWDP20.

111. I have found that the scheme is likely to be over reliant on the private car and less sustainable modes of transport and that the proposals do not minimise the demand for travel nor offer genuinely sustainable transport choices. It would therefore conflict with Policy SWDP4 and be contrary to Policies DC1, DC4 and DC5 of the Worcestershire County Council Local Transport Plan.

112. Being outside of a development boundary, and in the absence of any other justification for the scheme, having found the proposal to be contrary to Policy SWDP20 it is also contrary to Policy SWDP2 which seeks to control development beyond any development boundary.

113. The proposal would be of such a scale that it would be disproportionately large compared to the existing village and harmful to the social infrastructure of Beckford. As a result the proposal would be contrary to Policy SWDP2 F.

114. I have also found that the proposals would have a substantial detrimental impact on the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB by reason of its impact on settlement character. As a consequence I find that the proposal would be contrary to Policies SWDP 23 and SWDP25. Moreover, as major development I have found that there are no exceptional circumstances or other reasons which would justify the development in the public interest and therefore the proposal is contrary to paragraphs 109, 115 and 116 of the Framework.

115. In spite of the County Council's consultation response which indicated that the approach to sustainability at the site was holistic and detailed I conclude that the appeal scheme does not constitute sustainable development because of the negative effects which I have identified. Accordingly it would be contrary to Policy SWDP1 which sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

116. Taking all of this into account, I find that the proposal is not in accordance with the development plan as a whole and that there are no material considerations which would indicate that a decision should be taken other than in accordance with the development plan.

117. For the reasons set out above, and taking into account all matters presented in written submissions and raised at the inquiry, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Kevin Gleeson

INSPECTOR

APPEARANCES

FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY

Gary Grant, of Counsel	Instructed by the Solicitor to Wychavon District Council
He called:	
Eileen Marshall, BSc (Sp Hons) DipLA, MA MCIHort	Landscape Officer, Wychavon District Council
Stephen Hawley, BSc IEng MCIHT FIHE	Development Control Engineer, Worcestershire County Council
Emma Worley, BA (Hons) Dip EP MRTPI	Development Manager, Wychavon District Council
Penelope James	Solicitor, Wychavon District Council*

FOR THE APPELLANT

Hugh Richards, of Counsel,	Instructed by Andrew Boughton, BB Architecture and Planning Ltd
He called:	
Keith Cockell,	Chairman, English Care Villages
Steve Wilson, BA (Hons) Dip LA	Director, Portus and Whitton Landscape Architects
Graham Davison, BSc MSc MCIEEM MSB	Director, Focus Ecology Ltd
Peter Fox, FRICS PhD MSc FCIWEM FRSPH	Director, Salveson Fox Hydrosurveys
Peter Smith, BSc MCIHT MICE CEng	Associate Director, Ove Arup and Partners
Andrew Boughton BSc MA RIBA MRTPI	Director, BB Architecture and Planning Ltd

RULE 6 PARTY

Andrew Parkinson, of Counsel	Instructed by Sally Tagg, MRTPI Foxley Tagg Planning Ltd
He called:	
Diane Lesley Colvin	Beckford Parish Council
John Cecil Colvin	Beckford Parish Council

*Ms James only contributed to the discussion on the S106 agreement.

INTERESTED PERSONS

Councillor Adrian Darby OBE	Wychavon District Councillor, Ward Councillor and Member of the Planning Committee. Speaking in a personal capacity.
Stuart Barr	Beckford Future Group
Mark McCauley	Beckford Future Group
Sally Stringer	Local Resident

DOCUMENTS

ID1. Statement by Councillor Adrian Darby OBE.

ID2. Opening Statement of the Appellant.

ID3. Opening Statement on behalf of the LPA.

ID4. Beckford Parish Council's Opening.

ID5. Plan showing the AONB Boundary in relation to Beckford, submitted by the Council.

ID6. Extract from Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2013-2018, submitted by the Council.

ID7. Plans showing the Wychavon Way, submitted by the Council.

ID8. National Vegetation Classification: MG5 Grassland, submitted by Councillor Darby.

ID9. Landscape Concept /Strategy Plan, submitted by the Council.

ID10. Extract from Introduction of Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment, submitted by the Council.

ID11. Copies of Representations / Consultee Comments, submitted by the Council.

ID12. Beckford Parish Council Statement of Case, submitted by the Parish Council.

ID13. Parishes Map, submitted by the Council.

ID14. Wards Map, submitted by the Council.

ID15. Amended Section 6 and Table 1 from Ms Worley's Proof of Evidence, submitted by the Council.

ID16. Leaflet produced by Beckford Future, submitted by the Appellant.

ID17. Representation to PINS submitted by Stuart Barr.

ID18. Minutes of the Meeting of Beckford Parish Council Planning Committee, 12 April 2017, submitted by the Appellants.

ID19. Proposed Route for Site Visit / Photo Locations, submitted by the Council.

ID20. A Survey of Selected Agri-environment Grassland and Heathland Creation and Restoration Sites, submitted by the Appellant.

ID21. Set of Agreed Plans, submitted by the Appellant.

ID22. Correspondence with GP Practice Manager, submitted by the Appellant.

ID23. Plan of Site Areas, submitted by the Appellant.

ID24. Correspondence between English Care Villages and Beckford Parish Council, submitted by the Parish Council.

ID25. Details of Bus Services for Richmond Retirement Villages, submitted by the Parish Council.

ID26. Letcombe Regis Committee Report and supporting documents, submitted by the Parish Council.

ID27. Statement by Mark McCauley.

ID28. Additional Note by Councillor Adrian Darby OBE.

ID29. 'Time to Care', submitted by the Parish Council.

ID30. 'More Choice, Greater Voice' submitted by the Appellant.

ID31. Response to Criticisms of the Demographic Computation included in Appendix 5 of the Appellant's Planning Evidence, submitted by the Appellant.

ID32. Topographical Survey of the Appeal Site, submitted by the Appellant.

ID33. Businesses Local to the Appeal Site, submitted by the Appellant.

ID34. Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2013-2018, submitted by the Council.

ID35. Statement of Sally Stringer.

ID36. Beckford Parish Council's Closing.

ID37. Closing on behalf of the LPA.

ID38. Closing Submissions on behalf of the Appellant.