
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 November 2017

by K Ford BSocSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 17th November 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/W/17/3180499

Stables rear of No 60 High Street, Stagsden, Bedford MK43 85Q

- 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 Mr and Mrs R Payne against the decision of Bedford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 16/03059/FUL, dated 25 October 2016, was refused by notice dated 9 February 2017.
 - The development proposed is conversion and extension of stables and hay barn to form one residential dwelling and other associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. Following refusal of the application the appellant has submitted an alternative landscaping photo montage as part of the appeal. The 'Planning Appeals: Procedural Guide' makes it clear that 'the appeal process should not be used to evolve a scheme and it is important that what is considered by the Inspector is essentially what was considered by the local planning authority, and on which interested people's views were sought'. I have therefore assessed the appeal on the basis of the proposal set out in the application.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the appeal site is an appropriate location for residential development.

Reasons

4. The appeal site accommodates a vacant brick and clay tiled stable building and breeze block building formerly used to keep horses for recreational purposes. The site is located to the rear of 54 and 60 High Street and is accessed off a private lane between No 60 and Joel Cottage (No 54). The site is not isolated in location but is isolated in character and blends in with wider open countryside to which it adjoins. The site is situated outside the Settlement Policy Area boundary for Stagsden in the Allocations and Designation Plan 2014 and within the Rural Policy Area in the Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan 2008 (Core Strategy). It is therefore in the open countryside for the purposes of planning policy.

5. Saved Policy H26 of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2002 (Local Plan) and Core Strategy Policies CP13 and CP14 seek to manage patterns of growth in the Borough by focusing development in locations that are or can be made sustainable. Policy CP14 limits development in the Rural Policy Area to that which has a proven need. With the exception of reference to rural workers in paragraph 55, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) does not set a requirement to prove need and so I give little weight to the proposal's conflict with this element of the policy. Nonetheless the overarching aims of the policies with regards sustainable development accord with and are consistent with the NPPF and so I give significant weight to them in this respect. Paragraph 7 of the NPPF identifies the dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.
6. Both the Council and the appellant identify that there is a farm shop, public house and village hall within walkable distance of the proposal. I note, as identified by the Council, that the pub is however currently closed. Although the farm shop offers a range of goods for sale, I consider it to be a destination shop rather than somewhere that would meet day to day needs, based on the nature of the produce available.
7. The Council say that the site is around 2.3km from the nearest service centre at Bromham. Much of the route on foot would be along unlit rural roads with intermittent provision of a footpath. It runs along the A422, a main road and therefore there would be a notable level of traffic. A bus stop is within walking distance of the site which provides a reasonable service although there is no evening service and a limited number of buses running on Sundays. In practical terms occupants of the proposal are likely to be reliant on the car.
8. Whilst a higher proportion of car journeys can be expected in rural areas, the economic benefits of the proposal in terms of supporting local services in neighbouring areas, along with the economic benefits achieved during construction would be modest given the size of the development and therefore would make little meaningful difference in terms of the contribution made. There would also be limited social gain in terms of increasing housing supply. The development would have poor access to services and facilities and therefore would not accord with the NPPF, which includes a core principle that planning should 'actively manage patterns of growth to make fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling.
9. The appellant cites the third bullet point of paragraph 55 of the NPPF as the special circumstances that justify the development, this being 'where the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting'. It is not disputed that the proposal would result in the re-use of dis-used buildings as a result of the reduction in the number of horses kept on the site.
10. Domestication of the buildings would intensify residential use in a location that is isolated in character. Although views from the road would be limited the development would be visible from both neighbouring properties and the countryside setting. Whilst some vehicle parking may already take place on the site, this would be formalised through hardstanding. It is not considered that the use of conditions would be sufficient to mitigate the adverse effects of the proposal in terms of its impact on the open and rural nature of the countryside that would occur from the domestication of the site. Rather than enhancing its

setting, the proposal would harm it. Whilst the appellant cites substantial landscape improvements through the tidying of the site and removal of paraphernalia accrued over time, this is not development dependent and could be undertaken in the absence of the scheme.

11. The development proposal would make a positive contribution to the housing supply of the Borough and consequently would have social benefits. This however is outweighed by the limited economic benefits and environmental harm that would be generated by the development. The proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area and would not constitute sustainable development. Irrespective of informal advice given at the pre-application stage the proposal would conflict with the parts of Saved Policy H26 of the Local Plan, Core Strategy Policies CP13 and CP14 and the NPPF identified above.

Other Matters

12. I acknowledge the personal benefits of the proposal for the appellant in terms of providing accommodation for retirement. These gains are however outweighed by the significant harm identified.
13. The site is located with the setting of 2 Listed Buildings; Stagsden Voluntary Primary School and 54 High Street. The Council has not identified any harm to the setting of either heritage asset and given their location I have no reason to disagree.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons identified, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

K Ford

INSPECTOR