



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 July 2019

by S D Castle BSC(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12th August 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/P0119/W/19/3227867

Sundays Hill House, Sundayshill Lane, Falfield GL12 8DQ

- 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 Michael Sullivan against the decision of South Gloucestershire Council.
 - The application Ref PT18/6432/F, dated 14 December 2018, was refused by notice dated 7 February 2019.
 - The development proposed is conversion of an existing redundant barn to a dwelling to include access and parking and associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - Whether the proposal is consistent with local and national policies relating to the location of new housing development;
 - The effect of the proposal on the living conditions of future occupiers with regards to internal living space.

Reasons

Location of new housing development

3. The site lies outside the defined settlement boundary of Falfield and is therefore within the open countryside as set out in the development plan. In such areas, policy CS5 of the South Gloucestershire Core Strategy (2013) (the Core Strategy) states that new development will be strictly limited.
4. The appeal building is a lightweight utilitarian structure, including a timber frame, single skin timber and corrugated metal sheet walls, and a corrugated metal sheet roof. At the time of my site visit, I noted that part of the roof was collapsed, and the timber structure of the roof was significantly damaged. Two unglazed windows are located on the northern elevation. Access to the building is provided by timber doors on the western elevation and corrugated metal doors on the eastern elevation.
5. No structural survey has been provided to establish the extent of works required to bring the building into residential use. However, given my above

findings, I have serious doubts that such an outcome could be achieved without significant construction work.

6. Accordingly, the building is not of permanent and substantial construction and the proposal does not therefore meet this criterion of policy PSP40 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan (2017) (the Local Plan) for development to be acceptable in the open countryside.
7. Turning to transport impacts and accessibility, the nearest services, including a post office, public house and bus stop, are some distance away in Falfield. The route to access those services along Sundayshill Lane is, for much of its length, narrow, lacking footpaths and unlit. These circumstances do not lend themselves to safe use by pedestrians. Similarly, these factors would be unlikely to encourage cycling to the nearest services and facilities. I recognise that the Council has no objection with regards to either the proposed parking provision or the vehicular access to the highway. I am also mindful that the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that, opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas. Nevertheless, it remains the case that there would be a lack of sustainable transport choices available to enable future residents to conveniently access services and facilities.
8. Drawing all of this together, the proposal does not represent the conversion of a building of substantial construction and the site is not a suitable site for housing, having regard to the proximity to services and the lack of sustainable transport choices. As such it would conflict with policies CS5, CS8 and CS34 of the Core Strategy and policies PSP11 and PSP40 of the Local Plan. Together, these policies seek to promote most new development in locations which reduce the need to travel and restrict development in the open countryside. The policies also require development to connect to the wider network of pedestrian, cycle and public transport links and to provide appropriate, safe, accessible, convenient and attractive access for all mode trips arising to and from the proposal. The proposal would also conflict with the Framework which indicates that development proposals should consider transport issues at the earliest stage so that opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued.

Living conditions

9. Based on the information provided in the Council's statement, the gross internal floor area of the proposed dwelling amounts to 29 square metres. The internal arrangement on the proposed floor plan shows a bedroom at one end of the dwelling, and an open plan kitchen, dining and living area at the other.
10. The floor plan shows indicative locations for bedroom furniture, but it does not show how furniture and equipment such as a dining table, settee and television could be comfortably accommodated in the dwelling. I am not convinced that the combined kitchen, dining and living area would comfortably accommodate the furniture and household equipment that would be expected in that part of the home, whilst also allowing for convenient circulation and access. The layout and confined nature of the accommodation would not be conducive to providing appropriate areas to cook a meal, eat and relax comfortably. This lack of space would result in a cramped and claustrophobic environment to the detriment of the living conditions of future occupiers.

11. For the above reasons, the proposed development would not accord with policy PSP8 of the Local Plan which seeks, amongst other things, for development to ensure acceptable living conditions for future occupiers. It would also conflict with the overarching goal of policy CS1 of the Core Strategy for high standards of design.
12. Policy PSP38 of the Local Plan refers, amongst other things, to the development of dwellings within existing residential curtilages in the urban areas and rural settlements with defined settlement boundaries. The proposal is not located within either an urban area or rural settlement with a defined settlement boundary. Consequently, policy PSP38 is not relevant in the assessment of the future living conditions of occupiers of the proposal.

Other Matters

13. It is a matter of disagreement between the appellant and the Council as to whether the Council can demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. I have no substantive evidence before me, however, to demonstrate that the policies most important for determining the application are out-of-date, and I do not find that paragraph 11 d) of the Framework is engaged in this case.
14. The appellant has drawn my attention to a number of other planning permissions which have been granted by the Council for development in the surrounding area. However, I have not been provided with details of the background to those cases and cannot, therefore, be certain of the full circumstances in which they were permitted. From the limited information before me, these cases all differ from the appeal proposal, either in terms of the condition of the buildings to be converted, or in terms of the relevant policy assessment. Notwithstanding this, I have considered the appeal on its own merits.
15. The proposal would contribute towards housing supply and its occupation would provide support for local services. Being for one property, however, it would only make a very limited contribution and this significantly limits the weight I attach to this consideration.
16. I note that paragraph 117 of the Framework supports the use of previously-developed land as an effective way to meet the need for homes. The benefits, given that very little of the original building would be retained in this instance, would be limited. Even if the whole of the appeal site were previously developed land, there are other considerations that need to be satisfied as part of an overall balance of policy.
17. I acknowledge that the proposal would result in some economic and social benefits, including through its construction and through the support future occupiers would give to services and facilities in the area. The proposal would make a limited contribution to the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. However, the benefits that would be likely to result could be achieved elsewhere in the area, on sites that accord with the development strategy set out in the development plan.
18. Overall, there are no material considerations, either individually or in combination, of sufficient weight to outweigh the conflict with the development plan, nor do they indicate that the proposal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons set out above, the appeal is dismissed.

S D Castle

INSPECTOR