



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 June 2019

by Michael Wood RIBA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 August 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/W1850/W/19/3226268

Land at Grid Ref 365060 250800, Munderfield, Bromyard, Herefordshire HR7 4JT

- 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 John Poyner against the decision of Herefordshire Council.
 - The application Ref 180738 dated 26 February 2018 was refused by notice dated 22 October 2018.
 - The development proposed is the erection of four detached houses with garages.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The appeal relates to an outline planning application for permission to develop land for four new houses on the southern outskirts of Munderfield. All matters other than the details of the access to the site are reserved for future consideration. The layout plan submitted with the application is considered to be for illustrative purposes only and I have assessed the appeal on that basis. Details of the access, subject to a condition, are acceptable to the Council.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposed development would accord with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and the policies in the development plan relating to the location of new development in the countryside.

Reasons

Policy Context

4. Munderfield is a small village about two or three miles from the market town of Bromyard. Munderfield is identified as suitable for sustainable housing growth in policy RA2 of the adopted 2015 Hereford Local Plan Core Strategy 2011-2031 (the Core Strategy) which indicates that development proportionate to the size of the community and its needs will be permitted. Policy RA2 of the Core Strategy states that in, respect of Munderfield, housing development should be located '*within or adjacent to the main built up area*' and will be expected to '*demonstrate particular attention to the form, layout, character and setting of the site and its location in that settlement and/or they result in*

development that contributes to or is essential to the social well-being of the settlement concerned'. In addition to Policy RA2, Policy RA3 of the Core Strategy is of relevance to this appeal in so far that it lists the kinds of residential development that would be permitted in Hertfordshire's countryside.

5. The above policies need to be considered in the context that there is no dispute between the parties that it cannot be demonstrated that there is a five year supply of deliverable housing sites in the area. Consequently it will be necessary to consider this appeal in the context of paragraph 11 d of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019. It is suggested in the officer's report that without a neighbourhood plan, and with the current lack of a deliverable five year housing supply, pressure for further development in Munderfield would lead to disproportionate numbers of new dwellings in the village. It is indicated that 22 houses have so far been approved or allowed in Munderfield during the current shortage of housing land supply.

Location and countryside impact

6. I note the appellant's contention that the site is adjacent to the settlement of Munderfield. I do not agree with this view. Whilst I do acknowledge that the appeal site is close to some existing properties including 'The Briars' and 'The Chestnuts', it is currently undeveloped pasture land surrounded by open countryside. The land contributes to the pattern of local farm land as one of a series of connected fields. The land is clearly separated from the more built up part of the village and nearby properties. There is no existing road access directly from the field. This part of the B4214 includes sporadic development and there is a distinct appreciation of openness and rural character when travelling past the appeal site. In considering Policy RA2 of the Core Strategy, I do not consider that the proposed residential development would be within or adjacent to the main built up area of Munderfield. The appeal site is within open countryside and therefore the identified conflict with Policy RA2 of the Core Strategy is a matter which weighs against allowing the proposal.
7. Policy RA3 of the Core Strategy restricts development outside of settlements and contains a list of exceptions where residential developments may be permitted in Hertfordshire's countryside. None of the exceptions apply in this case and hence the conflict with Policy RA3 is a matter which weighs against granting planning permission.
8. Based on my site visit observations and taking into account the indicated locations of recently approved housing developments, I consider that the proposed development would extend and intensifying the linear settlement pattern disproportionately and would significantly detract from the more spacious and rural character of the locality. Whilst detailed design and scale matters are not before me, I have no doubt that the erection of four dwellings (of any scale or height) on this site would cause significant harm to the identified distinctive and positive characteristics of the locality. Therefore, the proposal would conflict with Policies RA2 of the Core Strategy which seeks to encourage high quality sustainable schemes which are appropriate to their context and make positive contributions to the surrounding environment and landscape settings. Furthermore, whilst development on the site would, to a limited extent, boost the supply of housing (as considered below), the evidence before me does not indicate that the proposal would be essential to the social well-being of the settlement.

Other considerations

9. In the context that a deliverable five-year supply of housing sites cannot be demonstrated, the provision of four detached houses would make a positive contribution in terms of boosting the supply of new homes in the area. This is a positive matter to weigh in the overall planning balance. However, the contribution to the undersupply position, as well as any economic associated benefits, would be relatively limited given that only four dwellings are proposed.

Planning balance and conclusion

10. There would be some, albeit relatively limited, social and economic benefits to be gained from providing four houses on the appeal site, particularly from a housing land supply point of view. These matters weigh in favour of allowing the proposed development. Nonetheless, I have also found specific conflict with Policies RA2 and RA3 of the Core Strategy and this weighs against allowing the development. As identified in my reasoning above, the proposal would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of this countryside location. In this regard, there would not only be conflict with the Policies RA2 and SS2 of the Core Strategy, but also with paragraph 170 of the Framework which states that decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by '*recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside*'.
11. The significant environmental harm that would be caused by the development to the character and appearance of the countryside is a matter of overriding concern. Such an adverse impact would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the identified benefits of allowing the development when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. Consequently, and taking into account all other matters raised include the supportive comments received from the occupier of Hawthorn Cottage, the appeal should be dismissed.

Michael Wood

INSPECTOR