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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 August 2019

**by Ben Plenty BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 16 September 2019**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/H1840/W/19/3226290**

**Farm Close Cottage, Ombersley Road, Worcestershire WR3 1LN**

- 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 Robert Rock against the decision of Wychavon District Council.
  - The application Ref 18/02144/FUL, dated 1 September 2018, was refused by notice dated 31 January 2019.
  - The development proposed is proposed self-build detached house and access drive on open land (extended garden) adjacent to and south of Farm Close Cottage.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the appeal site offers a suitable location for new housing development, having regard to the development plan policies concerned with the location of new development, and the accessibility of services and facilities.

### Reasons

3. The site, the subject of this appeal, is located within part of a paddock. The paddock is to the side of Farm Close Cottage. Both parcels of land share a boundary with the highway (A449) and present open countryside to the rear and front. The existing dwelling is in a small ribbon of development and otherwise within the open countryside. The side boundary of the site is adjacent to a thick hedge and beyond which is a new large housing estate, connecting to Bevere on the northern edge of Worcester. The site is therefore in the open countryside but adjacent to a settlement boundary.
4. Policy SWDP2 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan 2016 (DP) establishes the Council's settlement strategy. This policy identifies the requirement to provide sufficient housing sites to meet its objectively assessed needs, to focus most development in urban areas and to maintain the Green Belt and the open countryside. As such, most development is expected to take place in Worcester, nearby secondary towns and within the settlement boundaries of villages. Policy SWDP2(C) identifies that development in the open countryside will be strictly controlled and mostly reserved to replacement dwellings and dwellings for rural workers.

5. The Council can demonstrate it has a 5-year housing land supply. Furthermore, it achieves a Housing Delivery Test measure of 187% meaning that its housing related policies are considered to be up-to-date and full weight can be applied to them.
6. The adjacent housing estate at Gwilliams Farm gained outline planning permission in 2013<sup>1</sup> for up to 230 dwellings. This represents an extension of the adjacent settlement boundary bringing it nearer to the existing dwelling and application site. The site has footpath linkages to Worcester and being on a major highway has relatively good access to public transport. As such the site is relatively well connected to nearby services and facilities. However, this alone does not satisfy the objectives of the spatial strategy to bring forward housing development in a measured and regulated manner.
7. Accordingly, the proposal would not accord with policy SWDP2 of the DP which seeks housing development to take place within defined settlement boundaries.

### **Other matters**

8. The appellants identify that the proposal would enable improved care for an elderly relative. However, the new dwelling does not appear to be specifically designed for the provision of care. In any event, the proposal is not supported with a legal mechanism to specifically ascribe it to the appellants. Furthermore, it is not in evidence why the existing dwelling cannot be adapted to meet these needs. Therefore, whilst I sympathise with the caring challenges created by the existing dwelling, this stated benefit of the proposal would provide only limited support in favour of it.
9. The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to significantly boost the supply of housing. This also requires local authorities to meet the needs of specific groups including those wishing to commission or build their own homes. The appellants state that the proposal would be a self-build project. However, there is no evidence before me that indicates that the proposal has been registered with the Council as a self-build project or includes a legal mechanism to secure it as such. In any event, one dwelling would make only a very limited contribution towards housing supply in the area and if repeated its cumulative effect would significantly undermine the Council's spatial strategy.
10. Representations have suggested that the proposal would be only a minor encroachment into the countryside and retain a green corridor to the north of the house. Around one quarter of the site is designated as Green Space. Policy SWDP38 states that development would not be permitted in Green Space unless it is for community/recreation use that does not compromise its quality and character, if it is proven to be surplus or alternative provision made. The Council states that the effect of this designation is to manage development within it in a manner consistent with Green Belt policy. I concur with the Council's comments that the proposal satisfies this policy, by confining the footprint of the proposed dwelling to within the part of the site excluded from the designation. However, an absence of harm in regard to this policy can only be considered as a neutral factor in the planning balance.

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<sup>1</sup> Planning Approval Reference: W/13/00347/OU

## **Conclusion**

11. The proposal would be located outside of a defined settlement boundary, it would therefore be contrary to the spatial strategy of the development plan. In this case, the limited benefits advanced in favour of the proposal would not outweigh this conflict and do not indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. For the above reasons the appeal should not succeed.

*Ben Plenty*

INSPECTOR