



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 November 2019

by Paul Cooper MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3 December 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/P1805/W/19/3236035

Croppings Green Wood Stables, Warbage Lane, Dodford, Bromsgrove DY9 0AN

- 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 Brian Evans against the decision of Bromsgrove District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/00563/FUL, dated 29 April 2019, was refused by notice dated 8 July 2019.
 - The development proposed is conversion of stable block to bungalow.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The appeal proposal is for development within the Green Belt. Neither of the parties has raised the issue of the appeal proposal being inappropriate development. I see no reason to disagree with this approach. Therefore, the main issue in this appeal is whether the proposed development would provide a suitable site for a dwelling, having regard to the proximity of services and employment opportunities, and reliance on motor vehicles.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a stable block within an equestrian development. A number of alterations are proposed in order to make the building suitable for human habitation.
4. There is no pedestrian footway on this section of Warbage Lane, and there is no evidence of street lighting in the locality. At the time of my site visit, the amount of vehicle traffic was minor.
5. The appellant has brought to my attention local services that would be within cycling distance of the site but has accepted that these would not be within reasonable walking distance. Given that significant sections of the walking routes would be without footways and unlit, they would not be appealing to pedestrians in any event. For the same reason, I also find that the routes would not encourage the possibility of cycling to reach the services and facilities in question, if a sufficiently diverse range of goods were available.

6. I have not been made aware of any regular public transport provision in the immediate locality, and again, the nature of the routes to gain access to those services would be unappealing to those on foot. As a result, the use of public transport would not be a realistic option.
7. Given the circumstances, I find that the practical use of walking, cycling or public transport would be unlikely. Occupiers of the proposed dwelling would be reliant on the use of a motor vehicle.
8. The appeal site is not located within a defined settlement, and whilst the proposal could provide some additional support to rural services, the contribution from a single unit would be very minor.
9. As a result, I find that the site would not be a suitable location for a new dwelling, having regard to its proximity to services and job opportunities which would result in a reliance on private motor vehicles. As such the proposal would be contrary to Policies BDP1 and BDP2 of the Bromsgrove District Plan (2017). These, amongst other matters, provide a settlement hierarchy for housing delivery and require regard to be had to the accessibility to public transport options and to reduce the need to travel. Moreover, it would also be contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework which aims to locate development in accessible and convenient locations and promote walking, cycling and public transport use.

Other Matters

10. From the evidence before me, it would appear that the Council is unable to demonstrate a five year housing supply. In these circumstances it is appropriate for me to assess the proposal having regard to Paragraph 11 of the Framework. In this case I am satisfied that the policies on which the Council relied are consistent with the aims of the Framework. Consequently, any conflict with them carries full weight in my assessment.
11. The appellant has brought to my attention a number of permissions that the Council has granted consent for. I have not been provided with full details of these and therefore cannot compare them with the current scheme. However, the examples are located in different areas with different development and locational characteristics to the appeal scheme. In any event, I am required to deal with this proposal on its own merits and, as such, I accord them limited weight.
12. The reason for refusal does not relate to harm to the Green Belt. However, the lack of harm is a neutral factor and does not weigh in favour of the proposal.
13. I have noted the comments of the appellant in relation to the fact that the proposal would allow them to downsize, reduce their environmental impact and make their existing property available for a relative. This approach does not overcome the harm that I have identified from the unsustainability of the proposals, and as such, I can only assign limited weight to the argument.

Conclusion

14. I have concluded that the proposal would conflict with the development plan. There are no other material considerations that outweigh this conflict and for this reason I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Paul Cooper

INSPECTOR