



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 July 2020

by B Davies MSc FGS CGeol

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 August 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/P0119/W/20/3248493

Springwood House, 62 Over Lane, Almondsbury, Bristol, BS32 4BW

- 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 Mrs J Hodges against the decision of South Gloucestershire Council.
 - The application Ref P19/09014/F, dated 12 July 2019, was refused by notice dated 24 January 2020.
 - The development proposed is the erection of 2no self-build dwellings (Use Class C3).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issues

2. The appeal site is located within an area of Green Belt. Accordingly, the main issues are:
 - Whether or not the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework') and development plan policy;
 - The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - Whether or not the appeal site is suitably located for a new dwelling having regard to local and national planning policy; and
 - If the development would be inappropriate, whether the harm to the Green Belt by way of inappropriateness and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify it.

Reasons

Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt

3. The site is in the Bristol and Bath Green Belt. Paragraph 145 e) of the Framework lists exceptional circumstances when construction of new buildings would not be inappropriate in the Green Belt, including limited infilling in villages.
4. The site is towards the end of a long ribbon of development radiating along the north side of Over Lane away from Almondsbury. Near the site, the road has

the character of a country lane, bounded by hedges and stone walls, and lacks any footpath. Neighbouring houses are only distantly visible and well screened by vegetation. A short distance beyond the site, the road is bound by fields on both sides and feels more rural in character. I therefore consider that the site relates to the semi-rural area beyond the village of Almondsbury and I do not consider it to be part of the built-up area of the village. In addition, I do not consider that the site forms part of a small settlement in its own right, given the large distances between houses along this stretch of road.

5. It follows that the proposed development would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt. This is in conflict with Policy CS5 and CS34 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan: Core Strategy (adopted 2013)(CS) and PSP7 of the South Gloucestershire Policies Sites and Places Plan (adopted 2017)(PSPP), which together require that proposals in the Green Belt are not inappropriate and comply with the Framework.

The effect on openness of the Green Belt

6. The site comprises grassed land and is currently devoid of built form. The development of two, two-storey detached houses with would therefore have an adverse impact on openness. The increase in built form and bulk would be visible from the public domain, albeit fleetingly from the road. Overall, given that there are other houses to either side and Springwood Nurseries to the rear, I consider that the proposal would have a moderate adverse effect on the openness of the Green Belt.

Suitability of the location in the open countryside

7. The site is approximately 800 m beyond the settlement boundary defined by the Policies Map and therefore in the open countryside, in which development is strictly controlled. The location does not meet any of the exceptions for residential development in this location listed in Policy PSP40 of the PSPP or Policy CS5 of the CS. Site specific factors may lead to an exceptional finding that development is acceptable in this situation, but given the large distance from the settlement boundary, the lack of transport options and semi-rural character of the area, I do not find that a compelling case can be made for this at this location.

Other considerations

8. I have reviewed the appeals brought to my attention regarding local infilling in the Green Belt. The recent appeal decision letter for a similar development at Springwood House¹ gave clear reasons for the difference in circumstances between the cases, which I do not consider it is necessary to repeat here. I have noted new information regarding separation distances, but do not consider that this changes the conclusions in paragraph 14 of the earlier decision.
9. In their final comments, the appellant introduces the argument that the site also constitutes previously developed land. Notwithstanding that the Council have not had a chance to comment on this, I consider that the addition of two, two-storey detached houses in a location otherwise unbuilt on would clearly have a greater impact on openness and would therefore not meet the requirements of paragraph 145 g) of the Framework.

¹ APP/P0119/W/19/3234390 (October 2019)

10. There would be benefits from increasing housing supply and the contribution this would bring to the local economy, but as this is only two dwellings the benefits from this would be limited.

Balancing exercise

11. I have found that the proposed development would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would have a harmful impact on its openness. These matters carry substantial weight. I have also found that there would be conflict with the Development Plan in respect of the location of the proposed development and this adds further weight to that already identified.
12. Against this has to be balanced the factors in favour of the proposed development, as outlined above. In this particular case, I do not consider that they outweigh the harm that would be caused. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the appeal do not exist.

Conclusions

13. For the reasons above, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

B Davies

INSPECTOR