
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 September 2020

by R Morgan MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 October 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/P3420/W/20/3248508

Land adjacent to 'Gracelands', Station Road, Onneley, Crewe CW3 9QQ

- 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 J Finney against the decision of Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 19/00700/FUL, dated 2 September 2019, was refused by notice dated 29 October 2019.
 - The development proposed is the erection of two detached dwellings.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The decision notice refers to the impact of the scheme on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers, but the Council's appeal statement confirms that this was an error, as revisions to the scheme made during the application stage were sufficient to overcome initial concerns. I have therefore not addressed this matter any further.
3. The appeal site is within the area covered by the Madeley Neighbourhood Plan. Whilst this plan has been subject to consultation, it has not yet been submitted for examination. I have therefore afforded limited weight to policies in the neighbourhood plan in this appeal.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the occupiers of the proposed dwellings would have adequate access to services by an acceptable choice of modes of travel.

Reasons

5. Policy SP1 of the Newcastle-under-Lyme Core Spatial Strategy (Core Strategy) directs new housing primarily towards sites in the urban areas of Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme, and to previously developed land which can support sustainable patterns of development with access to services and service centres by foot, public transport and cycling. Within the rural area, Core Strategy Policy ASP6 directs new housing to brownfield sites within the key rural service centres, which include Madeley.
6. The appeal site is centrally located within the small settlement of Onneley, around 2 miles from Madeley. Onneley comprises of a cluster of dispersed development, focussed around the junctions of Newcastle Road (A525) with

Station Road and School Lane. Although located within the settlement of Onneley, the appeal site is not within a defined 'village envelope' in the Newcastle under Lyme Local Plan 2011 (Local Plan). Onneley is treated as being within the open countryside within the Local Plan. Policy H1 restricts new residential development within such areas to one of three specific circumstances, none of which the proposal complies with.

7. Core Strategy Policies SP1 and ASP6, and Local Plan Policy H1 are concerned with meeting housing requirements, but Inspectors in a number of previous appeal decisions (including ref APP/P3420/W/18/3215969), have found that these policies do not reflect an up to date assessment of housing needs, and as such are out of date. However, the overall strategy of directing new development to the larger settlements, which have access to a wider range of facilities, reflects the environmental objective in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which seeks to protect and enhance our natural environment and make efficient use of land.
8. Furthermore, Paragraph 103 of the Framework seeks to actively manage patterns of growth to locations which allow a choice of sustainable transport modes, whilst recognising that such options vary between urban and rural areas. Policies SP1, ASP6 and H1 provide for development in the larger rural settlements, which have access to a wider range of facilities. In this way, the policies allow for development to meet rural needs whilst limiting the need for travel. Whilst out of date in respect of detailed housing requirements, the policies are part of an overall strategy which remains consistent with the Framework. I therefore give these policies significant weight in this appeal.
9. Onneley has some basic facilities including a village hall, pub and sports facilities, but to access a wider range of day to day services including shops, schools and health facilities, it would be necessary for occupiers of the proposed development to travel to Madeley or another nearby local service centre.
10. Madeley has a good range of facilities and is less than 2 miles away, but Station Road is narrow and poorly lit, and the A525 is a busy main road with a number of sharp bends. Footways along the route are not continuous and, where they are present, are frequently narrow. Newcastle Road would not provide a safe or attractive route for walking to Madeley. Off road routes may be available which would provide a more pleasant alternative, but their use would be limited by weather conditions and a lack of lighting.
11. The distance to Madeley means that cycling may be a realistic option for some. However, there are no dedicated cycling facilities or signage, and traffic speeds and bends on the main road are likely to be off-putting for many less confident cyclists. There is a bus stop on Newcastle Road close to the appeal site which may provide school pick-ups, but I note comments from local residents that there is no longer a local bus service through the village. Options for cycling and public transport are therefore likely to be limited.
12. Owing to the lack of alternative options, it is likely that occupiers of the proposed development would need to make use of private motor vehicles for the majority of trips. Vehicles in future will need to have lower emissions, and the proposal would make provision for electric charging points. However, the use of an electric car cannot be guaranteed. Furthermore, policies which aim to reduce the need to travel do not differentiate between electric or other types

of cars, including those with lower emissions, which still have environmental and other impacts associated with their use.

13. Working from home is reducing the need for some commuting, but this depends on the type of work involved and does not negate the need to access day to day facilities such as schools, health and community facilities. Increased use of online shopping and delivery services may also reduce the need for travel by occupiers, but this still generates the need for traffic movements.
14. I acknowledge that a large proportion of people in this country have access to at least one car, and that the distance to local services in Madeley is not excessive. However, the proposal would be contrary to the objectives of the Framework and local policies, which seek to reduce the need for travel in order to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health.
15. I conclude that the proposed dwellings would not have adequate access to services by an acceptable choice of modes of travel. The proposal would conflict with Core Strategy Policies SP1 and ASP6, and Local Plan Policy H1, all of which direct residential development to larger urban and rural centres which have access to a range of services and facilities. There is further conflict with Core Strategy Policy SP3, which seeks to maximise the accessibility of new residential development by walking, cycling and public transport.

Other Matters

16. Planning permission has previously been granted for equestrian use on the appeal site. Whilst this could generate traffic movements and activity on site, it would depend on the intensity of use and could be very limited. Furthermore, stables are an acceptable use in the countryside, and the existence of this planning permission does not justify the appeal proposal which is contrary to the development plan.
17. I note the appellant's comments that development of the site would provide security benefits to existing properties through additional activity and surveillance. However, I have no reason to suppose that crime and anti-social behaviour is a particular problem in this rural location, and even if it is, that the appeal proposal would be the most appropriate way to address it.
18. The occupiers of the proposed houses could help to support local community activities and businesses, but this could also be achieved through new development in Madeley, which would be closer to a wider range of local facilities and would better reflect the development strategy for the area.
19. The houses would be energy efficient and built to a high environmental standard, but this does not justify their construction in a countryside location, which is not easily accessible to day-to-day services and facilities and does not comply with the development plan and provisions of the Framework.
20. The Council has confirmed that it is able to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable sites for housing, but I note the appellant's comments that there is a lack of up to date information to support this claim. Even if the housing land supply has fallen below five years, the provision of two houses would make a very modest contribution towards meeting housing needs. Benefits to the local economy would also be small. When taken together, the benefits of the proposal would not outweigh the significant environmental harm which I have

identified. The adverse impact of granting planning permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework when taken as a whole, and the presumption in favour of development would not apply.

Conclusion

21. Material considerations do not indicate that I should conclude other than in accordance with the development plan as a whole. I therefore conclude that the appeal be dismissed.

R Morgan

INSPECTOR