
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 December 2020

by J P Longmuir BA (Hons) DipUD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 January 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/F1610/W/20/3259960

Land at Wayside, Totterdown Lane, Fairford

- 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 Manor West Homes against the decision of Cotswold District Council.
 - The application Ref 20/01062/FUL, dated 12 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 1 September 2020.
 - The development proposed is erection of 7 no. dwellings together with associated access, parking and landscaping.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the accessibility of the proposed dwellings to facilities and services.

Reasons

3. The appeal site lies just outside Fairford, linked by Horcott Road but the town centre is a considerable distance away. There is a pavement on one side of this road and lighting. Fairford provides basic everyday facilities.
4. The site is broadly triangular shaped. One side faces Totterdown Lane, an uneven gravel track which joins several gardens, but other sides face the countryside. There is a large lake nearby and an undulating grass field. The site is vacant and has been cleared of much of its vegetation and is largely open.
5. The site is close to bus stops on Horcott Road, but the service is likely to be very limited in such a rural area. Walking to facilities would be possible but prolonged due to the distances involved. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the occupants of the development would be dependent on private transport to access everyday services, facilities and socialising. As such the site would not be well located for new dwellings.
6. The settlement boundary appears to offer scope for infilling/small scale development within its limits for new housing to support the town and indeed a site close by has been allocated for 12 houses. The appeal site lies almost adjacent but outside the settlement boundary of Fairford. This development would be an extension of the settlement and the proposed houses would be

several minutes further walk than those within the settlement boundary. Indeed, the nearest route would be Totterdown Lane which as I observed on my site visit is dirty during wet conditions and therefore at such times would be discouraging for walking.

7. The Council has an up to date Local Plan, an excess of 7-years housing land supply and a high delivery rate. Consequently, sufficient new growth is being provided in targeted areas which are readily accessible to facilities. This site has limited accessibility and would be contrary to the Council's strategy. Policy DS4 prevents open market housing outside settlements and the lower-case wording favours development in principal settlements. Indeed, the explanatory text to Policy DS1 explains the main focus is on Cirencester/Chesterton which offer the most facilities. The appellant does question this housing distribution being towards Cirencester rather than Fairford but that reflects the relative size and nature of the settlements.
8. There is an extant permission here for two houses and various other decisions are quoted in support of this fallback position. However, the five additional units here would not be well located in terms of accessibility and therefore would not be justifiable. The other decisions do not lead me to a different conclusion.
9. The proposal would increase housing stock which would have economic and social benefits to the locality and wider area, although these would not outweigh the limited accessibility of the site and undermining the Local Plan strategy. Similarly, CIL payments would be payable but these are intended to provide services for the occupants of the houses, so would be of more mitigation rather than benefit. It is also suggested that house prices are overly high here but that would not be helped by this proposal.
10. The proposed dwellings would also have electric charging points but there is no guarantee of electric cars being used.
11. The site has little vegetation and is simply rough grass. The proposal includes new landscaping, a pond and bat/bird boxes. These would be beneficial but at least in part would be needed to offset the impact of development of an open space adjacent to the countryside and a lake. Consequently, the ecological and landscaping benefits would be very limited and do not outweigh the locational concerns. Similarly, a SUDs pond is proposed but that would be needed to offset the run-off from building on a greenfield site rather than improving flood prevention to the surrounding dwellings. There is an existing access onto a right of way (Totterdown Lane) which would be removed. However, this is on a long straight and given the nature of the route any traffic would be very slow, so the safety benefit would be minimal.
12. It is also suggested that the scheme would make best use of the site. However, it is within the countryside, attractive and housing has been identified elsewhere.
13. I therefore conclude that the occupants of the proposed houses would be likely to be car dependent. Consequently, the proposal is contrary to policy DS4 of the Cotswold District Local Plan and paragraph 79 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which precludes isolated homes in the countryside. Paragraph 8 of the Framework has an economic objective which includes providing development in the right place, the social objective seeks for

accessible services and the other objective is environmental including addressing climate change and low carbon.

Conclusion

14. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

John Longmuir

INSPECTOR