
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 July 2021

by J P Longmuir BA(Hons) DipUD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8 September 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/H1840/W/21/3269522

Land to the rear of Norcelia and Foxborough House, Laurels Road, Offenham, WR11 8RE

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr M Cook against the decision of Wychavon District Council.
 - The application Ref 20/01394/OUT, dated 7 July 2020, was refused by notice dated 27 August 2020.
 - The development proposed is outline application for erection of single dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The above address is taken from the decision notice as it is more comprehensive.
3. The application was submitted as outline with all matters reserved.
4. The revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published on 20 July 2021 after the submission of the appeal statements. Both parties were given the opportunity to comment on its changed significance or otherwise.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are:
 - whether the occupant(s) of the intended dwelling would be dependent upon private car use for everyday living and;
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Whether the occupant(s) would be car dependent

6. The proposed dwelling would be just behind a row of various houses fronting Laurel Road, which is a distinct line of houses within the countryside. On the opposite side of the road is an extensive open agricultural field and glasshouses.

7. The nearest settlement is Offenham. This has a first school, 1.1km away from the site and pub but otherwise the village's facilities are limited and would not meet the everyday needs for secondary schools, health, food, leisure, employment and other services. Such facilities exist at Evesham, but this would be overly long to walk. The Design and Access Statement mentions the potential for employment in the surrounding horticultural industry but that would be very specialist and would be unlikely to be widely utilised.
8. There is a bus service to Evesham, but the services are at best hourly which together with the journey time would be unlikely to be convenient on a regular basis and therefore unlikely to be favoured. Rather I find that the occupants would be car dependent.
9. The proposed development lies outside a settlement and the location would lead to car use and therefore carbon emissions, exacerbating climate change implications.
10. To the sides of the rear part of the site are gardens beyond which there is residential development. I understand that this was allowed at a time when the Council could not show an adequate housing land supply. That is very different to the current situation. I understand that the Development Plan is being reviewed, however other locations may well have better accessibility to services than this site.
11. I therefore conclude that the location of the development would lead to carbon emissions and exacerbate climate change. Policy SWDP1 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan (DP), seeks to promote sustainable development. Additionally, Policy SWDP2 seeks to avoid new houses in the countryside and focuses development on urban areas. The proposal would be in conflict with these policies.

Character and appearance

12. The appeal includes a swath of grass between the drives of houses on Laurel Road and then extends to the rear into a part of an overgrown field. The application form and Design and Access Statement suggest that this was once used for horticulture.
13. The vicinity of the appeal site is characterised by a linear frontage of houses which have a close and largely open aspect to Laurels Road. They are a prominent feature.
14. The proposed dwelling being to the rear would be at odds with the frontage, creating a more extensive expanse of development and in depth which would appear inappropriate in the countryside. It would intensify the perception of the residential presence which is detached and distinct from the village. Whilst Laurels Close is a cul-de-sac offshoot, even this single dwelling would undermine the perception of the linearity of the frontage.
15. I therefore conclude that the development would harm the character and appearance of the area.
16. Policy 21 of the DP requires development to integrate with its surroundings and reinforce local distinctiveness. The proposal would be in conflict with this policy.

Other matters

17. The proposal would be for a self-build dwelling and the Planning Practice Guidance encourages such development to help diversify the housing market. It is also suggested that the Local Plan is out of date because it does not include such a policy. Paragraph 62 of the Framework does encourage self-build, and I also note the increasing entries on the self-build register. However, this would not outweigh the effect on the character and appearance and the impact of development in an area with car dependency, indeed paragraph 65 of the Framework requires provision for self-build as part of major developments.
18. I note the submitted appeal cases¹, for self build dwellings. The Inspector at the Gamlingay case found that it was accessible to services and the Droitwich Spa site is described as urban fringe. These do not appear to be comparable to the particular case here and its poor accessibility to services.
19. Paragraph 8 of the Framework provides the three overarching objectives of the planning system: economic, social and environmental. The proposal would also make a contribution to housing land supply and bring social and economic benefits but would conflict with the environmental objective. The benefits would be very limited and would not outweigh the harm above.

Conclusion

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

John Longmuir

INSPECTOR

¹ APP/H1840/W/19/3241879 and APP/W0530/W/19/3230103