



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 19 October 2021

by Andrew Owen MA BA(Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 04 November 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/P0240/W/21/3272146

Woodside Livery Stables, West End, Haynes, Bedford MK45 3QU

- 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 Brendan Mullan against the decision of Central Bedfordshire Council.
 - The application Ref CB/20/03651/OUT, dated 7 October 2020, was refused by notice dated 11 December 2020.
 - The development proposed is erection of 7 detached dwelling houses.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The application was submitted in outline form with matters of access for consideration at this stage, and all other matters reserved for later consideration. I therefore have treated the proposed block plan drawing as an indicative plan.
3. Since the time of the Council's decision the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan has been adopted. As such, policies CS14, CS16, DM3 and DM14 of the Central Bedfordshire Core Strategy and Development Management Policies document, referred to in the Council's decision, now carry no weight. The Council have advised that Policies HQ1, SP7 and EE5 of the Local Plan are now the relevant policies.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. The site currently accommodates a number of mostly vacant buildings associated with the livery stables. There are a handful of detached houses set comfortably on their plots nearby, and a commercial premises at the adjacent land which contains a number of buildings including a large barn. Nevertheless, the area is generally rural in character with most of the surrounding land being open and undeveloped. The livery nature of the existing use including the design of the buildings adds to the rural appearance of the area.
6. The block plan shows seven detached dwellings with each having its own double garage. Though the layout of the site is indicative, given the shape of the site it appears to be a likely layout for seven detached dwellings.

7. The site measures just under half a hectare in total and so the development would be at a density of about 14 dwellings per hectare. Though this is a generally low density, it would be substantially greater than that of the surrounding residential development in this rural area. It would also be greater than the density of the previously permitted scheme¹ which comprised five dwellings on a part of its site which is broadly similar in size to the current appeal site.
8. The provision of seven dwellings on this site would appear cramped, notwithstanding their scale or design. It is understood that the Council's Design Guide states that densities under 25 dwellings per hectare would be appropriate in rural locations, and that the National Planning Policy Framework advocates a more effective use of land. However the proposal would appear excessively cramped on this particular site given its specific context. The provision of a details landscaping scheme, as a reserved matter, would not wholly mitigate the cramped suburban density.
9. The large barn on the adjacent site is partially hidden behind a number of large trees so does not appear prominent from the road. Nonetheless, it does have a significant length and forms a considerable mass of built form along the west boundary of the site. Although the visual permeability of the appeal site may be increased due to the replacement of the few current large buildings with more but smaller buildings, the adjacent barn would appear as an enclosing feature adding to the cramped nature of the proposal. It is understood that there is an intention to remove the barn. However, as it is outside the appeal site and is not indicated as being within the ownership of the appellant, its removal could not be ensured.
10. The indicative plans show dwelling 1 at the front of the site set forward of the adjacent dwellings at Dramaddition and Arkle Lodge. The next house to the west along the road at Greenacres is also set back from the highway by a similar distance. However that house is around the bend in the road and is separated from the site by some mature trees. As such the building line provided by Dramaddition and Arkle Lodge is not a strong feature in the street scene. Also the houses next to Greenacres at Scotsdale and Kimblewick House, are close to the road. As such, if dwelling 1 were provided in the position indicated, it would not appear inharmonious in the street scene.
11. Nevertheless, the proposal would appear cramped on this site by being built at a density which would be incongruous with its surroundings. It would therefore harm the character and appearance of the area and would conflict with policies HQ1, EE5 and SP7 which all aim to ensure that development responds positively to its local character and context.

Other Matters

12. I note the reference to a development of nine units at Silver End Road. However from the details provided, that site appears to be part of a settlement with a greater number of houses, and which are set closer together, than is the case around the appeal site. As such the two schemes are not wholly comparable.

¹ Ref CB/19/00092/OUT

13. I note the Council's comments regarding the accessibility of the site to local bus stops and the nearby villages of Clophill and Haynes. Against that is weighed the extant planning permission for five units at the site which suggests the Council previously found the accessibility between the site and these facilities acceptable. The development would provide some benefit to the viability of these local services. As such I give moderate weight to the provision of seven dwellings to add to the Council's supply and the support they could give to local services.
14. I also note the concerns in the Council's appeal statement, in respect of the overdominating effect of the adjacent barn on dwellings 6 and 7. However, as they acknowledge, the layout of the site is a reserved matter and it may be that a development could be provided that would be separated sufficiently from this building such that it did not cause an unacceptable effect in this regard.

Conclusion

15. The proposal would be unacceptably harmful to the character and appearance of the area. As such, the proposal would fail to accord with the development plan as a whole and the other considerations do not outweigh that harm to indicate the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan.
16. Therefore, for the reasons given above, and taking account of all other matters, the appeal is dismissed.

Andrew Owen

INSPECTOR