

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 April 2022

by Matthew Jones BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6 May 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/P1133/W/21/3289581

Land Adjacent Haccombe Rise, Long Lane, St Marychurch Road, Newton Abbot TQ12 4SF

- 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 L Coker against the decision of Teignbridge District Council.
 - The application Ref 20/01817/FUL, dated 5 October 2020, was refused by notice dated 3 August 2021.
 - The development proposed is self-build bungalow.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the suitability of the site for a dwelling, having regard to local and national policy for the supply of housing, with reference to the accessibility of services.

Reasons

3. The site forms a modest plot of land containing a small agricultural building. The dwelling Haccombe Rise is to the south, with the stead of Little Haccombe Farm across Long Lane to the west. The site and these environs occupy an open countryside position fairly close to the east edge of Newton Abbot.
4. Policy S22 of the Teignbridge Local Plan 2013-2033 (adopted 2014) (the TLP) provides that, within the open countryside, development will be managed to provide attractive, accessible and biodiverse landscapes, sustainable settlements and a resilient rural economy. To that end, the policy expressly limits development to a closed list of circumstances. The scheme would not conform to any of the circumstances, and this causes conflict with the policy.
5. Policy S1 of the TLP, subject to Policy S22, requires schemes to perform well against several criteria. This includes the accessibility of a site by walking, cycling and public transport for main travel purposes, and also the environmental effects of fumes or other forms of pollution arising from the proposal, including from associated traffic.
6. Whilst Newton Abbot is the principal settlement within the area, the distances to the nearest day to day facilities within it are quite considerable. The route into the town via St Marychurch Road is also across a steep hillside, along a quite fast-moving carriageway, largely without street lighting and dedicated pedestrian space. It is therefore likely to be a highly unappealing environment for pedestrians and, to a lesser extent, cyclists. I am not aware of any

reachable bus stops within the locality of the site. On this basis, the vast majority of trips to and from the bungalow would be by private motor vehicle.

7. Paragraph 105 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas. Even so, the likely near total dependence on private travel leads me to find that the scheme would have an unacceptable level of access to services. That Paragraph 105 also seeks to direct significant development to sustainable locations should not be taken as support for minor schemes, like this, in locations so bereft of sustainable transport options.
8. It follows that the scheme would equally increase our reliance on carbon emitting transport, albeit this would be modest given the small scale of the scheme and the relative distance to Newton Abbot by vehicle. Nonetheless, these issues draw the proposal into conflict with Policy S1 in my opinion.
9. The appellant states that the site is not isolated in the Framework's terms. In my view, the buildings around the site present as little more than a farmstead allied to the surrounding fields, and do not have the appearance or character of a definable settlement. On that basis, I consider the site to be isolated. Moreover, I do not prescribe to the notion that the site's level of inaccessibility to services is analogous to typical standards and behaviours within suburban areas; such areas are generally planned to provide networks where walking or cycling to basic services and public transport is comfortable and achievable.
10. I have been directed to traffic movements associated with the nearby football pitches, and permission for a business park on the west side of Long Lane. The former appears to represent an unsustainable transport pattern in itself, which does not therefore set a positive precedent for the scheme. I have only limited details as to the circumstances which led to permission being granted for the business park. However, it is a scale and type of development which is materially different to the proposal, logically with different envisaged traffic patterns and a different magnitude of economic benefits. It has consequently had little influence on my reasoning here.
11. The appellant has referred to the Council's 'Small Residential Sites HELAA Methodology'. However, I am not aware that this is a policy document or has borne substantive public scrutiny; it appears to relate to a scoping exercise for the Council's emerging Local Plan Review. Given its current role and status, it carries little weight and does not alter my findings.
12. Accordingly, I conclude that the site would not be suitable for the dwelling, having regard to local and national policy for the supply of housing, with reference to the accessibility of services. The proposal would conflict with the relevant aims of Policies S1. S1A and S22 of the TLP and the Framework.

Other Considerations

13. I recognise the appellant's circumstances, and how living close to Haccombe Rise would allow these to be addressed and provide a degree of independence. However, there is no clear evidence to rule out the potential for this to be addressed in alternative ways, such as at Haccombe Rise itself, or in housing in the area. This matter has therefore carried limited weight in my assessment.

Other Matters

14. The site is in a Landscape Connectivity Zone associated with the South Hams Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The potential for the existing, open sided, barn to provide bat habitat is low, and the existing boundary hedges could be retained. Given that lighting could be subject to a planning condition, I can ascertain at the screening stage that likely significant effects on the integrity of the SAC could be ruled out, had I been in a position to allow the appeal.

Planning Balance

15. The proposal would conflict with the development plan read as a whole. This is the statutory starting point for decision making, and the Framework states that where an application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan permission should not usually be granted. Within this context, it is my opinion that there are no other considerations, including those put forward by the appellant, that would justify setting aside the development plan in this case.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons outlined above, and taking all other matters raised into account, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Matthew Jones

INSPECTOR