



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 August 2022

by Bhupinder Thandi BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 September 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/R1845/W/22/3292313

**Land adjacent to Keys Meadow, New Road, Far Forest, Nr. Kidderminster
DY14 9TQ**

- 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 and Mrs Prince against the decision of Wyre Forest District Council.
 - The application Ref 21/0389/OUT, dated 6 April 2021, was refused by notice dated 19 January 2022.
 - The development proposed is construction of 4 no. 2 bed bungalows.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The application is in outline with all matters reserved for future consideration. I have determined the appeal on this basis.
3. An illustrative layout accompanies the application and I have paid regard to this layout in so far as assessing the principle of development in land use terms.
4. It is apparent that the proposed development was amended during the application to reduce the number of dwellings from 5 to 4. Accordingly, the description of development in the heading above has been taken from the appeal form which reflects this change. The Council dealt with the proposal on this basis and so shall I.
5. The Wyre Forest Core Strategy (2010) and the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan (2013) referred to by the Council in its decision notice have been superseded by policies in the Wyre Forest District Local Plan (2022) (LP) which has been adopted since the appeal was submitted. Both parties have commented upon this change in policy and thus neither party has been prejudiced by this change.
6. The appellant has submitted a signed Unilateral Undertaking (UU) securing the proposed dwellings as discounted Local Needs Housing. I have addressed this in my reasoning below.

Main Issue

7. The main issue is whether the appeal site is an appropriate location for new housing having regard to the development plan and relevant national planning policies.

Reasons

8. The appeal is located beyond the settlement boundary of the village of Far Forest but lies adjacent to it. The site is a field enclosed by hedgerow and trees. It neighbours existing residential development to both the north and south and lies opposite the local school.
9. Far Forest is identified as a suitable location for new development under LP Policy SP.2. The policy states that sustainable forms of development including housing to meet local needs within settlement boundaries will be supported. Part 4 sets out that permission for development beyond settlement boundaries will be strictly controlled and will only be granted if specific policies allow development in such locations including rural exception sites.
10. Policy SP.11 relates to proposals for rural housing needs and supports developments to meet specific local needs including rural exception sites subject to a number of criteria. The Council will work closely with local bodies including Parish Councils to identify appropriate sites for such schemes on windfall sites. However, the introduction text indicates rural housing should be located within settlement boundaries.
11. Therefore, there is a tension between the two policies in respect of directing new development to appropriate locations. As such, a balance needs to be struck between the delivery of new housing and supporting rural communities.
12. The appellant has submitted the scheme on the basis of Local Needs Housing being discounted and marketed and intended for occupation for persons with a local connection. The application is accompanied by a signed UU as the mechanism by which to deliver it.
13. I note that the Rock Parish Housing Needs Survey identifies a requirement for 2-bed bungalows. However, the survey was undertaken prior to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, and it is likely that housing needs in the area have changed during this period. Furthermore, given the low response rate to the survey I am not satisfied it provides a robust analysis of local housing need. I therefore give it limited weight in coming to my decision. As it stands before me, there is no compelling evidence to suggest that the scheme would address a specific need in Far Forest and Rock Parish.
14. I acknowledge that maintaining a deliverable supply of housing land supply is not a ceiling and the National Planning Policy Framework seeks to boost the supply of housing including through windfall sites, on small sites that would not normally be used for housing and in response to local circumstances reflecting local needs. However, I have not been made aware of any pressing housing need that would justify a different overall conclusion that the appeal should be dismissed.
15. As such, the proposed development would not accord with the Council's strategy for housing conflicting with LP Policies SP.2 and SP.11 in this respect. This resultant harm would undermine the confidence of a plan led system and

the delivery of housing in appropriate locations and that meets specific local needs.

Other Matters

16. I note that representations were made by local occupants raising additional concerns including in respect of highway safety, ecology and flood risk. However, given my findings, it is not necessary to consider these matters in detail.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons set out above the appeal does not succeed.

B Thandi

INSPECTOR