



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 May 2023

by C Rose BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 June 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/D1265/W/23/3315231

Land at Verwood Road, Woodlands, Wimborne BH21 8LS

- 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 R Black against the decision of Dorset Council.
 - The application Ref P/FUL/2022/03829, dated 21 June 2022, was refused by notice dated 8 December 2022.
 - The development proposed is the erection of two dwellings with new vehicular access and associated car parking.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The site falls within 5km of the Dorset Heathlands which comprises the Dorset Heathlands Special Protection Area, Dorset Heathlands Ramsar Site, Dorset Heaths Special Area of Conservation and Dorset Heaths Special Area of Conservation (Purbeck and Wareham) and Studland Dunes. I will return to this below.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are whether the appeal site is an appropriate location for housing, and the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area with particular regard to boundary treatment.

Reasons

Appropriate Location

4. The site lies within the Bournemouth Green Belt but falls outside of the Village Infill Policy Envelope as defined by the East Dorset Local Plan (2002) (LP). However, both parties consider that the proposal represents limited infilling in a village in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and that as a result does not represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt. I concur with this.
5. The site comprises part of a field with some planted boundaries and access onto the road. A residential property, Strathyre, adjoins the site to the west with the remainder of the field to the north and an access lane with residential properties beyond to the east. The village is spread out on a number of roads accessed off the main Verwood Road.

6. The services and facilities in the village comprise two churches, a village hall and a limited bus service. As a result, and despite the range of activities and events at the churches and village hall, the site is not in a location that is easily accessible by means other than by the motor vehicle. In light of this, and as the site is accessed via unlit roads with no footpaths, this would make walking or cycling to a wider range of services and facilities, particularly in the dark and in colder months, unattractive. Moreover, access to the closest settlement with a wide range of services and facilities at Verwood is up an incline making this journey less attractive to walkers and cyclists.
7. Bearing this in mind, the site is not well-served by key services and facilities and is not in an accessible location well linked to existing communities that would promote alternative means of travel to the motor vehicle.
8. Policy KS2 of the Christchurch and East Dorset Local Plan Part 1 - Core Strategy (2014) (CS) defines the settlement hierarchy and settlement types. It states that the location, scale and distribution of development should conform with the settlement hierarchy as they provide the best access to services, facilities and employment. Policy KS2 of the CS defines Woodlands/Whitmore as a Village and states that within Villages, only very limited development will be allowed that supports the role of the settlement as a provider of services to its home community.
9. Policy KS2 does not define the extent of the settlements but in light of the location of the site close to one of the village churches, bus stop, and with built development to its east, west and further to the north, the site falls within the village for the purposes of Policy KS2 of the CS. I acknowledge that the site falls outside of the extent of the Village Infill Policy Envelope but the supporting text to saved Policy GBV1 of the LP clarifies that this 'should not be confused with village boundaries'.
10. Given the size of the village, the proposal represents 'very limited development'. The proposal would provide some support to the village's services and facilities in accordance with Policy KS2 of the LP, and paragraph 79 of the Framework indicates that new housing should enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. However, due to the small scale of the development and narrow range of services and facilities in the village to contribute to, the proposal would provide limited support to the settlement. This limited support would not outweigh the harm caused from the reliance on the motor car and need to promote sustainable development.
11. In light of the above, I conclude that the proposal is not an appropriate location for housing. As a result, the proposal would not accord with Policy KS11 of the CS. This seeks to ensure, amongst other things, that development reduces the need to travel, promotes alternative modes of travel, directs development to accessible locations that are well linked to existing communities by walking, cycling and public transport routes. Whilst the proposal does not represent significant development in terms of paragraph 105 of the Framework, the proposal is also contrary to the Framework as it fails to promote sustainable transport modes.

Character and Appearance

12. The proposed Site and Location Plan detail the provision of 1.8m high close boarded fencing to the site's north and east boundaries.

13. Given the open nature of the field to the north of the site, and presence of an existing hedge to the eastern boundary providing a rural verdant setting to the adjacent lane and wider area, the proposed fencing would introduce a harsh and alien feature into the landscape.
14. However, a condition could be used to secure more appropriate planted north and east boundaries were I to allow the appeal. It is relevant to note that both parties agree that this would be acceptable.
15. In light of this, I conclude therefore on this matter that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the area with particular regard to boundary fencing. As a result, the proposal would comply with Policy HE2 of the CS. This seeks to ensure, amongst other things, that the design of development is of a high quality and be permitted if it is compatible with or improves its surroundings in relation to materials and landscaping.

Other Matters

16. The Dorset Heathlands Framework 2020-2025 Supplementary Planning Document April 2020 seeks to secure mitigation as a result of development within 5km of the Dorset Heathlands towards any effects on its integrity. However, as I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons, I do not need to consider this matter or the related duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 further.
17. I have had regard to the suitable design and appearance of the dwellings, provision of a safe access, adequate parking and refuse provision, and lack of harm to biodiversity and flood risk. However, these matters are neutral in my consideration.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given above I conclude that the proposal conflicts with the development plan taken as a whole and there are no other considerations, including the provisions of the Framework, which outweigh this finding. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

C Rose

INSPECTOR