



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 August 2023

by Ben Plenty BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 September 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/C3240/W/23/3319161

Land north of Birchmoor Lane, Edgmond, Telford TF10 8LA

- 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 Kez, Ashley & Lindon Cresswell against the decision of Telford and Wrekin Council.
 - The application Ref TWC/2022/0113, dated 25 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 2 December 2022.
 - The development proposed is an outline application for the erection of 3no. dwellings and associated works (with all matters reserved).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal proposal is made in outline form with all matters reserved. The indicative layout plan shows three dwellings arranged in a linear configuration, with separate access points onto Birchmoor Lane. The indicative layout plan provides a useful illustration of one way the site might be developed. However, as all matters are reserved, I have afforded only limited weight to these details and shall consider this appeal in those terms.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the site is a suitable location for housing with regard to local and national policies.

Reasons

4. The Telford and Wrekin Local Plan [2018](LP) establishes the Council's approach to the distribution of housing across the district. LP Policies SP1-SP4 describe the Plan's spatial strategy with most development directed towards Telford and Newport. Policy SP3 relates to the development in Rural Areas. In such areas development will be supported where it addresses the needs of rural communities, with development directed to the reuse of previously developed land and settlements with good infrastructure. It states that the Council supports the delivery of around 1,000 homes in such areas. This spatial housing approach is consistent with the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) that seek to locate new development in locations that can gain access to infrastructure and facilities.
5. LP policy HO10 relates to residential development in rural areas. This states that the Council will support limited infilling in identified settlements, including Edgmond, that can demonstrate it would meet the rural housing requirement.

The supporting commentary identifies that the listed settlements have the highest concentration of primary services as well as other services to promote community life. The commentary expects new housing to be developed on small-scale sites within existing settlements. With respect to Edgmond it specifically states that the policy relates to Edgmond only, not Edgmond March or Harper Adams University, and it is important the Edgmond does not coalesce with Newport. LP policy HO11 refers to rural exception sites. This policy lists six key features of such housing that must be achieved for such development to be found to be suitable, it is uncontested between main parties that these criteria are not met in connection with the proposal.

6. The Edgmond Neighbourhood Plan (NP) was made in 2018. NP policy RES1, with respect to residential development within the village, states that suitable infill sites will be supported where they would make a positive contribution to the local character and its distinctiveness. NP policy RES2 states that residential development outside the village will be resisted as it would, *inter alia*, fail to safeguard the rural character of the village and contribute to ribbon development. The NP does not define the village boundary.
7. The Local Plan and the Framework do not define infill development. However, the planning portal defines this as being "the development of a relatively small gap between existing buildings" which I find to be a useful guide. Accordingly, the question of whether a development would be considered as an infill site and whether it would be within a village, are matters of planning judgement.
8. The appeal site is a field alongside a single-track lane with dwellings either side of the site, being 'Barnfield' and 'Westwinds'. The site is enclosed by existing field boundaries and the proposed plots be a similar depth as adjacent dwellings. The site would be occupied by three dwellings. These would be relatively widely spaced and generally reflect the plot size of the neighbours. As a result, I find the site to be 'a relatively small gap' in consideration of the local context. Consequently, due to its size and being between existing residential plots, the appeal site would be an infill plot.
9. Despite the proximity of neighbouring dwellings, and its visually enclosed character, the site makes a positive contribution to the surrounding countryside in its rural setting. The site slopes from its rear to the front providing distant views of the surrounding countryside from its frontage. The lane is connected to High Street, with the site being separated from the main built-up area of the village by several fields. The site is to the west of the village, significantly beyond the western edge of its built-up edge and away from its main cluster of buildings. As such, the adjacent properties are outlier dwellings, separated from the main village, within an area with a dispersed settlement pattern.
10. Birchmoor Lane is a narrow, single-track lane that becomes a farm track after 'Barnfield'. The lane has no apparent passing points, streetlights or footways emphasising its rural setting. Therefore, the site has a tenuous visual and functional link to the main cluster of village buildings.
11. Furthermore, the proposed development would visually connect 'Barnfield' and 'Westwinds', creating an uncharacteristic ribbon development that would be contrary to the existing dispersed form of buildings. Accordingly, whilst not an isolated site it is not deemed to be within the village and would relate poorly to it, in conflict with the existing pattern of development.

12. Consequently, the site would represent development in the open countryside and would be an un-suitable infill plot. Therefore, the proposal would conflict with LP policies SP3 and HO10 and NP policies RES1 and RES2, as defined above. LP policy HO11, in relation to exception sites, is not relevant to the proposal and weighs neither for nor against the scheme.

Other Matters

13. The proposed housing would deliver social and economic benefits both during and post construction. The site would be within a reasonable walking distance of the High Street. The settlement provides access to some local services including a primary school, church, and post office. Nonetheless, the locational benefits of the site would be limited due to its rural context.
14. Moreover, whilst bio-diversity benefits could be secured by planning conditions, these would provide only negligible gains to local wildlife.

Planning balance and conclusion

15. The Framework seeks to significantly boost the supply of housing. However, three further dwellings would provide only a minor gain to the supply of housing within the district and therefore does not weigh strongly in favour of the scheme. Furthermore, whilst the site is within an area deemed suitable for rural housing, it is not within the village. Being within the open countryside, the proposal would relate poorly to the surrounding built-up area. Consequently, the limited benefits delivered by the proposed housing would be of insufficient magnitude to outweigh the objectives of the Council's spatial housing strategy.
16. The proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole and there are no other considerations, including the provisions of the Framework, which outweigh this finding. Therefore, for the reasons given, the appeal should not succeed.

Ben Plenty

INSPECTOR