



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 June 2024

by J D Clark BA (Hons) DpTRP MCD DMS MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 November 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/L3245/W/23/3334667

World War II munitions bunker west of Shrawardine Castle, Shrawardine Castle Farm, Shrawardine, Shrewsbury SY4 1AJ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr & Mrs S & R Jones of Adlebury Limited against the decision of Shropshire Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/01573/FUL.
 - The development is proposed conversion of a World War II munitions bunker to a holiday let.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The former World War II munitions bunker is a non-designated heritage asset. However, no heritage implications have been raised in the Council's refusal of the application although I have taken into account the retention and development of a heritage asset in my determination of this appeal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the site is a suitable location for a holiday let having regard to its accessibility.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises a former munitions bunker and access to it. It is adjacent to another bunker and originally formed part of a wider group of similar buildings which provided secure storage during World War II.
5. Access to the bunker is across fields from a country lane which passes through the village of Shrawardine. This is described in the Shropshire Hierarchy of Settlements¹ as being a 'recognisable named settlement' in Shropshire and falling under the category for 'other rural settlement'. There is little by way of local services or facilities in the village so it would be necessary for those living or staying in or around the village to travel farther afield. Nesscliffe, described in the hierarchy as a 'community hub settlement', is referred to as being about 2 miles away. Shrewsbury, the 'strategic centre' in the hierarchy, with its full range of services and facilities, is accessible from the A5 which is about 2.5 miles from the appeal site with the town being about 8 miles away.

¹ Shropshire Council Hierarchy of Settlements (2017).

6. Shrawardine does not have a bus service although the appellants refer to Shropshire Council's 'Connect on Demand' service which may become available in the future. The National Cycle Route 81 and The Shropshire Way run to the east of the appeal site, and therefore the proposed holiday let may well be a choice for cyclists and walkers requiring a rural location. However, a significant portion of them would still likely be dependent on a car or equivalent vehicle.
7. The proposed holiday let would be substantial in size aimed at large group/family holiday lettings. The converted bunker would provide accommodation for up to 18 guests. This would add to the holiday accommodation already offered by the appellants at Shrawardine Castle Farm from which the appellants run a mixed arable and livestock farm together with holiday accommodation which has developed to diversify the business. Their existing business is well established and can accommodate 26 guests. It is described as being about half a mile away from the appeal site.
8. The proposal would provide a large unit of accommodation which would generate a substantial amount of comings and goings from holiday makers. Arrivals, departures and activities associated with people enjoying their holiday and the wider aspects of the region would inevitably involve journeys by car. Whilst I have no concerns from a highway safety point of view and notwithstanding the existing holiday accommodation run by the appellants, the remoteness of this large scale holiday let would make it unsustainable.
9. This would conflict with the objectives of Shropshire's Core Strategy² Policy CS1 and not meet the requirements of Policy CS5 or CS16 which, whilst encouraging tourist accommodation, requires visitor accommodation to be close to or within settlements, or a viable tourism enterprise where accommodation is required. The latter does not apply and I do not accept that the proposal is sufficiently close to a settlement so as to avoid the dependency on a car. Furthermore, Policy MD11 of the SAMDev³ recognises the need to balance the positive and negative impacts of tourist development but in this case the increased journeys to this development would be significant and therefore would be inconsistent with the policy's objectives. Consequently, the appeal site is not a suitable accommodation for a holiday let with regard to its poor accessibility.

Other Matters

10. The proposal would have economic benefits both in the short and longer term. The converted building would in the first instance require construction works and later the accommodation would involve staff employed to service it. I appreciate that the proposal has generated some support including from local businesses and whilst this weighs in favour of the proposal, it does not overcome the unsustainable location of the appeal site.
11. I also note the draft Shropshire Destination Management Plan 2023-2025⁴ which provides a blueprint for how Shropshire intends to manage the visitor economy. Furthermore, I have no reason to doubt the appellant's experience

² Shropshire Council Shropshire Local Development Framework : Adopted Core Strategy, March 2011.

³Shropshire Council Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan Adopted Plan 17 December 2015.

⁴ Shropshire Destination Management Plan 2023-2025 Produced April 2022. V6 (Updated January 2023) – Final Draft.

in the tourist industry and their subsequent identification of a demand for the type of accommodation proposed here.

12. Core Strategy Policy CS5 sets out a list of criteria in order to control development in the countryside and the Green Belt. Amongst other things, it supports small scale new economic development diversifying the rural economy provided the need and benefit of the development is demonstrated. However, the appellants already run a farm as well as providing tourist accommodation. Whilst the full details of these businesses are not submitted, I do not find that the policy excludes the proposed holiday let in this case on the basis of need. The policy includes a broad set of criteria including rural tourism and the conversion of rural buildings.
13. There is no dispute about the design of the conversion. The proposal would also ensure the former bunker was retained, providing an interesting insight into military history and the role of this area in World War II. I am satisfied that the significance of this non-designated heritage asset would not be harmed but provides an opportunity to retain it and sustain its historical interest. Thus, the social benefits would be advantageous.
14. The proposal would have limited environmental benefits but it would provide an opportunity to improve biodiversity by the provision of bat and bird boxes for example. Matters of ecology could be addressed by suitably worded conditions.
15. My attention has been drawn to an appeal decision at another site in Shropshire, Meadowtown Farm⁵. Whilst the appellant describes the similarities between that proposal and this one, from the information submitted, there are differences. Most notably, Meadowtown Farm is described as being within a settlement where sustainable development, including infilling and conversions will be supported by the adopted development plan. The appeal site on the other hand is not within a settlement but is within open countryside and is not supported by the development plan as a whole. I do not therefore find the two appeals directly comparable.

Planning Balance

16. The proposed conversion would provide a use for this building which is recognised locally as a non-designated heritage asset. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires a balanced judgement in weighing applications that affect non-designated heritage assets. In this case, the re-use of this building would carry moderate weight.
17. The proposal would also build on an existing business enterprise and in turn contribute to other associated businesses related to tourism. The Framework supports sustainable rural tourism recognising that all locations may not be well served by public transport. The economic benefits therefore would also carry moderate weight. The existing site has little ecological benefits but the proposal would provide some opportunities to improve these although these would be small and the weight afforded in this regard is limited.
18. The benefits, and I have not listed every benefit here, carry moderate weight, however, the sustainable objectives of the Framework are clear and taking into account the moderate social, economic and environmental aspects of

⁵ Appeal Ref: APP/L245/W/20/3246306.

sustainability, the accessibility of the appeal site weighs heavily against the proposal. The harm caused in this regard carries significant weight.

19. Therefore, whilst the development plan supports tourism and growth, the proposal would provide a large scale holiday let, accommodating 18 guests who would be largely dependent on a car to access the property. The potential scale of activity would be substantial and given the isolated location of the appeal site, the proposal would be unsustainable, in conflict with the development plan policies referred to above and the sustainability objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Conclusion

20. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Consequently, the appeal should be dismissed.

J D Clark

INSPECTOR