



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 January 2025

by Ben Plenty BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 January 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/H1840/W/24/3348214

31 Westbourne, Honeybourne, Worcestershire WR11 7PT

- 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 Ms P Ash against the decision of Wychavon District Council.
 - The application Ref is W/23/00249/OUT.
 - The development proposed is erection of proposed self-build dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The application has been made in outline form, with all matters reserved. The submitted layout plan shows the footprint of the proposed dwelling and the application form indicates that it would be single storey in scale. However, as the plan is indicative only, this shows only one way that the site could be developed. I therefore afford limited weight to the indicative plan.
3. Since the application was determined, a revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published on 12 December 2024. However, as any policies that are material to this decision have not fundamentally changed, I am satisfied that this has not prejudiced any party. I have had regard to the latest version of the Framework in reaching my decision.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposal makes suitable provision towards affordable housing, and
 - the effect of the proposed dwelling on the character and appearance of the streetscene and locality.

Reasons

Affordable housing

5. Policy SWDP15 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan [2016] (DP) requires all residential development, above the thresholds of SWDP 15B to contribute towards the provision of affordable housing. Threshold (vi) states that for sites of between 5-9 dwellings, a provision of 20% affordable housing units should be provided on site. The following threshold, at (v) requires, for sites of less than 5 dwellings, an off-site financial contribution be provided.

This requirement would generate the need for a financial sum to be secured through an appropriate legal mechanism, although it is noted that such a mechanism is not within the evidence.

6. The district includes Worcester and the market towns of Driotwich Spa, Evesham and Malvern, and large parts of the district are rural in character. Honeybourne is a village settlement and therefore within a more rural location away from the identified towns. The supporting text for DP policy SWDP15 explains that the district housing market suffers acute stress particularly with affordability issues in rural areas. This increases the importance of supporting the delivery and funding of affordable housing in such areas.
7. Although the Framework states that the provision of affordable housing should not be sought for residential developments that are not major developments, this excludes designated rural areas (where policies may set lower thresholds). The Council has identified that Honeybourne is within such a designated rural area, thus demonstrating that the Council's requirements are consistent with the Framework.
8. Accordingly, the proposal would conflict with LP policy SWDP15 in failing to make a financial contribution towards affordable housing.

Character and appearance

9. Westbourne Road is a residential street within a village setting. Local housing consists of a variety of forms including detached, semi-detached and single storey properties. No's 3-29 Westbourne form an irregular front building line, following a staggered line that follows the curve of the adjacent highway. The appeal site consists of the side garden of a corner plot, this is partially enclosed by landscaping with a tree and hedge boundary that follows the footpath edge. The side of the dwelling of No 31 is recessed from the highway by a significant amount, behind its relatively enclosed side garden. As such, the appeal site makes a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the area.
10. The site is located within the built-up limits of Honeybourne. The appeal site is adjacent to and ahead of the frontage of 29 Westbourne. Development of the site would enable a new dwelling to be accommodated in a manner that would follow the staggered building line of neighbouring built form. The site is relatively generous in size and, as a result, the proposal would not appear cramped on site. The site is also of sufficient size to accommodate both the dwelling and suitable garden and parking provision. Furthermore, the size of the proposed residential plot would be commensurate with local plot sizes observed around the site.
11. Accordingly, the site could accommodate a dwelling that would be in accordance with the character and appearance of the streetscene and locality. Consequently, the proposal would comply with DP policy SWDP21 and policies H4 and H5 of the Honeybourne Neighbourhood Plan. These seek, among other matters, for development to integrate effectively with its surroundings and complement the character of the area.

Planning balance and conclusion

12. The Council cannot currently demonstrate it has a 5 year housing land supply, with a supply of around 2.78 years, which is a substantial shortfall.

13. The Framework seeks to boost the supply of housing. It highlights the important contribution small sites can make and supports development which makes efficient use of previously developed land. This proposal would make better use of land in a sustainable location within Honeybourne and contribute towards Wychavon's housing supply.
14. Its sustainable location would comply with LP policy SWDP2B for infill development within the designated development boundary of Honeybourne. However, one additional house would make little difference to the overall supply of housing, even as the shortfall in supply is significant. I attribute modest weight to this benefit. The proposal is described as a self-build project. Whilst no mechanism has been provided to secure this as such, I also attribute modest weight to this further benefit.
15. There would be some economic benefits during the construction phase when the development would provide jobs and opportunities for local companies and once occupied when future residents would support services in Honeybourne. However, given the small scale of the proposal, these benefits would be limited.
16. In contrast, the proposal would result in substantial harm to the provision of affordable housing in the area. The Framework requires planning decisions to recognise the needs of groups with specific housing requirements and provide for an appropriate mix of housing types for the local community. I have concluded that the proposal would conflict with development plan policy SWDP15 and the Framework in this respect. I give this significant weight.
17. Consequently, even though there is a shortfall in five-year supply, and paragraph 11(d) of the Framework is engaged, the adverse impacts of the development on the provision of affordable housing in the area would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. Therefore, the maximum weight that could be attached to any benefit through increasing the supply of housing would not be determinative and the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply.
18. For the reasons given above, the proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole and there are no material considerations, including the Framework, that would outweigh that conflict. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

Ben Plenty

INSPECTOR