



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 February 2025

by Andreea Spataru BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 March 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/B3410/W/24/3352343

Brenern, Hollington Lane, Stramshall, Staffordshire ST14 5AJ

- 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 Miss Georgina Common against the decision of East Staffordshire Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is P/2023/00745.
 - The development proposed is described as 'the erection of a two-storey dwelling adjacent to the existing property'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. 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 Issue

3. The main issue is whether the appeal site is a suitable location for the proposed development, having regard to local and national policy.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises an area of garden land, in between two residential dwellings, and is located on the western side of Hollington Lane, in Stramshall.
5. Strategic Policy (SP) 1 of the East Staffordshire Borough Council Local Plan 2015 (LP) outlines the East Staffordshire approach to sustainable development. LP SP2 refers to the settlement hierarchy and states that development will be directed towards the most sustainable locations. It indicates that Stramshall is under Tier 3: small villages and other settlements, which is treated as open countryside where development will be permitted only in exceptional circumstances as set out in LP SP8, amongst other policies.
6. The supporting text for LP SP2 indicates that the purpose of identifying a network of settlements is to ensure that the right level of development takes place in the right places, recognising that each settlement performs a different role and function within the network. Consideration has been given to ensuring development takes place in locations served by services, facilities and public

transport, as set out in the settlement hierarchy evidence base. This is consistent with the objective of the Framework to manage patterns of growth in support of promoting sustainable transport.

7. LP SP4 outlines the distribution of housing growth 2012 – 2031 and indicates that the development requirements assigned to Tier 3 settlements and rural areas will be delivered on windfall sites such as on Exception Sites under SP18, in rural areas in accordance with SP8, or in accordance with a Made Neighbourhood Plan. In this case, as Stramshall does not have a development boundary, LP SP8 is relevant. This policy relates specifically to development outside settlement boundaries and states that such development will not be permitted unless it falls within the policy's list of exceptions.
8. In the context of the aforementioned policies, the appeal site is located within the countryside and the proposal does not align with any of the exceptions of LP SP8.
9. The Council's Settlement Hierarchy 2022 Update Topic Paper outlines the criteria used to assess the sustainability of settlements and the methodology used to assess service provision/scoring. There are five main categories, each with multiple services/facilities. For Stramshall, whilst the score has increased since the 2013 update by two points, it remains within the same tier.
10. Out of the five categories, Stramshall's points are for accessibility and community facilities; there are no services/facilities in terms of shopping and retail, health care and education provision. The appeal site is within proximity of a bus stop, which provides hourly service. However, in terms of services and facilities, notwithstanding the changes outlined by the appellant since the refusal of a previous planning application¹, particularly regarding the employment opportunities, I observed they are generally limited. The submitted evidence shows that residents rely mostly on services and facilities from Uttoxeter.
11. Whilst Uttoxeter has more services and facilities, future occupants of the proposed development would be less likely to reach them by walking and cycling due to the nature of the roads, and the lack of continuous footpaths and cycle lanes. Although Stramshall has several community clubs, village hall, church and social groups, which might reduce the need to travel for leisure and social activity, these are only part of the essential facilities needed. I acknowledge that certain facilities and services might be more appealing to certain age groups than others. Nevertheless, Stramshall lacks services and facilities from three out of the five main categories. Notwithstanding the possibility of using electric vehicles, the residents are likely dependant on private vehicles for accessing most day-to-day facilities and services.
12. Consequently, it has not been demonstrated that the appeal site is an appropriate location for the proposed development having regard to local and national policies. Accordingly, I conclude that the proposal is contrary to the aims of LP SP1, SP2, SP4 and SP8, and those of the Framework. In reaching my conclusion I also had regard to paragraph 82 (section 5) of the Framework, which states that to promote sustainable development in rural areas housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities, and to paragraph 124 (section 11) which indicates that planning policies and decisions should promote

¹ LPA ref: OU/07935/005/JI

an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment.

Other Matters

13. The appellant has referred to other elements of sustainability, such as the design of the proposed self-build dwelling and the increase in density on existing residential land. Paragraph 73 (b) of the Framework supports self-build dwellings, while paragraph 8 refers to ways of achieving sustainable development, including making effective use of land. Accordingly, I acknowledge the benefits of the proposal in this regard. However, good design is an essential requirement and the proposal's compliance in this regard does not justify the inappropriateness of the development in terms of its countryside location. Based on the information before me, it is also not clear that the proposal could be secured as a self-build dwelling. Therefore, I attach limited weight to these benefits.
14. In addition to the above policies, the appellant refers to LP SP16 – Meeting Housing Needs, which states that residential development elsewhere shall provide a dwelling or a mix of dwellings to best meet local need according to a local housing survey or where applicable the Council's evidence base. Reference was made to the Housing Needs Assessment -Stramshall, Staffordshire August 2023. The appellant considers, based on several factors, including the ONS DATA 2018 – 2043 Demographic Trends and Population/Household Projections, that a 3-bedroom dwelling, which could accommodate the elderly population, would be appropriate as an infill development.
15. Be that as it may, this does not negate the need for the proposal to comply with the other relevant policies. Whilst the proposal could provide a house suitable for older people, intended to meet a local need, there is not a mechanism before me to ensure it would be secured for this purpose. Furthermore, it has not been demonstrated that this cannot be achieved through development that satisfies the aforementioned policies. Accordingly, whilst the proposal would add to the mix of houses, it would do so in a location with limited services and facilities, contrary to the development plan when read as a whole. Thus, I attach limited weight to these benefits.
16. The proposed changes to the vehicular access would improve visibility on Hollington Lane and new native planting would be introduced to the site, which could provide a visual benefit. However, in the absence of substantive evidence that the existing visibility is unsafe, and could not be improved without the proposed development, I give this benefit limited weight.
17. The development might make the existing dwelling more affordable given the reduction in the size of the plot. There would also be social and economic benefits resulting from the construction works, spend from future occupiers, and the addition of a dwelling to the local housing stock. However, the nature and scale of the associated benefits that would flow from the scheme would be small and do not outweigh the harm identified above.
18. There were no objections from the Parish Council and the Highway Authority found the proposal acceptable in terms of highway safety. Nevertheless, these are neutral factors rather than ones that carry positive weight for the development.

19. Given the evidence before me, there is nothing to indicate that the Council's policies are out of date. Furthermore, the evidence shows that the Council has been able to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply.
20. The appellant has referred to section 13 of the Framework, in the context of 'limited infill in villages'. However, as the appeal site is not within the Green Belt, I do not find this section relevant to the development before me.
21. The appellant has drawn my attention to an appeal decision², which relates to a development in Stramshall. I do not find the proposal directly comparable with that development because in that case the development was found to meet one of the exceptions set out by LP SP8. The Inspector's assessment and conclusions regarding access to facilities and services were therefore within that context. The appellant also compares the appeal site with other sites allocated for housing within the district, particularly in terms of access to facilities, services and ecology. I have limited information regarding those sites, or the balance of considerations which they were subject to. In any event, I have considered the appeal development based on its own merits and site-specific circumstances.
22. I note that the appellant has not been satisfied with the Council's approach during the application process. However, my assessment has been limited to the proposal before me.

Conclusion

23. For the reasons given above, I conclude that 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.

Andreea Spataru

INSPECTOR

² Appeal ref: APP/B3410/W/16/3160945