



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 April 2025

by **SE Hughes BA (Hons) PGDip MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5 June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/E3335/W/24/3356628

Land at Cider Press Farm, Knole Causeway, Knole, Langport TA10 9HY

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mrs C Matthews against the decision of Somerset Council.
 - The application Ref is 22/00910/OUT.
 - The development proposed is the erection of 1no. dwelling with detached garage and adaptation of existing vehicular access.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The planning application is submitted in outline with all detailed matters reserved for a subsequent reserved matters application. An indicative site layout plan accompanies the outline planning application which indicates how a dwelling could be accommodated on the site. I have taken this plan into account for indicative purposes only.
3. During the course of the appeal the revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published. Therefore, I have taken into account the changes therein, including those with regards to boosting the supply of housing land.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the location of the proposed dwelling would accord with the spatial strategy of the development plan.

Reasons

Spatial Strategy

5. The appeal site is an orchard located in Knole, between Ciderpress Farm and a modern detached property called Southmead.
6. Policy SS1 of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028) (SSLP) outlines the spatial strategy for the distribution of housing development within the district, with development focussed on market towns and large villages, described as “Rural Centres”. The premise being that larger settlements offer the best access to jobs, services, and facilities locally, helping reduce the need to travel. Knole is classified as a “Rural Settlement” under policy SS1 and is considered countryside for planning purposes.
7. Policy SS2 of the SSLP supports new housing development in Rural Settlements

where it satisfies an “identified housing need, particularly for affordable housing” which is commensurate with the village and there is access to two or more services in the village. The proposal is for an open market property and no substantive evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that the proposal would meet an identified housing need.

8. The supporting text to policy SS2 explains that the Rural Settlements tier of the settlement hierarchy covers a range of settlements that vary widely in size, role, function, local priorities, and constraints. Therefore, the interpretation of the policy depends on the circumstances of the particular settlement. For example, a proposal that is acceptable in one of the larger Rural Settlements, which has a relatively strong employment function and good sustainable transport links, may not be acceptable in a smaller Rural Settlement which does not have these features. This reasoning is echoed in Policy TA5 of the SSLP, which requires new development to address its own transport implications and to be designed to maximise the potential for sustainable transport, as highlighted in the officer report.
9. The supporting text for policy SS2 defines the type of services that should be accessible, indicating that they might be provided in another settlement, where settlements operate closely together as a cluster. The appellant contends that whilst Knole does not have any services itself, it has a close functional relationship with Long Sutton, and given their isolation from Langport and Somerton, the two villages operate as a cluster.
10. With regards to accessing services in Long Sutton, the appellant has referred to the 1200 metres (m) preferred maximum walking distance in the “Guidelines for providing for journeys on foot” published by the Institution of Highways and Transportation, contending that as the appeal site is 1200m away from Long Sutton via Knole Causeway, it would take approximately 30 minutes by foot. However, I note that this measurement has been taken from the appeal site to the junction of Knole Causeway and Sutton Hill, therefore, even accounting for different routes (including via Cross Lane), all its services would lie beyond the maximum walking distance. Additionally, the Council’s adopted document “Placemaking Principles for Somerset” advises that services should be within a much shorter distance, comprising a 20-minute round trip, which they would not be.
11. Furthermore, Knole Causeway is narrow, with no dedicated footpaths, cycle lanes or streetlights along most of its length. It is also subject to the national speed limit. Therefore, it would not be a particularly desirable route to take on foot or by bicycle, especially in the winter months. Whilst it might be lightly trafficked, due to the nearby A372, this would not be enough to overcome the route’s drawbacks for pedestrians and cyclists. Whilst I note that there are off road footpaths connecting the villages, as these are lengthier than the highway route and would not have lighting, I do not consider they would be used in preference to Knole Causeway.
12. I have not been made aware of any public transport services, and in the absence of a safe walking and cycling connection as outlined above, I am not persuaded that the services in Long Sutton would be accessible by transport modes other than by motor vehicle.
13. Taking the above into account, given the separation distance between Knole and Long Sutton, I find that there is no clear evidence of a functional service relationship between the two villages.

14. Consequently, whilst proposal would be in the centre of Knole, between two properties, so would not be physically isolated from other houses and buildings, the criteria of policy SS2 for new housing development would not be met. While recognising that opportunities for sustainable transport solutions varies between rural and urban areas, the proposal would not support the locational aims of the SSLP or the Framework to avoid unsustainable patterns of development
15. I therefore conclude that permitting the development would be harmful to the spatial strategy of the development plan, as motor vehicle travel would be encouraged. As such it would conflict with the requirements of policies SS1 and SS2 of the SSLP and also policy TA5 with regards to the lack of access to sustainable transport.

Other Considerations

16. Set against the harm identified above, there would be limited social and economic benefits associated with the proposal. An additional dwelling would make limited difference to the overall supply of housing and the support that one extra household would provide to the vitality of the local economy and community would also not be significant.
17. The site lies within the Knole Conservation Area (KCA) which is characterised by its vernacular buildings including an old mill, waterwheel and aqueduct, nestled together at the foot of Knole Hill. In so far as is relevant to the proposal, its significance lies in its assemblage of traditional historic buildings.
18. The grade II listed Cider Press Farm is a traditional stone farmhouse of a vernacular style constructed in the sixteenth century, reshaped in the eighteenth century. In so far as is relevant to the proposal its significance lies in its age and its traditional appearance. In between the farmhouse and the appeal site is a substantial former cattleshed building. Taking account of the screening provided by the cattleshed building, it is unlikely that the proposed dwelling would affect the significance of the listed building or its setting.
19. A property called Burts is located to the other side of Southmead to the east and is also grade II listed. It is an early seventeenth century building with its significance again in part lying in its age and vernacular architecture. There would be no intervisibility between the listed building and the appeal site.
20. Given the application is outline, I have no details of the scale or appearance of the development to refer to. However, in view of the size of the site and the spatial arrangement of the buildings in the KCA, it is conceivable that the proposal could be designed and positioned in such a way that it would not cause harm to the KCA. As such, there is no reason to conclude at this outline stage that the proposal would harm the significance of the KCA, the desirability of the preservation or enhancement of which, I am required to pay special attention.
21. Likewise, given the existence of the cattleshed and the separation distance between the site and Burts, it is unlikely that the development would harm the aforementioned listed buildings or their setting.
22. In view of the above, I agree with the Council that heritage impacts would be more appropriately considered at the reserved matters stage, where the details of the built form and the site layout are provided. Therefore, I have treated the proposal's impact on heritage assets as a neutral factor in this appeal.

Planning Balance

23. Referring to the development plan as a whole, paragraph 232 of the Framework makes it clear that due weight should be given to existing policies according to their degree of consistency with the Framework. The proposal does not meet the provisions of policies SS1 and SS2 and would be contrary to the sustainable travel objectives of policy TA5 of the SSLP and the Framework's aim to prioritise sustainable transport modes. Therefore, as the Framework states that the planning system should be genuinely plan-led, the conflict between the proposal and policies SS1, SS2 and TA5 should be given significant weight in this appeal.
24. As there are no policies in the SSLP which positively favour development of this kind in this location and as the proposal would be contrary to the policies referred to above, there would be a conflict with the development plan as a whole.
25. The Council accepts that it cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, and I note that the appellant described its supply shortfall as "significant", referring to 2024/25 Planning Service Performance Data which sets out a 2.85-2.96 year's supply. In these circumstances paragraph 11d) of the Framework is engaged. This is not specifically contested by the Council. Consequently, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.
26. As described above, the economic and social benefits associated with a single dwelling would be limited even taking account of the objective of boosting significantly the supply of housing in the Framework and the Council's acute shortfall in its housing land supply. The Framework also gives weight to the value of sustainable transport.
27. Consequently, the adverse impacts on the district's housing strategy and of increasing travel by motor vehicles would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole having regard to key policies directing development to sustainable locations. As a result, the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply.

Conclusion

28. The proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole and there are no other material considerations, including the approach in the Framework in regard to housing supply, that outweigh this conflict. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

SE Hughes

INSPECTOR