



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 May 2025

by Hannah Guest BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/H1840/W/25/3359315

Albert House, Pershore Road, High Park, Whittington, Worcester WR5 2RS

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant permission in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Mr & Mrs M Collins against the decision of Wychavon District Council.
 - The application Ref is W/24/02338/PIP.
 - The development proposed is construction of up to 2no. dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Applications for costs

2. An application for costs was made by the appellants against the Council. This is the subject of a separate decision.

Procedural Matters

3. The proposal is for permission in principle. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The permission in principle consent route has 2 stages: the first stage (or permission in principle stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle and the second ('technical details consent') stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. This appeal relates to the first of these 2 stages.

Main Issue

4. The main issue in this appeal is whether the site is suitable for residential development, having regard to its location, the proposed land use, and the amount of development.

Reasons

Development Strategy

5. There is no dispute between the parties that the appeal site is located outside the development boundary. For the purposes of Policy SWDP 2 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan (2016) (Local Plan), land outside the development boundary is considered to be within the open countryside.
6. Policy SWDP 2 of the Local Plan sets out the development strategy and settlement hierarchy for the District. It states that in the open countryside, development will be strictly controlled and will be limited to dwellings for rural workers, employment

development in rural areas, rural exception sites, buildings for agriculture and forestry, replacement dwellings, house extensions, replacement buildings and renewable energy projects and development specifically permitted by other SWDP policies. The proposal would not meet any of these exceptions and would therefore be at odds with the development strategy. This would harm the public interest of having a genuinely plan-led system that provides consistency and direction.

7. In addition, the accessibility of the appeal site to day-to-day services is limited. The closest village, Norton, is over a mile away. Also, the routes to the nearest villages do not provide an attractive environment for pedestrians and cyclists.
8. I saw on my visit that the B4048, which would provide the beginning of the routes to Norton, Whittington and Littleworth experiences frequent vehicle movements, including larger vehicles, such as HGVs. This section of the B4048 is limited to 40 mph and the vehicles appeared to travel close to this maximum speed. Although refurbished, some sections of the pavement are narrow and would not accommodate certain users, such as those with children in prams or pushchairs and wheelchair users. Along parts of the routes, pedestrians would also be positioned very close to the fast-moving traffic and would likely feel vulnerable and unsafe. For pedestrians to pass one another they would have to step onto the highway, which significantly increases the risk of conflict between pedestrians and vehicles. The route to Whittington would also involve crossing multiple arms of the Crookbarrow Interchange roundabout. Except for a cycle and pedestrian path connecting Woodbury Lane with Worcester Parkway Station, there are no dedicated cycle lanes or paths between the appeal site and these nearest villages. For these reasons, occupants of the proposed dwelling would not be encouraged to walk or cycle to the nearest settlements.
9. The appeal site is located close to bus stops providing fairly frequent services to Worcester, Pershore and Evesham. However, the waiting areas at the bus stops are not overly attractive. There are no shelters and pedestrians waiting for services in the direction of Pershore and Evesham must cross the B4048 and wait on the highway, within the area provided for the bus to pull off the road, close to the fast-moving traffic. This would likely make them feel vulnerable and unsafe, which would discourage future occupants of the proposed dwellings from accessing the bus services on a regular basis.
10. I note that Worcester Parkway Station has now been completed and is fully operational. It would be around a 20-minute walk from the appeal site. Nonetheless, the route to the station would be along the B4048, which does not provide an attractive environment for pedestrians and cyclists. This would likely discourage future occupants of the proposed dwellings from accessing the train services or any other facilities and services at the station on a regular basis.
11. The appellants refer to another application for permission in principle, which was located close to Worcester Parkway Station and approved by the Council in February 2023¹. However, this site is located closer to the station than the appeal site and the journey on foot to the station buildings would be appreciably shorter. While there are sections of Woodbury Lane without a footway, the road experiences far fewer vehicle movements than the B4048. As such, I afford this

¹ Planning Ref: W/24/02308/PIP

application limited weight in my decision. In any event, I have determined the appeal on its own planning merits.

12. Overall, for the reasons set out above, future occupants of the proposed dwellings would be heavily reliant on the private car to access day-to-day services and facilities, rather than more sustainable forms of transport.
13. Accordingly, the appeal site would not be in a suitable location for the type and amount of development proposed when applying the development strategy set out in the Local Plan. The appeal site is in a less sustainable part of the District in terms of accessibility and would conflict with the development strategy set out at Policy SWDP 2 of the Local Plan.

Landscape character and integrity of the open countryside

14. The appeal site forms part of the garden space currently serving Albert House, a large, detached house in a small group of houses located alongside the B4084 Pershore Road. Albert House has a generous garden. The appeal site is positioned to the side of the house, sharing a boundary with the neighbouring property, High Park House.
15. The small group of houses, which include Albert House, are all located on the northern side of the B4084 and, with the exception of one house on the opposite side of the highway, are separated from other houses in the wider area by open fields. Notwithstanding this, views of the wider landscape are limited by mature trees and roadside planting along the B4048. Most of the houses are accessed from a service road set off the B4048 behind a large roadside verge with mature trees. As a result, many of the houses are not visible from the B4048.
16. The houses have a broadly linear arrangement along the service road. They are set back from the highway on generous plots. Together with soft boundary treatments, the mature trees and roadside planting along the B4048 and verge, as well as trees and other plants within the houses' frontages and rear gardens, this gives the area a spacious and verdant rural character.
17. Views taken through the gaps between the houses from the service road include their large, open and verdant gardens, which are largely undeveloped, as well as longer distance views of the wider landscape. The appeal site in its current form adds positively to the spacious and verdant rural character of the immediate area.
18. The indicative site plan, submitted as part of the proposal, positions the two proposed dwellings in between Albert House and High Park House with space for large rear gardens behind. This would reflect the existing pattern of development and would constitute the infilling of a gap within an existing residential frontage.
19. The proposal would erode the openness of the appeal site, and I appreciate that the proposed dwellings, including the subdivision of the plots and likely increase in domestic paraphernalia would urbanise the rural landscape to a degree. Nonetheless, I am of a similar view to the Inspector who determined a previous proposal at the appeal site², in that the appeal site, as garden space, already has a more formal, maintained and domestic appearance. The proposal would not extend the built form any further into the open countryside. The side garden serving Albert House provides one of the largest gaps between the existing

² Planning Ref: W/14/01076/OU; Appeal Ref: APP/H1840/A/14/2227505

houses. As such, there is sufficient space for the proposal to provide similar sized gaps to those between other houses in the group, between both the proposed dwellings and between the proposed dwellings and existing dwellings. These gaps would also allow for some longer distance views of the wider landscape to be retained.

20. For the reasons above, the proposal would not be visually prominent in the street scene, or the wider landscape, and I am of the view that the proposal could be successfully integrated with its surroundings. The overall effect of the proposal on the character of the wider landscape would therefore be limited and not to a degree that it would result in an adverse impact on its character.
21. Accordingly, the location of the appeal site would be suitable in this regard for a development of up to 2 dwellings and would accord with Part A iii. of Policy SWDP 2 of the Local Plan, which seeks to safeguard the open countryside. It would also accord with Policies SWDP 21 and SWDP 25 of the Local Plan. These policies seek to ensure all development is of a high design quality, which, among other things, complements the character of the area and that all development proposals are appropriate to, and integrate with, the character of the landscape.

Other Matters

22. In terms of benefits, the proposal would provide two new dwellings on a brownfield site. The Council does not currently have a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. The latest five-year land supply position was 1.10 years. This is a chronic shortfall, which is not disputed by the Council. Given this, while the scale of the proposal would be modest, the two dwellings, in this case, would make an important and much needed contribution to the district housing supply. I therefore afford the delivery of the two dwellings significant weight in my decision.
23. There would also be some modest economic and social benefits associated with the construction of the dwellings and their subsequent occupation.
24. Both parties refer to a previous application for a similar development at the appeal site, which was refused by the Council in 2014 and dismissed at appeal. The appellants contend that the context of the appeal site has changed since the determination of this application. These changes include the completion of Worcester Parkway Station, which I have dealt with above, the Council's lack of a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, and the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review.
25. I understand that the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review (emerging Local Plan), places the appeal site within a Strategic Growth Area, including 10,000 homes in the wider area surrounding the site, as well as other strategic infrastructure, services and facilities. However, the examination of the emerging Local Plan has not yet been completed. As such, the Council is not in receipt of the Inspector's report on the soundness of the policies and there is nothing before me to demonstrate the extent to which there are unresolved objections to them. I can therefore only afford the emerging policies limited weight in my decision.
26. The appellants have also brought to my attention another application for permission in principle, which they consider to also have limited accessibility, yet

was approved by the Council in December 2024³. Nonetheless, there appear to be substantial differences between this application and the appeal proposal, particularly in terms of the relationship between this site and its nearest settlements and its accessibility to services and facilities. In this case, the site was located within walking distance of Ombersley, a Category 1 settlement with a range of local services and facilities. As such, I afford this application limited weight in my decision. In any event, I have determined the appeal on its own planning merits.

Planning Balance

27. Given the shortfall in housing supply, paragraph 11d) of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) falls to be considered. Permission should therefore be granted unless any adverse impacts of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.
28. I have found that, although the proposal would not harm the landscape character of the area, it would conflict with the Council's development strategy. It would therefore conflict with the development plan read as a whole.
29. The Council's development strategy is broadly consistent with the Framework in terms of supporting housing developments in rural areas that reflect local needs. Nevertheless, Policy SWDP 2 of the Local Plan restricts the type of development permitted in rural areas where it would be located beyond the development boundary, whereas the Framework only restricts the type of development permitted in rural areas where it would result in an isolated home in the countryside. Where this is not the case, the Framework supports housing in rural areas, where it would enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities, especially where it would support local services in nearby villages.
30. In this case, while it may be that the proposal would support some nearby services, the accessibility of the appeal site in terms of walking and cycling would be limited, and future occupants of the proposed dwellings would be unlikely to access the bus services on a regular basis.
31. Paragraph 115 of the Framework seeks to ensure that, in assessing specific applications for development, sustainable transport modes are prioritised taking account of the vision for the site, the type of development and its location. While I understand that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, in this case, future occupants of the proposed dwellings would be heavily reliant on the private car to access day-to-day services and facilities.
32. This would conflict with the aims of Paragraph 117 of the Framework, which seeks to ensure that applications for development give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements. Also, that they address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport and create places that are

³ Planning Ref: W/22/02549/PIP

safe, secure and attractive – which minimise the scope for conflict between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles.

33. Overall, the proposal would support the objective of the Framework in boosting the supply of homes in an area where there is currently a chronic shortfall in the supply of deliverable housing sites. Although the scale of the proposal is modest, small-sized sites, such as the appeal site, are often built-out relatively quickly. The two proposed dwellings would therefore help address the shortfall more promptly.
34. Nevertheless, the appeal site would not be in a suitable location for the type and amount of development proposed when applying the development strategy set out in the Local Plan, and it would not direct development to a sustainable location in terms of accessibility. I find that the substantial harm arising in this regard, would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the significant benefits of the proposal.
35. Therefore, in this case, material considerations do not justify allowing the appeal. Consequently, the proposal would also conflict with Policy SWDP 1 of the Local Plan, which has similar provisions to paragraph 11 of the Framework.

Conclusion

36. For the reasons above, having had regard to the development plan as a whole and all relevant material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Hannah Guest

INSPECTOR