



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 June 2025

by Samuel Watson BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/H1840/W/25/3358921

Southfork Farm, Upton Snodsbury, Broughton Hackett, Worcester WR7 4BB

- 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 B Saunders against the decision of Wychavon District Council.
 - The application Ref is W/24/02051/PIP.
 - The development proposed is for the construction of up to 4no. dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. 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 two 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 two stages.
3. The scope of the considerations for permission in principle is limited to location, land use and the amount of development permitted. All other matters are considered as part of a subsequent Technical Details Consent application if permission in principle is granted. I have determined the appeal accordingly.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

5. The appeal site covers two portions of land that currently hold building materials. These portions sit either side of a private drive that serves a number of commercial units as part of a wider group accessed off the A422. This cluster of development sits outside of any settlements and is surrounded by open fields. The three closest settlements noted by the parties are Broughton Hackett and Upton Snodsbury, both on the A422, and Crowle to the north of it. The proposal comprises the provision of up to four open-market dwellings at the appeal site.
6. Policy SWDP2 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan (the DP) restricts residential development within the open countryside outside of settlements unless they meet one of a number of exceptions. These include residential development

for rural workers, rural exception sites and replacement dwellings. It has not been submitted that the proposal would meet any of these exceptions. Therefore, the siting of residential development in this location would conflict with the Council's spatial strategy.

7. Whilst the appeal site may not be isolated, given its siting within a cluster of development that includes one existing dwelling, it is nevertheless located where residential development is not supported by the development plan.
8. Both Broughton Hackett and Upton Snodsbury are within walking, or cycling, distance of the appeal site and are served by footpaths that follow the A442. Crowle however, is more distant and the route is not served by a suitable footpath. Nevertheless, I find it unlikely that future occupiers would regularly travel to these settlements to meet their typical needs given the very limited provision of services and facilities, particularly, food shops. Future occupiers would, instead, be reliant upon traveling further afield to reach employment, shops, and other services.
9. It has been raised that there are bus stops near the appeal site, but I have not been provided with sufficient detail to demonstrate that such bus routes would be a viable option for such travel as commuting for work or education, or for reaching services or shops. Future occupiers would therefore be reliant upon private motor vehicles in meeting their typical daily needs.
10. Although some travel by private motor vehicles may be expected, given the rural nature of the district, I find that this has already been accounted for in the Council's spatial strategy.
11. In light of the above the appeal site's location is not suitable for residential development and, therefore, conflicts with DP Policies SWDP1, SWDP2 and SWDP4. These policies collectively, and amongst other matters, seek to limit development within the open countryside other than where it meets specific exceptions and can be considered sustainable development that minimises the demand for travel, offering sustainable travel choices. The proposal would also conflict with Paragraphs 82 and 83 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which require residential development in rural areas to reflect local needs and promote sustainable development. Although the Wychavon Intelligently Green Plan does not appear to be directly relevant to the case before me, I have been mindful of its overarching aims.

Other Matters

12. I note the extant permission (ref: W/22/01542/FUL) at the appeal site for two dwellings. Although ostensibly similar to the scheme before me, it is clear that these were for live/work units and, as such, met one of the exceptions set out under DP Policy SWDP2. This has therefore had no substantive bearing on my own assessment of this proposal.
13. My attention has also been drawn to a permission elsewhere within the district (ref: W/24/02308/PIP) relating to the conversion of a barn outside of a settlement, and I note the comparisons made. However, having considered the details of that scheme it is substantially different to the proposal in context and nature. In particular, it is for a conversion, not new build, and it is also more closely related to a settlement. Therefore, I cannot make any meaningful comparisons to the appeal scheme before me, which I must consider on its own merits.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

14. There is no dispute that the Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. The Government's objective is to significantly boost the supply of housing, and the proposal would provide between two and four dwellings, contributing towards the Council's housing land supply. The extent of this contribution is limited by the presence of the extant permission for two dwellings at the appeal site meaning that the proposal could provide, at most, two new dwellings on top of those already permitted.
15. It would also lead to a small and time limited economic benefits during the construction phase. Given the small scale of the proposal, these matters would at most attract moderate weight. As future occupiers would be required to travel to meet their daily needs, any social and economic benefits afforded to the surrounding rural community would be very modest.
16. Although the proposal may provide opportunities for providing electric vehicle charging and secure bicycle parking, a lack of harm is not a benefit in and of itself. Therefore, these provisions do not weigh in favour of the proposal.
17. Conversely, the proposal would conflict with the Council's spatial strategy and future occupiers would be reliant upon private motor vehicles in meeting their daily needs. These impacts are contrary to both local and national planning policy to which I give considerable weight.
18. Taking everything into account, I consider that the adverse impacts of granting planning permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. As a result, the application of Paragraph 11d of the Framework does not indicate that permission should be granted, and the proposal would not represent sustainable development. In the circumstances of this appeal, the material considerations above do not justify making a decision other than in accordance with the development plan.
19. For the reason set out above, I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

Samuel Watson

INSPECTOR