
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 July 2025

by **P Brennan BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 04 August 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/J1860/W/25/3361738

Lower Lightwood Farm, Lightwood Lane, Cotheridge WR6 5LT

- 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 BM and SA Burgoyne against the decision of Malvern Hills District Council.
 - The application Ref is M/24/01123/FUL.
 - The development proposed is described as: Conversion of existing commercial buildings into 2 no. dwellinghouses with associated landscaping works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Council has submitted the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review for Examination. Due to the current stage in the adoption process, the policies of review are of limited weight.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the site is an appropriate location for the proposed development having regard to the ability of future occupants to access services by means other than private motor vehicles.

Reasons

4. Policy SWDP2 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan (DP) establishes the Council's approach to the sustainable distribution of housing across the area. Partly through use of development boundaries, it seeks to focus housing within the wider Worcester urban area, followed by the key towns of Droitwich Spa, Evesham, and Malvern and then the remaining smaller towns of Pershore, Tenbury Wells and Upton on Severn. Villages located within the rural area are deemed appropriate to meet only locally identified housing needs. The site is not located within or adjacent to a defined settlement and falls within the countryside for plan purposes. Within this context, Policy SWDP2 identifies that development will be strictly controlled except in accordance with the exceptions that it outlines, or, unless allowed by other policies within the DP. None of these exceptions would apply in this case.
5. The Broadwas and Cotheridge Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) was made in September 2019. The NDP's housing objective supports small scale housing development within the development boundary of Broadwas and on other exception sites consistent with the DP. Again, neither is applicable.

6. Policy P2 of the NDP provides greater scope for new development in the open countryside than Policy SWDP2 including conversions or re-use of existing buildings for residential purposes that do not require substantial reconstruction or need for large extensions. This is broadly consistent with paragraph 84(b) of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which allows for isolated homes in the countryside, where this would involve the re-use of redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting. Whilst the proposed development would comply with these exceptions, Policy SWDP4 of the DP and the Framework nonetheless similarly identify that new development should be located and design to reduce the need to travel and encourage the use of sustainable transport alternatives. It therefore remains necessary to assess the appropriateness of the location in this context.
7. The nearby hamlet of Cotheridge also falls within the open countryside and is identified as having no key services and limited or no bus provision. The village of Broadwas, which is located much further away, is identified as having at least two key services including a shop and access to at least daily bus services for employment and shopping purposes.
8. The appeal site is within an enclave of three residential properties and three buildings that were previously used for employment purposes, two of which are the subject of this appeal. The buildings proposed for conversion comprise a two storey, block and steel barn and a single storey brick office. The site is some distance from Cotheridge, and even further from Broadwas.
9. The National Design Guide advises that to be within a walkable distance, local facilities should be within a 10-minute walk, or an 800m radius of a site. Cotheridge has no facilities and though there is a bus stop located 400m away on the A44, it could not be reached safely as Lightwood Lane has no footways and is unlit.
10. Though the village of Broadwas has a public house, village hall and a primary school, it is substantially further than a 10-minute walk from the site. The A44 linking Lightwood Lane to Cotheridge and Broadwas is a national speed limit highway that, on this stretch, is again unlit and without footways. A wider range of services is available in Worcester, but this cannot be realistically accessed on foot. Accordingly, distance and lack of safety would be significant deterrents for future occupiers to walk to services and facilities in adjacent settlements.
11. Neither would cycling be a practicable alternative for many journeys. The appellant asserts that cycling might present an option for future occupiers however, this stretch of the A44, alongside being unlit and without footways, has no dedicated cycle lanes and carries a considerable volume of traffic. Accordingly, the lack of safety would also be a significant deterrent for future occupiers to cycle to services and facilities in adjacent settlements.
12. The Framework acknowledges that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas. However, even within that context, access to services from the site would be poor, giving rise to reliance on private motor vehicles to access services and the likelihood of environmental harm as a result of related exhaust emissions.
13. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the site is an inappropriate location for the proposed development given that future occupants would be reliant on

private motor vehicles to access services. Accordingly, I find conflict with Policies SWDP2 and SWDP4 of the DP, as set out above, and Policy SWDP1 of the DP, which is an overarching policy that reflects the Framework's presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Planning Balance

14. The appeal scheme would conflict with the development plan taken as a whole. The Council however acknowledges that it does not have a demonstrable 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites, with current supply placed at 2.06 years. For the purposes of decision making the policies most important for determining the application are thus deemed 'out of date'. Even so, and as established above, the policies/relevant parts of the policies with which I have identified conflict are broadly consistent with key policies for directing development to sustainable locations set out within the Framework. This conflict attracts substantial weight. The scheme would make use of a brownfield site and provide a minor boost to the delivery of housing within the context of a significant shortfall. The related social and economic benefits would however be very limited, and any claimed environmental benefits would be negated by the overall harm arising from travel. I therefore find that the adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.

Conclusion

15. The proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole and there are no other considerations, including the provisions of the Framework, which outweigh this finding. Therefore, for the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

P Brennan

INSPECTOR