



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 August 2025

by **C Butcher BSc MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 August 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/H1840/W/25/3367291

Allotments At (Os 9086 4705), Besford Road, Wadborough, Besford, Worcestershire, WR8 9HF

- 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 Philip Griffiths against the decision of Wychavon District Council.
 - The application Ref is W/25/01020/PIP.
 - The development proposed is Permission in Principle for the construction of a single self-build dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. In the absence of a full site address on the application form, I have used the details as provided on the appellant's appeal form.
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 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. It is only at the technical details consent stage where a planning permission can be granted. This appeal relates to the first of these two stages.
4. The scope of the considerations for permission in principle is limited to location, land use and the amount of development permitted¹. 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

5. The main issue is whether the principle of the proposed development is acceptable with specific regard to its location and its effect on the character and appearance of the area.

¹ PPG Paragraph: 012 Reference ID: 58-012-20180615

Reasons

Location

6. Policy SWDP2 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan, February 2016 (the DP) seeks to direct new development towards areas within defined settlement boundaries. The appeal site is located outside of any boundary, and as such, is regarded as being within the open countryside for planning purposes. The proposal to provide one self-build dwelling does not meet any of the exceptions listed within Part C of the policy. On this basis, it is clear that the proposal would conflict with the Council's adopted spatial strategy.
7. The closest settlement to the appeal site is the small village of Wadborough which has very little in the way of services and facilities. Drakes Broughton is slightly further away and contains various facilities such as a village hall, public houses, a shop and a first and middle school.
8. The existing access to the appeal site is located on Crabbe Lane which is a rural road with a national speed limit. The road does not benefit from pavements or street lighting. As a result of these considerations, and taking account of the distance to Drakes Broughton, I do not consider that future occupiers of the proposed dwelling are likely to utilise sustainable modes of transport such as walking and cycling. This would particularly be the case in poor weather or in the hours of darkness. I note that there are public footpaths nearby, but these are also unlikely to be an attractive option on a regular basis as they are indirect and likely to be on rough terrain while also being unlit. Bus services are available from Mill Lane to Worcester, although the timetable provided by the Council demonstrates that the services are very infrequent, even by rural standards.
9. Taking all of this into account, it is highly likely that future occupiers would be almost entirely reliant upon the use of the private car in order to access the services and facilities needed for everyday living. The appellant has suggested that the dwelling could contain a charging point for an electric vehicle. However, the use of such vehicles cannot be enforced by condition. Furthermore, while home working is becoming more common, it is still likely that future occupiers would need to access their place of employment for part of the week. In addition, such needs only represent one reason to travel amongst many.
10. With this in mind, the proposed development would not be in a suitable location with regards to the Council's spatial strategy and access to services and facilities. It would therefore conflict with DP Policies SWDP2 and SWDP4 which, in part, seek to direct development to sustainable locations, including those that offer genuinely sustainable travel choices.

Character and Appearance

11. Given that this is an application for permission in principle, there are no details before me in terms of the design, scale or layout of the proposed development. Nevertheless, it is still appropriate to consider the effect of the proposal on character and appearance insofar as it relates to the suitability of the location of the site.
12. In this instance, the site forms part of an undeveloped tract of land that was formerly used as allotments. The area is highly rural and has a particularly tranquil

and verdant character. There is a linear development of homes on Crabbe Lane, to the south of the appeal site. There is also a small collection of buildings situated around the junction of Crabbe Lane and Besford Road to the north. However, when standing at the entrance to the appeal site, these buildings are not visible and there is a real feeling of remoteness. As such, it is absolutely inevitable that the proposed development of an isolated single dwelling, along with some associated hard standing and domestic paraphernalia, would appear as an incongruous, contrived and harmful encroachment into the countryside which would erode the verdancy and tranquillity of the immediate area.

13. As a result, the proposal would conflict with DP Policy SWDP25, which in part, seeks to preserve landscape character. I do not find conflict with SWDP21 given that matters relating to detailed design must be left for the subsequent technical details consent stage.

Other Matters

14. The appellant has provided various examples of developments that have been permitted previously. However, I only have very limited details of these schemes before me, and it is also clear that each proposal must be considered on its individual merits. Moreover, each development proposal will vary considerably based on its precise location, including distance from services and facilities, and the character of the surrounding landscape. Indeed, I note the Council's comments that some of the examples cited appear to be situated much closer to designated settlement boundaries, or to existing developments. Furthermore, I have set out why the proposal in this instance would lead to harm, both in relation to the lack of sustainable access to services and facilities, as well as character and appearance. As such, these decisions do not justify me allowing a scheme where I have found harm.
15. As part of their appeal statement, the appellant has referred to the importance of Policy DBWP3(g) of the Drakes Broughton and Wadborough with Pirton Neighbourhood Plan. This part of the policy enables the development of new homes outside of designated development boundaries if they would be of exceptional quality. It is too early to determine whether that would be the case in this instance. However, the policy also notes that such developments must enhance their immediate setting. I have set out why, irrespective of the final design of the dwelling, that would not be the case in this instance. Therefore, while the Council did not reference this policy as part of their reasoning, the proposal would clearly be in conflict with it.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

16. From the evidence before me, it is clear that the Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, and at just 1.10 years, the shortfall is significant. In such circumstances, Paragraph 11d and footnote 8 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) require that permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole.
17. The proposal is contrary to the objectives of the spatial strategy under Policy SWDP2, while I have also found it to be contrary to the aims of Policies SWDP4 and SWDP25. The proposal therefore conflicts with the development plan taken

as a whole. The aforementioned policies are broadly consistent with the aims of the Framework, notably, in respect of seeking to promote development in sustainable locations with genuine sustainable travel choices, and in terms of ensuring that development preserves character and appearance. Consequently, I have given considerable weight to the conflict with the development plan.

18. The appeal proposal would make a small but nonetheless positive contribution towards housing supply in the area by way of providing a single self-build dwelling which has the potential to be well designed and energy efficient. It would also provide some social and economic benefits associated with the construction and subsequent occupation of the proposed dwelling, including the potential for future residents to support wider services. I have considered Paragraph 61 of the Framework which seeks to significantly boost the supply of homes. I have also considered Paragraph 73 of the Framework, which recognises the importance of small sites in meeting the housing requirement of the area. The extent of the shortfall in housing land supply leads me to attribute greater weight to the benefits of the scheme. However, given the limited scale of development, I still only afford them moderate weight in totality.
19. Due to the lack of access to facilities and services and the reliance on private vehicles there would be adverse environmental and social impacts, contrary to elements of the Framework. The harm to character and appearance would also be in conflict with the Framework. These are matters to which I have given significant weight.
20. Therefore, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, I find that the adverse impacts of the proposed development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. The appeal scheme therefore does not benefit from the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
21. In conclusion, the proposal conflicts with the development plan when taken as a whole. There are no material considerations, including the provisions of the Framework, that indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with it. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

C Butcher

INSPECTOR