



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 September 2025

by **N Bromley BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/H1840/W/25/3368325

The Geldings, Bouts Lane, Holberrow Green, Inkberrow, Redditch B96 6JX

- 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 M Pendleton against the decision of Wychavon District Council.
 - The application Ref is W/25/01005/PIP.
 - The development proposed is Permission in Principle for the construction of up to 4no. dwellings.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Planning Practice Guidance advises that the Permission in Principle route is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. It 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 the first stage is granted. I have determined the appeal accordingly.

Main Issues

4. Whether the location, the proposed land use and the amount of development is suitable for residential development, having particular regard to (a) local and national policies and access to services and facilities, and (b) the effect on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Development strategy and sustainable location

5. The appeal site comprises grazing land within the open countryside. The site has an extant planning permission for a live / work unit which was allowed at appeal¹ (the extant permission). The extant permission has not yet been implemented, and the site is undeveloped, greenfield land.

¹ Appeal Ref: APP/H1840/W/24/3351754

6. Policy SWDP2 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan, Adopted 2016, (the DP) sets out that development within the open countryside will be strictly controlled and will be limited to certain types of development. The proposed development does not meet any of the listed exceptions set out in Policy SWDP 2(C).
7. Policy SWDP4 of the DP, amongst other things, seeks proposals which can demonstrate that development will minimise demand for travel and offer genuinely sustainable travel choices. This is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which seeks to ensure that sustainable transport modes are prioritised taking account of the vision for the site, the type of development and its location.
8. The nearest identified settlements to the appeal site are Astwood Bank, which is approximately two kilometres (km) away and Inkberrow, at circa 3km away. Inkberrow is defined as a 'Category 1 settlement' under the settlement hierarchy of the DP.
9. Access to the two settlements is along busy roads with no continuous footpath and limited streetlighting. Therefore, in combination with the distance to the settlements, future occupiers would be discouraged from walking to access the services and facilities on offer, particularly during hours of darkness and poor weather conditions. This would particularly be the case for families with young children, older people or those with mobility issues. For similar reasons, I am also not persuaded that future occupiers would cycle to access the services and facilities on offer in the settlements. However, the provision of bicycle storage would, to some limited degree, encourage sustainable travel choice for those wishing to cycle.
10. While I acknowledge that the development could incorporate suitable electric vehicle charging points, it would not eliminate the reliance on private motor vehicles to access facilities, nor would it promote the health and environmental benefits from regular active travel such as walking and cycling.
11. The Framework states that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas. Even so, I consider the site to be highly inaccessible and physically remote from the nearest settlements. There is also limited evidence before me regarding the nearest bus stop and the frequency of a bus service, although the Council suggest that it is approximately 1km away from the site, on the route to Inkberrow. In these circumstances, I am not satisfied that the use of public transport would be a realistic option for future occupiers. As such, the future occupants would be highly dependent on the use of private cars for their day-to-day needs, and the proposal would not offer a genuine choice of transport or prioritise sustainable transport modes. Consequently, it is not clear to what extent the proposal would enhance or maintain the vitality of the nearby community.
12. Even if the new dwellings were smaller bungalows, four open market houses on the site would not be comparable to the extant permission for a one bedroom live / work unit. By its very nature a live / work unit can provide sustainability benefits and was concluded to be in accordance with Policy SWDP8 of the DP. In contrast, the proposed dwellings as open market houses would result in markedly more vehicle movements to and from the site on a daily basis.
13. I acknowledge that the proposal would likely result in the extant permission not being implemented and to some degree this would result in a loss of rural

employment on the site. However, the full details of the live / work unit have not been provided, and it is not clear why the loss of the live / work unit would cause harm to the rural economy or undermine the Council's overall development plan strategy for employment in rural areas. Therefore, and without substantive evidence before me, I am not persuaded that the proposal would conflict with Policy SWDP12B of the DP.

14. The main parties have highlighted a series of other planning applications and appeal decisions. In particular, my attention has been drawn to a recent planning permission, on neighbouring land, off Bouts Lane² for a Permission in Principle for up to five dwellings. In reaching their decision on that application the Council concluded that the development would comprise the redevelopment of previously developed land which would make effective use of land, thus complying with the policies of the development plan. The Council also highlight that a previous appeal decision on that site was a material consideration and that they could not justifiably refuse that application. Given this, the adjacent development and the appeal scheme are not comparable, and I attach limited weight to the Permission in Principle on the adjacent land.
15. Reference has also been made to another Permission in Principle granted for a new dwelling³. However, the full details of that case have not been provided, including any plans. As such, a proper comparison has not been possible. Accordingly, as I am required to do, I have determined the case before me on the site-specific circumstances and on its own merits.
16. For the above reasons and on the evidence before me, I conclude that the proposal is not in a suitable location having regard to local and national policies and access to services and facilities. It therefore fails to accord with Policies SWDP2 and SWDP4 of the DP, as well as the aims and objectives of the Framework. It would also be contrary to Policy SWDP1 of the DP, which is an overarching policy that reflects the Framework's presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Character and appearance

17. As a horse paddock, the appeal site has a rural character, set within the wider agricultural landscape, largely comprising open fields, bounded by tall hedgerows. However, the site is located adjacent to the road, and adjacent to a cluster of stable buildings and residential properties. Other buildings in the locality, including houses are primarily grouped in small clusters next to a road also.
18. The introduction of up to four additional dwellings onto the land would noticeably extend the amount of built development adjacent to the existing cluster of buildings. In addition, the land extends beyond the existing cluster of buildings, and the new dwellings, as well as the domestication of the site, would introduce a reasonable amount of built form and encroachment within the landscape.
19. Due to the scale of the development and its juxtaposition next to existing buildings the harm to the landscape would be tempered. Also, dwellings nearby range in age, style and appearance, and various matters can be agreed at the technical details consent stage, including the scale and appearance of the proposed dwellings.

² Council Reference: W/25/00422/PIP

³ Council Reference: W/24/02308/PIP

20. The proposed dwellings could be designed to front the road, and a soft landscaping scheme could include the retention of the frontage hedgerow. As a consequence, the harm to the landscape would be relatively localised, and I attach modest weight to the identified harm to the character and appearance of the area.
21. In the context of the above considerations, I conclude that the appeal site would not be an appropriate location for the development proposed, due to the resultant harm to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal would therefore conflict with Policies SWDP2, SWDP21 and SWDP25 of the DP, which together and amongst other things, expects all development to integrate effectively with its surroundings and is appropriate to the character of the landscape setting, safeguarding the open countryside.

Planning Balance

22. The Council accept that they cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land. Indeed, at around 1.1 years, this represents a severe shortfall in the supply of housing land. Therefore, the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out at Paragraph 11(d) of the Framework applies. In these circumstances, Paragraph 11(d)(ii) of the Framework states that planning permission should be granted unless any adverse effects of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.
23. The Framework makes it clear that weight should be afforded to policies of the development plan according to their degree of consistency with the Framework. In this regard, the Framework supports housing development in rural areas that reflect local needs. It also seeks to direct development towards locations with good access to services and facilities and ensure that sustainable transport modes are prioritised. The Framework also seeks the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places, that are sympathetic to local character. Accordingly, although modest, there would be harm to the landscape. The proposal would also not prioritise alternative modes of travel and it would not enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Therefore, the conflict between the proposal and Policies SWDP1, SWDP2, SWDP4, SWDP21 and SWDP25 of the DP should be given significant weight in this appeal.
24. Up to four new dwellings on the site would contribute to boosting the supply of new housing, as referenced in the Framework. In addition, as a small site it could also be delivered relatively quickly. There would also be social and economic benefits to local services during the construction and occupancy phases and support local trades, supply chains and a local housebuilder. The proposal would also not result in the loss of the most versatile agricultural land. Any technical details consent would also attract a financial contribution towards affordable housing. A 10% biodiversity net gain would also be achieved but this is a requirement of planning policy and carries neutral weight.
25. The new dwellings could be energy efficient and meet the accommodation needs of the elderly, persons with mobility concerns, and those looking to downsize to address an identified shortfall. Nonetheless, I do not share the view that people within these demographics would necessarily wish to gravitate to houses in such a remote location, devoid of adequate access to day-to-day services.

26. In the context of the shortfall in housing land supply, the identified benefits attract considerable positive weight in my determination. However, due to the small-scale nature of the proposed development the benefits of the scheme attract moderate weight overall.
27. Consequently, the adverse impacts of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. Therefore, the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply.

Conclusion

28. The proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

N Bromley

INSPECTOR