



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 September 2025

by K Townend BSc MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/P0119/W/25/3368748

Hackets End, Cutts Heath Road, Buckover, South Gloucestershire GL12 8QL

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Mark Snook against the decision of South Gloucestershire Council.
 - The application Ref is P25/00522/O.
 - The development proposed is erection of 1 no. self-build dwelling (Outline) with all matters reserved.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The planning application was submitted in outline with all matters reserved. The Council determined the application on that basis. I have therefore taken any indication of reserved matters shown on the submitted drawings to be illustrative.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposed development would provide a suitable location for housing, having regard to the development strategy for the area and the accessibility of services and facilities.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises part of the garden to the host dwelling, Hackets End. It lies outside of any settlement boundary identified in the South Gloucestershire Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-2027 (the CS). The appellant has referred to the group of houses around the host dwelling as 'Buckover' and also noted that it is close to Milbury Heath. However, I have not been provided with any evidence that either of these areas are identified as settlements for development in the CS. Therefore, the site is considered to be within open countryside.
5. Policy CS5 of the CS seeks to strictly limit new development in the countryside. Policy PSP40 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan Policies, Sites and Places Plan, adopted November 2017 (the PSP) also has the same aim. The appeal before me would not comply with any of the exceptions provided in PSP40 of the PSP and would also fail to comply with Policy CS5 of the CS.
6. I acknowledge that there is a large garden centre near the appeal site which would be within walking distance. Albeit that it has a café, hairdresser, dog day care, and click and collect facility for a large retailer, it would not provide for the day to day needs of the occupants of the proposed dwelling. The other services and facilities noted by the appellant, including the place of worship, the public house and children's nursery facilities would also not provide access to food shopping,

employment, or education. In my judgement the future occupants of the proposal would still need to frequently travel elsewhere to access these facilities and services.

7. The edge of the town of Thornbury is approximately 700m from the site. However, all of the services and facilities, including the employment and education provision, and the shops noted by the appellant, are further away. There is a footway along the A38. Nevertheless, this is, in parts, very narrow, overgrown, and tight against the vehicle carriageway. Walking along this footway would not be pleasant or feel safe. It would be possible to walk along Hackets Lane and other roads into Thornbury but the route would be along narrow country lanes without pavements and with tight bends, sections with limited verge and overgrown hedges. Although walking along Hackets Lane would be possible, and is used for leisure walking, it is unlikely that the future occupants would use these routes for commuting or to access schools and shops.
8. It is also unlikely that the future occupants would walk to Thornbury to catch a bus to other facilities in larger towns. Given that the site lies on the Avon Cycleway cycling would be a reasonable option for travel between the site and Thornbury. Nevertheless, residents are unlikely to cycle for shopping trips or to access education facilities.
9. The proposed improved cycle route on the A38 would provide access to Alveston and Bristol. However, there are limited services and facilities in Alveston and Bristol would be over half an hour cycle distance from the site. This improved route would also not extend up to the appeal site and would, therefore, not benefit the proposal. Overall, in my judgement, the appeal site is not within safe and convenient walking or cycling distance of a range of services and facilities, as required by Policy PSP11 of the PSP.
10. The Westlink bus service is a demand response facility where passengers can book a journey. Although the appellant contends that this facility would provide bus links to Thornbury and other towns, the booking evidence provided indicates that the appeal site is approximately 7 to 10 minutes' walk from the bus stop. Moreover, I have no compelling evidence that the booking would be honoured as the service relies on passenger numbers to provide effective use of the vehicles. Furthermore, there would be no guarantee that the bus would arrive in Thornbury at the expected time as this would depend on other pick-up and drop-off points and times.
11. In the appeal at Sodbury Road, referred to by the Council, the Inspector noted that the Westlink bus service would not be an attractive option for those who have access to a private car, particularly for trips where predictable journey times are important including access to schools, work and health services. Although that appeal related to a much larger development, the future occupants of the appeal scheme before me would also likely have access to a private car and it is unlikely that the Westlink bus would contribute to making a modal shift to other modes of transport. The weight given to the Westlink bus service in the Sodbury Road appeal was not related to the scale of the development but rather the availability of the private car. That appeal decision is, therefore, material to my consideration of this appeal.

12. The appellant has also drawn my attention to an approval on Cuttsheath Road in which the Westlink bus was considered to make the site sustainable. Although that site is also in the countryside, the decision pre-dates the appeal at Sodbury Road and I, therefore, give greater weight to the appeal decision.
13. Notwithstanding the distance to Thornbury and the presence of other residential properties in the area, for the above reasons, there are limited opportunities for sustainable transport modes. The future occupants of the development would be likely to rely on the private car for the majority of journeys. The scheme would not have access to a range of travel options other than the private car, as required by Policy CS8 of the CS. Neither would it promote sustainable modes of transport, contribute towards the objective of limiting the need to travel, or contribute towards reducing carbon emissions, even with the provision of electric vehicle charging.
14. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) recognises that sustainable transport solutions vary between rural and urban areas. Even so, in this case, the future occupants of the development would be heavily reliant on the private car and there would be limited sustainable transport options.
15. Consequently, I find that the site is not an appropriate location for the proposed housing, having regard to the development strategy for the area and the accessibility of services and facilities and would be contrary to Policy CS8 of the CS and Policy PSP11 of the PSP. Collectively these policies seek to ensure that development provides the occupants with a range of options other than the private car, resist developments which are car dependent, support travel by means other than the car, aim for development to provide appropriate, safe, accessible, convenient and attractive access for all mode trips, and are within appropriate distance to key services and facilities that is safe and usable for walking and/or cycling.
16. I also find that the proposal would not comply with the guidance within the Framework which, amongst other matters, seeks to promote sustainable development in rural areas, manage patterns of growth and ensure that appropriate opportunities can, or have been, taken to promote sustainable transport modes.

Other Matters

17. The proposal is for a self-build dwelling. However, although the Council Self-build Officer supported the proposal, I have no means, such as a completed S106 agreement, to secure the development as self-build. I am, therefore, not able to give this benefit any weight in the decision.
18. Both main parties agree that the Council cannot currently demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. Both quote a supply of 4.41 years, as detailed in the Council's Annual Monitoring Report. Paragraph 11d) of the Framework therefore applies.
19. Policies CS5 of the CS and PSP40 of the PSP are the most relevant in considering new dwellings outside of settlements. These policies are broadly consistent with the Framework as a whole in recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Given the lack of a five year housing land supply only limited weight should be given to the conflict with these policies.

20. Policy CS8 of the CS and Policy PSP11 of the PSP are also consistent with the Framework in seeking to ensure that development offers genuine sustainable travel choices. The proposed development would conflict with these policies and, consequently, would conflict with the development plan as a whole. I attribute significant weight to this harm in the overall balance.
21. The proposal would accord with the Framework in that it would boost the supply of housing and recognise the important contribution small sites make. The site would also be deliverable within a short timeframe and provide economic benefits both during and post construction.
22. However, although I afford significant weight to the provision of new houses, as only one dwelling is proposed this benefit is limited when weighing the merits of the scheme. I therefore afford significant weight to the limited benefit the development would make to addressing the housing shortfall.
23. The appeal site is between existing dwellings, and I have no compelling evidence that a reserved matters scheme would not be capable of being designed to fit in with the character and appearance of the area. New planting would also help to reduce the visual effect. Nevertheless, the design and layout of any future development would not weigh substantially in favour of the proposal.
24. That there are no concerns regarding the living conditions of future occupants, the occupants of neighbouring properties, highway safety of the access, flooding, ecology, or trees are all neutral matters. Therefore, I have attached negligible weight to these.
25. On the other side of the balance there would be adverse environmental and social impacts contrary to elements of the Framework, in terms of the lack of access to services and facilities and the reliance on private vehicles. I give this harm significant weight.
26. Overall, I attribute significant weight to the limited benefits of the scheme. The adverse impacts of the location of the proposed development and the lack of sustainable modes of access to services and facilities would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole. As a result, the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply, and the proposal would also be contrary to Policy CS4A of the CS.

Conclusion

27. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

K Townsend

INSPECTOR