
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 October 2025

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

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/H1840/W/25/3368312

Land at stables at (OS 9186 5683), Netherwood Lane, Crowle WR7 4AB

- 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 Mr & Mrs M Littlewood against the decision of Wychavon District Council.
 - The application Ref is W/25/00937/PIP.
 - The development proposed is described as: Permission in Principle for the construction of 1no. dwelling.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal is for permission in principle. The 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 establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle and the second (technical details consent - TDC) is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. Planning permission does not exist unless both the permission in principle and the technical details are approved. This appeal relates to the first of these two stages.
3. The scope of the considerations for PIP is limited to location, land use and the amount of development permitted. All other matters are considered as part of a subsequent TDC application if permission in principle is granted.
4. In respect of residential development an applicant can apply for permission in principle for a range of dwellings by expressing a minimum and maximum number of net dwellings. In this case, permission in principle is sought for one dwelling.
5. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was updated in February 2025. The Council has subsequently confirmed that the effect of the revised Framework means that the Council can presently demonstrate 1.1 years supply of housing land.
6. The appellant refers to policies of the emerging development plan within the evidence. The Council has submitted the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review (SWDPR) for Examination. Consultation is required to be undertaken on the main modifications. In the absence of details of the extent of any unresolved objections or conclusions regarding the degree of consistency with the Framework, I afford limited weight to the policies of the emerging local plan.

Main Issues

7. The main issues are:

- whether the site is suitable for residential development, having regard to its location, the proposed land use, and the amount of development; and
- the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, with respect to the location and proposed land use.

Reasons

8. Policy SWDP1 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) seeks to ensure that new development is channelled to appropriate locations including the need to promote accessibility to everyday facilities. Policy SWDP2 of the SWDP establishes the Council's approach to the sustainable distribution of housing across the area. Partly through the use of development boundaries, it seeks to focus housing within the wider Worcester urban area, followed by the key towns and then the remaining smaller towns. Villages located within the rural area are deemed appropriate to meet only locally identified housing needs.
9. 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 SWDP. The proposal would not meet any of these exceptions and would therefore be at odds with the development strategy. Consequently, the appeal site is not located within or adjacent to a defined settlement and falls within the open countryside for plan purposes. Part of the site is occupied by a small stable building however the majority is undeveloped and the site therefore, as a whole, does not constitute previously developed land.
10. The appeal site is a parcel of open land situated on the western side of Netherwood Lane. The settlement of Crowle includes Crowle Green, and Sale Green. The appeal site is located within Crowle Green. Crowle is a Category 3 village as set out in Table 2 of Policy SWDP2 and Annex D: Hierarchy of Settlements of the SWDP. SWDP2 identifies that housing development within Category 1, 2 and 3 villages should be predominately aimed at meeting locally identified housing needs only and that infill development within defined development boundaries will be supported subject to meeting detailed plan policies. The proposed development would be outside a defined development boundary and would not therefore meet the definition of infill development, nor would it be for a locally identified housing need.
11. The SWDPR proposes to amend the settlement boundary for Crowle and upgrade the village from a Category 3 to a Category 2. The settlement boundary amendment would extend the boundary to include existing properties on the western side of Netherwood Lane, but not the appeal site. Therefore, whilst affording limited weight to the policies within the SWDPR, the site would remain in the open countryside in any event. Furthermore, the proposed change to village category would continue to require housing development to predominantly meet locally identified housing needs.
12. Policy SWDP4 of the DP identifies that new development should be located and designed to reduce the need to travel and encourage the use of sustainable transport alternatives.

13. Netherwood Lane is a 30 miles per hour road with no streetlights and for most of its length has no footway. Crowle Green facilities comprise a post office and public house which lie to the south of the appeal site. A primary school, village hall, church, and shop are in Crowle. Bus stops providing a service to Worcester are located on Old Turnpike Road.
14. The appeal site is within walking distance of Crowle's services and facilities. However, the lack of safety relating to walking on the unlit road/public footpath for even a short distance, would be a significant deterrent for future occupiers to walk to the services and facilities, especially at night or in inclement weather. This would also apply in relation to future occupiers cycling to services and facilities. To meet their day-to-day needs, future occupants would likely be generally dependent on the use of a private car to access services and facilities in larger settlements. Consequently, the location of the site would not minimise the demand for travel or reduce the reliance on the use of a private car. Therefore, the proposal would not help achieve sustainable development.
15. The Framework recognises that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas. However, a likely reliance upon travel by private modes of transportation sits uncomfortably alongside the Government's objectives of delivering sustainable development in a planned and coordinated manner.
16. For the above reasons, the appeal site, whilst of a size and composition capable of accommodating one dwelling, would not be suitable for the residential development proposed, having regard to its location, the proposed land use, and the amount of development. Accordingly, the proposed development would conflict with Policies SWDP1, SWDP2 and SWDP4 of the SWDP, whose requirements have been outlined above.

Character and Appearance

17. Policy SWDP2 (A) (iii and iv) requires, amongst other things, development to safeguard and wherever possible enhance the open countryside and encourage the effective use and re-use of accessible, available, and environmentally acceptable brownfield land.
18. The appeal site comprises part of a larger open field on the western side of Netherwood Lane. Within the site, adjacent to its eastern boundary, is an existing small stable block, associated structures, and concrete hardstanding with an existing access onto Netherwood Lane. Existing residential properties are located on the eastern side of Netherwood Lane which stretch northwards and terminate around the appeal site.
19. The site lies within the open countryside and sits adjacent to fields to the south, west and north. A barn is on the adjacent site to the south. The appeal site and adjacent fields provide wide views over the surrounding countryside, and the existing roadside hedge provides an important verdant feature. The residential development on the eastern side of the lane has a suburban character, whilst the western side is mainly undeveloped and retains a strong rural character. The existing development is not intrusive within the site or wider landscape and represents the agrarian character of the western side of Netherwood Lane. As an open parcel of land with limited built form, the site makes an important and positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area.

20. The proposal would introduce built form beyond the edge of the village. Despite the retention of the roadside hedge to the front of the site, a built excursion into the open countryside in the form of a dwelling would be obtrusive when compared with the existing structures on site. As a result, the rural openness of the site would be materially eroded at a prominent location readily experienceable when exiting the village via Netherwood Lane. This would be the case whatever the precise format and design of the proposed development.
21. Although the appeal site lies adjacent to an agricultural barn and small stabling structures, the proposed dwelling would introduce domestic built form, hard surfacing, lighting, and residential activity that would intensify development and diminish its rural character. Whilst the proposed dwelling would be located on part previously developed land, its urbanising effect would be incongruous and harmful to the open countryside and the village's landscape setting, failing to safeguard or enhance it.
22. Consequently, for the above reasons, the proposed development would represent an unsuitable use in an unsuitable location, in conflict with Policies SWDP2, SWDP21 and SWDP25 of the SWDP. These policies, amongst other things, support development proposals where they conserve and enhance the special qualities of the landscape; and require development proposals to be appropriate to, integrate with, and complement the character of the area and landscape setting.

Other Matters

23. The appellant has drawn my attention to decisions made by the Council where development in the open countryside has been approved. Although some of the cited examples share similarities with the appeal proposal, none are directly comparable. The Church Road cases involved more extensive residential development and Baytree House concerned a barn conversion near a Category 1 village with significant services. Bouts Corner Farm allowed five houses following a previous appeal on the site; however, I have insufficient information to be satisfied that the context was comparable. Accordingly, I have determined this appeal on its individual planning merits, having regard to the particular case and site circumstances to hand.

Planning Balance

24. I have concluded above that the entire site does not constitute previously developed land as only a proportion has been previously built on. Nevertheless, the proposed development would make use of a partially brownfield site for one dwelling within a District where a 1.1-year housing land supply is in existence, which falls significantly below the level of supply required by national policy.
25. Given the shortfall in housing supply, paragraph 11 of the Framework is engaged, whereby planning permission should be granted unless (i) policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provide a strong reason for refusing the development, or (ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, and having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually

or in combination. There is nothing to suggest 11(d) (i) is relevant to this case, hence the balance in 11(d) (ii) applies.

26. Paragraph 73 of the Framework recognises that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area. Socially, and considering the magnitude of shortfall in the area's housing supply, the provision of one additional dwelling would make a valuable contribution to the Council's housing land supply and thus would contribute to the Government's objective to significantly boost the supply of homes. However, the contribution of one dwelling would be modest, even in the context that the Council cannot currently demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites.
27. The appeal scheme would also provide some modest economic and social benefits associated with the construction of the dwelling and its subsequent occupation, including support for the existing local services and facilities.
28. However, the proposed development would not accord with the development strategy set out in the SWDP as the site sits in the open countryside outside a defined development boundary where new housing development is strictly controlled. The use of a partially previously developed site as proposed does not outweigh the identified conflict with the development strategy to which I afford considerable weight. The proposal would also be harmful to the character and appearance of the area and its landscape setting.
29. The proposed development would not satisfy the Framework's key policies at paragraphs 129 and 135. These support development that takes into account the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting and is sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment. I therefore afford considerable weight to the proposal's conflict with Policy SWDP21.
30. Also, the proposal, whilst being within walking distance of a number of services and facilities would conflict with Policy SWDP4 as the location of the site would not minimise the demand for travel or reduce the reliance on the use of a private car.
31. Consequently, I find that the adverse impacts of the proposal and conflict with Policies SWDP1, SWDP2, SWDP4, SWDP21 and SWDP25 of the SWDP would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.

Conclusion

32. The proposal, having regard to its location, the proposed land use, and the amount of development, 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, the appeal should be dismissed.

P Brennan

INSPECTOR