



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 November 2025

by R J Redford MTCP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/E3335/W/25/3368693

Land to the West of The Cedars, Poolbridge Road, Blackford, Wedmore, Somerset BS28 4PA

- 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 Lewis Coulson on behalf of BJ Campbell South West Ltd against the decision of Somerset Council.
 - The application Ref is 50/24/00054.
 - The development proposed is the erection of 4-self build dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The application was made in outline with access detail submitted for approval. Accordingly, the proposed layout plans are considered illustrative only.
3. The main parties have referred to the Self-Build and Custom Build Homes Supplementary Planning Document August 2021¹ (SPD). Although this has not been submitted, the online version has been reviewed as part of this decision.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are whether the appeal site is a suitable location for the proposed development having regard to relevant policies relating to the countryside and accessibility, the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, and the desirability of preserving the setting as it relates to the special interest of the 4 nearby Grade II listed buildings.

Reasons

Location

5. The appeal site constitutes a field enclosed with hedging located between two pockets of development on Poolbridge Road, separate from Blackford Village. The village is a tier 4 settlement as identified by the development plan and the two pockets of development and appeal site are outside the settlement boundaries.
6. Policy CO1 of the Sedgemoor District Council Local Plan (LP) requires new development in the countryside outside of defined settlements to comply with relevant LP policies or demonstrate there is a specific countryside need. Although

¹ Written by Sedgemoor District Council, but transferred over to Somerset Council when this replaced the District Councils in 2023

no specific countryside need has been identified, the proposal is for 4 self-build dwellings, so LP Policies CO2 and D9 are relevant.

7. LP Policy CO2 provides for infill housing development up to 4 houses, within small villages or hamlets which have a clearly defined nucleus of existing dwellings. In the LP explanatory paragraph 5.196 it identifies a clearly defined nucleus as being typically at least 10 existing dwellings forming a tightly knit cluster.
8. To one side of the appeal site is a handful of residential properties located around the junction with Fosse Lane. On the other is a larger grouping of buildings including further residential properties, a farm, and business centre located opposite the Blackford Moor Lane junction. Opposite the appeal site, between the 2 groups of buildings, is some further development. Although this is set back from the road, it gives the impression of a loose, dispersed linear development and not a tight knit cluster. It is recognised that the SPD identifies that linear settlement patterns that follow a particular feature, such as a road, could also be candidates for potential infill. However, it goes on to specify that the built form of that settlement still needs to be tightly knit, and that is not the case in this instance.
9. Accordingly, the location of the appeal site cannot be considered to be an infill location within the existing main built up area of a clearly defined nucleus hamlet. The proposal would therefore fail to comply with LP Policy CO2.
10. Although for self-build developments of 4 or less houses, LP Policy D9 requires compliance with LP Policy CO2, it also allows for self-build developments of 9 houses or less in rural areas when well related to a settlement boundary. As identified above the appeal site is set away from Blackford Village so is not well related to the village's settlement boundary. Accordingly, the location of the appeal site would fail to comply with this part of LP Policy D9.
11. Additionally, one of the criteria of LP Policy D9 also requires that any self-build housing proposal should provide opportunities for walking and cycling to local services and facilities. Notwithstanding that the services in Blackford Village are unlikely to sustain day-to-day living, the walking or cycling from the appeal site would require travel along Poolbridge Road. This is unlit with no pavements and has little to no verge which could provide safe refuge when traffic is approaching. Therefore, the appeal site would also fail this criterion of LP Policy D9.
12. The appellant has drawn my attention to a number of planning applications², these have been considered and confirm that when it comes to assessment of location, each case should be considered carefully on its own merits.
13. Therefore, the appeal site cannot be considered a suitable location for the proposed development as it would fail to comply with LP Policies CO1, CO2 and D9 insofar as they relate to the countryside and accessibility, and Policy Wed 1 of the Wedmore Neighbourhood Plan, insofar as it requires development outside of settlement boundaries to comply with the LP.

Character and appearance

14. The area is predominantly characterised by an agricultural and rural landscape with small clusters of buildings located at road junctions or around farming units. The majority of development is concentrated in the various villages throughout the area.

² Westham – reference 50/24/00008; Mill Lane – reference 50/20/00069; and Berhill – reference 01/20/00017.

15. The proposal seeks a singular access into the appeal site. Due to the linear form of the appeal site this would mean a parallel access drive would likely need to be created, as shown on the proposed site access plan and illustrative site layout. This form of development would be suburban in its appearance so would not reflect the rural appearance of the area or the prevailing clustering of development which informs its character.
16. The proposal would also have an urbanising effect as it would remove the separation between the existing clusters of development, and the space between those clusters is important to the verdant and rural appearance of the area. Therefore, although design and layout are not for consideration at this stage, the proposal for 4, even modest dwellings, would require a significant proportion of the appeal site to be developed to accommodate access, parking, the houses, and domestic gardens. This would permanently alter the overall character of the site and remove the space the site provides between existing development, so harming the character and appearance of the area.
17. It is recognised that the proposed dwellings could be set back behind area of landscaping which could potentially be used for screening. However, the density and height of landscaping required would, likely, enclose this part of the lane. This would be uncharacteristic and remove the sense of openness and space the appeal site creates between development along the road and thus the landscape character of this area.
18. Accordingly, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area. It would fail to comply with LP Policies D2 and D19, and NP Policy Wed 4, insofar they seek to protect the landscape character and ensure new development to respond and reinforce local context including distinctiveness of place.

The setting of listed buildings

19. The appeal site is within the vicinity of 4 Grade II listed buildings. To one side of the site is 'The Cedars, forecourt wall and boundary wall' (reference 1252857) and opposite that, over Poolbridge Road, 'Over Brook Farmhouse and wall' (reference 1262085), whose 'bridge railings and gate at entrance' (reference 1252785) is separately listed. Within the cluster of the buildings on the opposite side of the appeal site is a further listed building 'Sexey's House Farmhouse' (reference 1262098)³.
20. The Cedars and Over Brook Farmhouse likely date back to the 17th Century but clearly show 18th and 19th century alterations, including the bridge railings and gate. Sexey's is slightly later, dating to the 19th Century. Nevertheless, all are good examples of vernacular rural houses, therefore their significance is related to their age, and rural aesthetic and setting.
21. Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended, requires that I have special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings, as heritage assets. Paragraph 202 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires that heritage assets, as irreplaceable resources, 'should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance' and paragraph 212 confirms 'great weight' should be given to their conservation.

³ It is noted that in some of the interested party submissions Southcote House Farm is identified as a listed building. There is no record of this property being listed, although it appears to be next to Sexey's House Farmhouse which is. There may have been changes in name over time but in this decision, I am relying on the references of the listed buildings and not their names.

22. The appeal site is located between the 4 listed buildings and the open and rural character of the space between them informs their significance as vernacular rural houses. Accordingly, the proposal would visually alter the appeal site to a level which would remove its open and rural character and so would fail to preserve the setting as it relates to the special interest of the 4 listed buildings.
23. It is recognised the Council has concerns relating to the level of heritage information submitted. However, in this instance, the submissions provided enough evidence to understand the relationship between the appeal site and heritage assets.

Other Matters

24. The Council has not identified harm in relation to living conditions, ecology, flooding, and highway safety. Nevertheless, a lack of harm, is by definition, neutral and so cannot weigh for or against the proposal.
25. Interested parties have highlighted concerns relating to drainage, community involvement, and local demand. These are noted but do not alter my findings on the main issues.
26. The Council's ecologist is also satisfied that the proposal would qualify as an exception under the Biodiversity Net Gain Regulations. There is nothing before me to conclude otherwise.
27. That there were issues with accessing documents on the Council's website is noted but this does not alter the planning merits of the case before me.

Heritage and Planning Balance

28. Less than substantial harm has been identified in relation to the setting of 4 listed buildings and this would be of a moderate order. Paragraph 215 of the Framework states that in the case of less than substantial harm this should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
29. The Council have confirmed that it does not have a 5-year housing land supply, with the most recently tested supply position standing at 4.17 years. Therefore, a public benefit of the proposal would be the provision of 4 houses which would have a positive effect on the Council's housing land supply. The appellant also considers there to be a defined, local need for self-build housing and that future occupants would support local services and the general vitality of the rural area. In combination these public benefits would, therefore, attract moderate weight.
30. However, paragraph 212 of the Framework requires great weight to be given to the conservation of heritage assets. Therefore, although the proposal would attract a number of public benefits, in accordance with Paragraph 215 of the Framework, it is not found they outweigh the identified harm to heritage assets. The proposal would therefore fail to comply with the Act, the Framework and LP Policy D26 insofar as it requires new development to avoid harm, sustain and where appropriate enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings.
31. Paragraph 11(d) of the Framework indicates that permission should be granted, unless the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provide a clear reason for refusing the development

proposed. The application of heritage policy provides that to be the case here. As such, the proposal would not be the sustainable development for which Paragraph 11 of the Framework indicates a presumption in favour.

Conclusion

32. For the reasons given above the appeal scheme would conflict with the development plan when read as a whole and there are no sufficiently weighted material considerations, including the Framework, which would indicate a decision otherwise. The appeal is, therefore, dismissed.

RJ Redford

INSPECTOR