



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 May 2016

by **A J Mageean BA (Hons) BPI PhD MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 6 June 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/L3245/W/16/3145214

Longden Properties, Unit 1, The Farriers, Annscroft, Shrewsbury SY5 8AN

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Longden Properties Ltd against the decision of Shropshire Council.
 - The application Ref 15/02962/OUT, dated 25 June 2015, was refused by notice dated 25 November 2015.
 - The development proposed is housing development on brownfield land consisting of mixed market and social two bedroomed dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. As the address details on the application form submitted in this case are incomplete I have used the address provided on the appeal form.
3. This application was submitted in outline with all matters except access reserved for consideration at a later stage. An Indicative Site Plan was submitted with this application to which I have had regard in determining this appeal.
4. Since the determination of the application which is the subject of this appeal the Council has adopted the Site Allocations and Management Development Plan 2015 (the SAMDev). It is clear from the appellant's Planning Statement that they were aware of the status of this document. I have therefore determined the appeal on the basis of the national and local policies adopted at the present time.

Main Issues

5. The main issues in this case are:
 - 1) Whether the proposal would represent a sustainable form of development in terms of its location; and,
 - 2) The effect of the proposed development on the rural character and appearance of the area.
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Reasons

Sustainable Development

6. The appeal site is part of the 'Farriers Business Centre' which is accessed via a private drive running south from the main road. Whilst I noted on my site visit that the site is presently somewhat overgrown I understand from the appellant that it has previously been used for the storage of topsoil and overburden. The northern boundary of the site is formed by the main road, to the west of the site are three large detached properties which also front onto the road and to the south west lie the car park and buildings associated with the business centre. To the north of the road and to the east and south are open fields, though I noted on my site visit that a number of caravans are located directly to the east of the appeal site. This proposal would place a development of up to twelve two bedroomed houses on this site.
7. The site is outside the villages of Annscroft and Longden. As it is not located within any settlement boundaries the Council has indicated that this site is regarded as open countryside. In this respect Policy CS5 of the Shropshire Adopted Core Strategy 2011 (the Core Strategy) is relevant. This Policy seeks to strictly control development in the countryside and will only be allowed where this improves the sustainability of rural settlements by bringing economic and community benefits. In this respect new housing is limited to that which is needed to house rural workers, other affordable accommodation to meet local need and the replacement of existing dwellings.
8. However the Council also states that the Core Strategy CS4 which seeks to ensure that rural communities will become more sustainable by focusing development and investment in Community Hubs and Community Clusters is relevant. In this respect SAMDev Policy S16.2 (xi) Longden, Hook-a-Gate, Annscroft, Longden Common and Lower Common/Exfords Green are identified as a Community Cluster in Longden Parish which will provide for limited future housing growth of around 10-50 houses up to 2026. This will be delivered through infilling, groups of houses and conversions which may be acceptable on suitable sites within the villages.
9. Of these planned dwellings 25-30 are to be in Longden village, with the remainder spread evenly amongst the cluster settlements. This Policy statement also notes that Longden parish Council has adopted a Parish Development Statement (2013) as an addendum to the Parish Plan (2010) indicating that no individual site should be of more than 10-15 houses and a preference for lower cost 2-3 bedroomed properties. Suitable zones with associated guidance for development are identified in Longden.
10. The Council states in its officer report that as a whole this cluster is considered to be close to the housing guideline target, as there are 24 dwellings with either approval or with current officer recommendations for approval. The Parish Council itself states that it has far exceeded its SAMDev quota for development in the parish. I acknowledge that further development could take place in Annscroft but consider that this should follow the policy guideline and be achieved through infilling, groups of houses and conversions on suitable sites within the village. Whilst Annscroft itself is a linear village whose boundaries are not clear, most built form is sited on the north west side of Shrewsbury Road. The appeal site is separated from the village by several fields and as such I do not consider that this site is within the village for the purpose of SAMDev Policy S16.2 (xi).

11. I note that the appellant states that this site must be regarded as brownfield land as it has recently been used. However, whilst this might be the case, as it is located outside the main village areas it is also relevant to consider the SAMDev Policy MD3 which states that in addition to supporting the development of the allocated housing sites set out in settlement policies, planning permission will also be granted for sustainable housing development on windfall sites both within these settlements and in the countryside, particularly where the settlement housing guideline is unlikely to be met. Considerations relevant to this Policy also include the presumption in favour of sustainable development and the benefits arising from the development.
12. In considering the suitability of this site for a residential development of approximately twelve houses I have looked at the availability of services locally and also access to services and employment elsewhere via public transport, cycling and walking. This site is outside but a short distance away from the villages of Annscroft and Longden. Whilst I noted on my site visit that Annscroft has very few facilities, Longden does have some basic provision in term of a primary school, church, public house, post office and shop. The appellant states that Longden can be reached on foot, though footpaths are limited and unlit in this area. A local bus stop provides access to larger centres though I have not been presented with any information about the regularity of this service. I note that some employment opportunities could be available in the Business Centre. However, I consider that development in this location would lead to regular travel to access most basic services and employment primarily by private car.
13. I have also looked at the key elements of sustainability as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) at paragraph 7. I accept that this development would contribute to the expansion of the local population and thereby the vibrancy of the community. I acknowledge that the Business Centre could provide employment opportunities for people living in these properties and I also accept that there would be short term economic gain through the provision of construction jobs. The appellant suggests that there would be of two units of affordable housing on this site, though I note that no mechanism to secure such provision has been presented. I also note that the small size of these houses would reflect a need identified by the local Parish Council. There would also be some additional revenue generated for the Parish Council. However, looking at the environmental impacts of this scheme, whilst I recognise the appellant's view that this is a brownfield site, the need to travel outside the immediate area to access key services and most employment cannot be overlooked and outweighs the social and economic benefits.
14. The appellant has stated that prospective local purchasers have indicated their interest in these properties. However, the appellant has not presented any further evidence of this being housing to meet local need. Therefore this matter does not overcome the concerns identified about the sustainability of this location for development of this nature.
15. I conclude on this issue that this proposal would not represent a sustainable form of development in terms of its location. It would therefore not comply with Core Strategy Policies CS4 and CS5, or the SAMDev Policies S16.2 (xi) and MD3 which seek to strictly control development in the countryside, focusing development in community hubs and clusters.

Character and appearance

16. The Council has stated in its officer report that this development would “appear as a disjointed and bulky addition” intruding into the open countryside with little relationship to Annscroft. The Councils decision notice also states that this scheme would conflict with the Core Strategy Policy CS6 which seeks to ensure that development is of a scale, density and pattern appropriate to its surroundings.
17. The proposed development would be sited in front of the Business Centre buildings which are substantial two storey red brick buildings set some distance from the road. The detached properties to the west are well screened by mature vegetation and area set back a little further from the road than the indicative site plan suggests the proposed dwellings would be. As the existing access to the Business Centre has a wide entrance the proposed dwellings would be clearly visible from the road when travelling in an eastern direction.
18. Whilst I recognise that the rural character of this area is diminished by the presence of the Business Centre, including the large sign at its entrance, the appeal site does presently allow for open views of the countryside to the south east of the appeal site. Development on such a scale in this location would introduce built form, hard landscaping and other domestic paraphernalia into this largely rural setting. Whilst I recognise that the proposed dwellings would be small in themselves, twelve dwellings clustered in a relatively small area would be uncharacteristic in this area.
19. I have acknowledged the appellants point that the appeal site has previously been used to store topsoil and overburden. However this site has remained free from built development and such usage does not justify the development being considered in this case.
20. On this issue I conclude that the proposed development would have a detrimental effect on the rural character and appearance of this area. It would therefore not comply with the Core Strategy Policy CS6 which requires new development to protect, restore and conserve the environment and to be appropriate in terms of scale, density, pattern and design, taking into account the local character and context.

Conclusion

21. Drawing all of these strands together, in the scheme’s favour it would contribute to the supply of housing adjacent to a source of local employment, it would make a contribution to the provision of affordable housing and the houses themselves would be of the small size required in this area. However, these benefits would be in common with development located within village areas. These considerations would be outweighed by the fact that this site is located outside the villages of Annscroft and Longden, that it has not been demonstrated that these settlements have capacity for further sustainable development and that a case for specific local need has not been made. Furthermore I have found that this development would have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of this rural area.
22. For the reasons set out above, and taking into consideration all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should fail.

A J Mageean

INSPECTOR