

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2017/0516
Valid 25/09/2017

HIGHFIELD HOUSE
SCHOOL LANE
LONGSDON

ERECTION OF DETACHED
DWELLING

(OUTLINE - MINOR APPS)

MAIN ISSUES

Whether or not the proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

The principle of development in terms of sustainability and whether or not there are any adverse impacts which outweigh the benefits of providing new housing in this location.

The impact on the character and appearance of a rural area.

The impact on residential amenity.

The impact on highway safety.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is located on the edge of the village of Longsdon to the east side of School Lane and a short distance to the north of the A53/School Lane junction. It comprises part of the garden of Highfield House, which lies to the north of the dwelling which is next to the road junction. Agricultural buildings outside of the property lie to the east and north-east and open land lies to the north and west of the site (to the other side of the road) although there is also a stables building facing the road.

PROPOSAL

An outline application, with details of access and layout, has been submitted for a dwelling which appears from the indicative drawings to have a “chalet-dwelling” form similar to one refused for the site in 2015. It would have an L-shape and be sited next to the south boundary, the proposed boundary which would subdivide the overall property to create the new plot. There is an existing access and drive at the site which is separate to the main access for Highfield House and this would be used as the sole access for the new residential property.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Adopted 2014)

S01 Spatial Objectives

SS1 Development Principles

SS1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

SS6b Small Villages Strategy

H1 New Housing

DC1 Design Considerations

DC3 Landscape and settlement setting
T1 Development and sustainable transport

National Planning Policy Framework

Section 6 (Housing), 9 (Green Belts) and 10 (Climate Change).

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/2015/0231: Full application for one dwelling. Refused.
SMD/2016/0363: Resubmission of SMD/2015/0231. Withdrawn.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 14.11.17
Neighbour consultation period ends: 14.11.17
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

One letter of objection has been received concerning the adjacent agricultural buildings. It is considered by the objector that the dwelling would lead to complaints about the neighbouring agricultural operations, which includes the keeping of livestock and there is also concern about the impact on a drain from the farmland which runs through the site.

Town / Parish Comments

No objection.

Local Highways Authority

No objection subject to conditions.

Severn Trent Water

No objection.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The site is in the Green Belt and in order to protect its openness, the NPPF allows development only under limited criteria as listed in paras 89 and 90 (Section 9). New houses do not fall under the criteria and are therefore the development is deemed to be inappropriate development and thus harmful to the Green Belt. However, "limited infilling of villages" in the Green Belt is listed. Although the NPPF does not elaborate as to what constitutes "infill", I do not consider the proposal would amount to infill. This was also the conclusion reached in determining a previous scheme for a dwelling on this site in 2015 which was refused permission. The new scheme differs

only in that the siting has been moved closer to the south boundary but the movement of the house closer to the existing dwelling to the south and away from the open Green Belt land to the north does not in my opinion lead the scheme to now be deemed “infill development” simply because the land to the due north of the site (away from the main built-up part of the village) remains open. There are no other buildings between Highfield House (which could be described as forming part of the built-up part of the village despite the absence of a “development boundary” in the former Local Plan) and the open land away from the village to the north, other than farm buildings and stables, which are deemed to not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and which do not in principle harm its openness.

The proposed dwelling would not infill any gaps and would introduce a permanent form of development which would harm the openness of the Green Belt. Policy SS6b of the Council’s Core Strategy, relating to the strategy for the small villages (of which Longsdon is listed) allows some infill development within the development boundaries shown in the forthcoming Site Allocations Plan. There is no development boundary for the village shown in the Council’s former Local Plan. The forthcoming Site Allocations Plan will introduce or modify development boundaries for some of the villages in the District but there are no current proposals to introduce a development boundary for Longsdon under the latest draft Plan document (there was one proposed for the village at the Preferred Options stage but this has been dropped).

The proposal therefore amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt which is thus harmful to its openness and therefore, in accordance with the NPPF, should not be approved unless there are very special circumstances considered to outweigh the harm and the operation of Green Belt policy. However, although the applicant has identified two appeal decisions, these are not special circumstances which would outweigh the in principle objection to the scheme. Each case must be considered on its own merits and in this case, it is not considered that the development would amount to infill development.

The NPPF does give a presumption in favour of new sustainable housing where a five year housing land supply cannot be demonstrated. This is the case in Staffs Moorlands. Approval in this case should be given unless there would be adverse impacts which are considered to outweigh the benefits of providing more housing in an area of undersupply. It is considered that the harm to the openness of the Green Belt would outweigh the benefits of adding just one dwelling to the current housing stock in the District. Furthermore, the village of Longsdon is limited in terms of sustainability and does not have a wide range of services and there are no shops.

In terms of the impact on the character and appearance of the rural area, the previous scheme in 2015 was considered to harm the rural setting of the village. The slight re-siting of the dwelling would not overcome this concern and the character and setting of the village when approaching it from School Lane to the north remains open and rural, as farm buildings and particularly a traditional stone barn are the first buildings visible when approach the village along this road.

With regard to residential amenity, the details of the design are not to be determined but there is scope to design a dwelling on this plot which would not harm residential

amenity of either the existing residents or the future residents of the proposed house. The comments in the objection letter are noted but it is not uncommon for dwellings to be located adjacent to working farms with no significant impacts on residential amenity.

The proposed access is safe for the purposes of serving a new dwelling with the safeguard of planning conditions.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

In circumstances where a five year supply of housing cannot be demonstrated, and therefore policies for the delivery of housing are out of date, the NPPF states that consent should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the scheme. In this case, the harm to the openness of the Green Belt by reason of the inappropriateness of providing a new dwelling in this particular site which is also not in a particularly sustainable location and which would significantly harm the openness of the Green Belt and the rural village setting are identified as environmental harms which would outweigh the social and economic benefits of providing one dwelling in this location. The provision of one dwelling would have a very limited impact on the Council's current lack of a five year housing supply and would make a very modest contribution towards the economic and social strands of sustainable development. Moreover, the proposal would also not comply with other parts of the NPPF (as required in para. 14, footnote 9) such as Section 9 which aims to protect the Green Belt.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : REFUSE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston

Recommendation Date: 20.11.17

X 

Signed by: Jane Colley

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council