

TWC/2014/1054

Land Adjacent 1, Moorhead, Preston Upon The Weald Moors, Telford, Shropshire, TF6 6DL

Outline application for the erection of 2no. dwellings with associated access, all other matters reserved ***AMENDED PLANS RECEIVED***

APPLICANT

A Phillips & Sons, H Phillips

RECEIVED

25/11/2014

PARISH

Preston upon the Weald Moors

WARD

Church Aston and Lilleshall

OFFICER Matthew Thomas

COUNCILLOR ANDREW EADE HAS REQUESTED THAT THIS APPLICATION BE DETERMINED AT PLANNING COMMITTEE

OBJECTIONS RECEIVED: Yes

MAIN ISSUES

Sustainability of proposed development, Impact on character of village and residential amenities, Access, Ecology & Trees

PROPOSAL

This outline application originally sought planning permission for the erection of 8no. dwellings, comprising six semi-detached properties and two detached, with associated access on land to the south-west of Moorhead in the village of Preston Upon the Weald Moors. Following the consultation process and the large number of local objections received, amended plans were received reducing the proposed development to 2no. detached dwellings. Under this application access is sought for approval however all other matters including appearance, landscaping, layout and scale are reserved for later approval through a separate planning application.

Indicative drawings propose two detached properties with attached garages with access proposed directly off the highway where on-site parking and turning will be provided. A pedestrian footpath is also proposed along the site frontage linking to the existing footway network to the front of the existing properties at Moorhead.

The application is supported by a Design & Access Statement, Planning Statement and an Ecological Appraisal.

Background

In the autumn of 2014 the applicant engaged in pre-application discussions with the Local Planning Authority (LPA) where a proposal was put forward for residential development on the piece of land which this outline application is subject to. At this time the LPA did not have a published five year housing land supply and therefore less

weight was given to local policy relating to new residential development and greater weight was applied to the guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework, in particular the requirement for sustainable forms of development. During the pre-application stages, the applicant was advised that the principle of residential development may be supported subject to the usual planning considerations relating to design, scale, impact on the character and setting of the area and this advice was provided without opportunity for neighbour consultation. The applicant subsequently submitted a planning application seeking outline permission for 8no. dwellings, three of which were to be reserved for affordable housing provision. Following the consultation process it was apparent that there was a significant level of local objection and a range of issues were brought to the attention of officers. The LPA considered the large number of objections received and decided it could not be reasonably argued that Preston represents a sustainable location for new development. In February 2015 the LPA advised the applicant that officers were minded to recommend the application be refused on the grounds of Preston not being a sustainable location for residential development and the loss of agricultural land. The applicant subsequently provided amended plans for a revised scheme for the erection of 2no. detached dwellings with nil affordable housing.

On the 20th March, Telford & Wrekin Council published an updated five year housing land supply statement stating that the Council has now demonstrated a housing land supply of 8.2 years, thus weight is now being reverted back to local policies relating to new development within the Borough.

Officers have reviewed their advice in the light of the publication of the five year land supply figure. It is clear that the principle of the development was supported because of the absence of a five year land supply. Officers attached significant weight to the NPPF's advice on what councils should do in such situations. The scheme does not represent sustainable development and should therefore be resisted. This change in circumstance and subsequent change in recommendation has been relayed to the applicant however in the interests of transparency it is considered appropriate for this application to be determined by members of the Planning Committee.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The application site is located to the south of the village of Preston Upon the Weald Moors set back from the road which links the village with the adjacent village of Horton. The application site extends to approximately 0.49 hectares of a larger agricultural field, sited in the eastern corner of the field. The site is situated adjacent to an existing cluster of post war dwellings known as 'Moorhead'.

The site is bounded to the east, south and west by further agricultural land and to the north by existing residential development. Boundary treatment currently consists of semi-mature hedging to the north and east, with no existing access point to the highway other than through the main field.

The village of Preston Upon the Weald Moors has a primary school (St Lawrence Primary School) situated in close proximity to St Lawrence's Church and a Public House

(Queens Head). The village is approximately 4 miles north east of Wellington and some 6 miles north of Telford.

SUMMARISED CONSULTATIONS

Standard consultation responses

Preston Parish Meeting: Object

- Application site does not meet the test of sustainability as set out in the NPPF
- There is no public transport available and all other community facilities such as shops, medical facilities are only accessible by car. There is a local school but pedestrian access is difficult because a large part of that foot journey is on roads with no pavement which creates unnecessary danger. Similar situation with the Public House
- The road adjacent to the application site has a tendency to flood in period of heavy rain. Discrepancy between the site maps relating to the proximity of the flood plain and the proposed dwellings. Concerns over where storm water will collect and may exacerbate existing flooding problems. Further concerns that the sewerage system is inadequate and there are claims that raw sewage emerges in Horton
- Local residents are concerned about excessive volume and speed of traffic along The Humbers. At peak times the amount of traffic using this road as a short-cut to by-pass the Trench Lock traffic lights is such that residents have to wait for long periods before they can join the traffic on the main road. These country lanes were not mean to carry this volume of traffic
- Possibility that if this development was to be granted permission it may be the start of a process which would inevitably lead to Preston becoming contiguous with Horton. This in turn would mean that both communities would lose their unique identities and become part of an urban sprawl, thus destroying the rural character of this part of Telford

Highways: Comment - No Objection in principle subject to the following conditions:

- Visibility Splays (2.4m x 43m)
- Road Design
- Parking/Turning/Loading
- Development shall not take place until full construction of a 1.8m footway along the site frontage linking to the existing Footway Network to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority
- Highways Informative

Drainage: Support subject to conditions:

- Scheme of foul & surface water drainage
- Soakaway Tests/Locations of soakaways

Parks & Open Spaces: Comment

- Based on the scheme for 8no.units, a S106 Contribution of £600 per dwelling (total of £4,800) to be provided towards upgrading/enhancement of nearby play

recreational facilities for children and young people in order to maximise the capacity and meet the need arising out of this development

Ecology: Comment – include following conditions

- Erection of artificial nesting/roosting boxes
- Lighting Plan
- Informatives – Trenches & Pipework

Arboriculture: No Comment

Affordable Housing: Comment

- The affordable dwelling types, sizes, tenures, specification and location are to be agreed with The Council before any commencement on site. The internal space standards should meet the Homes and Communities Agency's (HCA) Housing Quality Indicators. The affordable homes should be fully integrated within the overall development
- The affordable homes should be transferred to an appropriate Registered Provider. An appropriate mechanism is required to ensure that all of the affordable homes remain as affordable in perpetuity. The method of advertising and allocating these homes should be agreed between the Council, the Registered Provider and representatives of the Parish

Shropshire Fire Service: No Comment

Neighbour consultation responses

Following neighbour consultation 40 letters of objection were received from a total of 26 addresses with the majority of the objections being received from local residents. The issue raised have been summarised below:

- Preston is a rural village and unsuitable for further residential development
- Proposal represents a ribbon form of development which would destroy the existing rural scene and create an urban type environment
- Existing local road network is unsuitable to accommodate additional volumes of traffic and further residential development would lead to a decrease in highway safety
- There are existing planning consents for residential development within the village without the need for additional consents
- Proposed development does not represent a sustainable form of development as required by the National Planning Policy Framework
- Preston has only recently seen improvements in land drainage however nowhere near enough to cope with further developments
- Existing problems relating to highway safety – road is used as a cut-through and vehicles often speed through the village
- Proposal would amount to overdevelopment of the village and site itself and will be an encroachment to existing countryside

- Site is agricultural land which gives clear distinction between Preston and Horton and should not be developed
- Immediate area floods regularly irrespective of all remedial work that has been done on the “crow brook site” making normal soakaway drainage difficult
- Plenty of brownfield sites in Telford which are more suitable for development
- Preston currently consists of 53 homes with existing planning consents for a further 24 potentially increasing the size of the village by 50%
- Proposal will place a severe strain on the village infrastructure – the village school is already very full
- Narrow roads and lack of footpaths is a real safety issue and with no local bus network there will be at least one additional vehicle per dwelling
- Allowing this development would set an unwelcome precedent in the village
- Further residential development will ruin the ‘village life’ for local residents
- Sewerage system is already working at full capacity
- Development will have an adverse impact on local wildlife/ecology
- Record of car accidents along the highway due to roads being narrow and vehicles travelling too fast – further development will exacerbate problems
- Village has no public facilities i.e. shops, post office and is not serviced by a bus service making a car essential
- Consideration must also be given to other planning applications for further residential developments within the village

A petition opposing the proposed development, containing over 300 signatures from a worldwide base, has also been received. Only a minor percentage of names are located within the borough.

A single letter of support was also received.

Following reconsultation, 15 letters of objection were received however no new issues were raised

RELEVANT HISTORY

None

RELEVANT POLICIES

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Core Strategy:

CS1 Homes

CS7 Rural Area

CS9 Accessibility & Social Inclusion

CS11 Open Space

CS12 Natural Environment

CS13 Environmental Resources

CS15 Urban Design

Wrekin Local Plan:

UD2 Design Criteria

H22 Community Facilities

OL7 Development in the open countryside

OL12 Open Land and Landscape – Contributions from New Development

OL13 Maintenance of Open Space

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of Development

Development within the rural area is focused within three main settlements of High Ercall Tibberton and Waters Upton, as directed by policy CS7 of the Core Strategy. Outside of this development is limited, and within the open countryside strictly controlled. The application site sits within the open countryside abutting the built village boundary of Preston Upon The Weald Moors. Consequently at face value, the application is inconsistent with the development plan.

Preston upon the Weald Moors is a small settlement that does not have any community facilities apart from a CoE school. It has one bus service (Route #16) that connects the site with Wellington twice a day and High Ercall once a day Monday to Friday. It does not run in the evenings or at weekends and does not connect with employment opportunities at Hortonwood or Donnington identified by the applicant. There is a Church within the village and a public house in Horton. The village is manifestly not the type of settlement which national policy anticipates as acceptable for housing. In short, the proposal does not represent sustainable development and should be resisted in principle

The Local Planning Authority acknowledges the letter received from the applicant's agent in March where a number of other planning approvals are cited. Officers would argue that each application is determined on its own merits and the granting of one approval within the village does not give way for all applications for development being approved. Reference is also made to Inspector's appeal decisions for sites in Gloucester, Herefordshire, Staffordshire and Warwickshire. Officers have noted the content of this supporting letter but do not feel these cases are relevant to the determination of this application especially since the publication of the Council's updated five year land supply statement, which outlines the provision of 8.2 years housing land supply, and as a consequence policy CS7 is relevant and a material consideration in the determination of the application.

At a national level the NPPF clearly promotes sustainable development in the rural area where it will enhance and maintain the vitality of rural communities, and recognises the development in one village may support services in a village nearby. However it also recognises that housing in rural areas should not be located in places distant from local services. Sustainable development has three key themes, an economic role, a social role and an environmental role, and neither role should be considered in isolation. In considering this application the proposal will have a negligible impact on the economy of the area due to the scale and type of development, and the loss of agricultural land

which currently supports a working farm; at a social level its role will be limited providing only two family homes to support the existing limited services; and at an environmental level, the proposal neither protects nor enhances the natural or built environment, nor has the proposal demonstrated that the units will have any innovative measures that will reduce the carbon footprint of the units, Subsequently if is considered that the proposal has failed to address the key themes to create a sustainable development, nor will it enhance or maintain the vitality of this rural community; nor form an exception as recognised in para 55 of the NPPF.

Access

The proposed access is to be directly off the highway to the south east of the site which links the villages of Preston and Horton. A visibility splay of 2.4m x 43m is to be provided with both dwellings having their own driveway providing on-site parking. A pedestrian footpath is also proposed along the site frontage linking to the existing footway network to the front of the existing properties at Moorhead.

The Local Planning Authority acknowledges the concerns raised by the Parish Council and local residents regarding the potential impact the development may have on local highway safety. These concerns primarily relate to the condition of the surrounding roads and how they are unsuitable to accommodate additional volumes of traffic and how there would be an increase in danger to pedestrians due to the lack of public footpaths and lighting. Many of the issues raised are beyond the control of the Local Planning Authority however noting no objections have been received from the Local Highways Authority, it is considered that the proposed development will not prejudice the safety and freeflow of highway users, that could not be controlled through condition if members were minded to grant the application.

Impact of the development on the character and appearance of the village

The site is located in a relatively exposed setting due to the relative flatness and in a rural landscape on the edge of a village that can be categorised as broadacre arable farming land use with limited tree cover, extensive areas of hedgerow around a regular field pattern and, historically, a tightly clustered settlement. Such land is expected to be protected under local policy. The post war development in the village (for example, at Moorhead) has extended the village in a southerly direction but it is fair to state that this relatively recent development does not respond positively to this interface.

A saving factor in favour of the development is that it is low density and in outline form. Landscaping could be introduced and the scale of houses amended in the submission of reserve matters. However, the introduction of extensive screening and the defensible boundary would not only take some time to establish but would harm the setting of the village and neighbouring properties. Furthermore the segregation of this area of arable field would hinder the yield in this corner having a negligible impact on the wider use of the field. In the absence of any detailed justification for the development in the light of the NPPF, it is submitted that the development could potentially harm the setting of this rural village.

Scale, Design & Impact on Residential Amenity

This application does not seek permission for layout, scale or appearance and therefore consideration to the final siting of dwellings would usually be given at a later stage. Similarly, more comprehensive design consideration can also be dealt with when a Reserved Matters application is submitted. However it is considered that the site is a sufficient separation distance from the adjoining residential properties with adequate screening remaining to ensure that the proposed development can be accommodated without detriment to existing residential amenities. Officers are satisfied that mutual privacy can be maintained between the proposed and existing dwellings and further screening can be incorporated in to a landscaping scheme, should this be required. Furthermore, matters relating to privacy, light and scale could be addressed at a later stage when consideration is given to the individual house types. Accordingly, through appropriate design considerations, officers are satisfied that the scheme could be successful in not having a significant adverse impact on the amenities of neighbouring properties by virtue of any detrimental loss of light, privacy or any overbearing impact. Nevertheless, on balance, this unsustainable form of development would still have a detrimental impact on this rural village and on balance therefore the proposal remains unacceptable.

Drainage

It is proposed for foul water to be connected to the main sewer. Storm water tests have been undertaken and the results have been submitted to the Local Planning Authority. Soakaways have been demonstrated to work on site however final details will be required prior to commencement of development on site. There is a brook within close proximity to the application site and therefore consideration is required for potential flooding. The site area has been checked against the Environment Agency Floodplain Maps and the site is shown to be outside the floodplain which shows the 0.1% annual probability of extreme flood. The Council's Drainage Engineers have raised no objections to the proposed development subject to appropriate conditions.

Impact on Trees and Ecology

A Phase One Habitat Survey has been submitted in support of this application to identify any potential ecological constraints on the proposed development. This report concludes that the habitat of the site is of low ecological value however it was recommended that should the tree to the south of the site be removed, it should be subject to a Dusk Bat Emergence and/or Dawn Bat Entry Surveys to establish if it contains bat roosts. However, the LPA are not aware that it is the intention of the applicant to remove this tree given that it falls outside of the red line boundary. The assessment also provides guidance regarding external lighting and the removal of vegetation bounding the site. The Council's Ecologist has been consulted and has raised no objections subject to conditions requiring the submission of an external lighting plan and details of proposed bat boxes. The Council's Arboriculture Officer has also been consulted but had no comments to make given that there are no trees to be affected by the proposed development.

Contributions and Affordable Housing

The level of housing proposed on the amended scheme does not trigger the requirements for contributions towards offsite leisure and recreation facilities, education facilities or the provision of onsite affordable housing.

Conclusion

Whilst the proposal is acceptable in highway terms with no concerns relating to drainage, ecology or potential impact on residential amenity, the fundamental issue of location outstands. The Local Planning Authority considers the proposed new homes represent an unsustainable form of development located within the open countryside, which would conflict with the adopted Core Strategy where by development is focused on three suitable settlements, and outside of this limited and in the open countryside strictly controlled. Preston upon the Weald Moors is not the type of settlement which national policy suggests would be suitable for new housing. The development of this site would therefore result in an undesirable encroachment into the surrounding countryside detrimental to the visual amenity of the area. The proposal fails to address the three themes of sustainable development set out in national policy, and would not enhance or maintain the vitality of the rural community and would therefore be contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework in addition to the policies contained within the Wrekin Local Plan and Core Strategy.

RECOMMENDATION: REFUSE OUTLINE PERMISSION for the following reasons:

1. The Local Planning Authority considers the proposed residential development represents an unsustainable form of development within the open countryside, where by development in the rural area is focused on the identified settlements of High Ercall, Waters Upton and Tibberton, limited within the rural area and within the open countryside strictly controlled. The proposed development within Preston upon the Wealds Moors would not maintain or enhance the vitality of the settlement nor would it represent an exceptional circumstance. Furthermore the development of this site would therefore result in an undesirable encroachment into the surrounding countryside detrimental to the visual amenity of the area. Accordingly the proposal fails to address the three tests of sustainable development as set out in national policy and would therefore be contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework, Wrekin Local Plan policies UD2, H9 and OL7 and Core Strategy policies CS1 and CS7.