

# Paul Smith Associates

Chartered Town and Country Planners

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Ms Emily Reed,  
Planning Officer,  
Planning Services,  
Herefordshire Council,  
Blueschool House,  
Blueschool Street,  
Hereford. HR1 2XB

My ref: PMS/H/Cornes/16/01

20 May 2016

FAO Ms Emily Reed

Dear Ms Reed,

**Re: Proposed Erection of One Dwelling,  
Land Adj. 'Little Howle Farm', Howle Hill Nr. Ross-on-Wye**

Please find attached a planning application for the proposed erection of a small bungalow in the rear garden of 'Little Howle Farm' in the settlement of Howle Hill.

Application Site and Locality

The site comprises part of the rear garden to my client's home, 'Little Howle Farm' which lies in the south-eastern segment of the dispersed settlement of Howle Hill. This garden has its own vehicular access onto the public highway and is well-screened from public views by tall dense boundary screening.

The proposal entails the erection of a small, two bedroomed, single storey dwelling. This building would consist of approximately 95 square metres of gross internal floor space. It would be served by the existing vehicular access from which good highway visibility splays in both directions are achievable.

The site does not lie in a conservation area or within the setting of a listed building.

Planning Policy

On 16 October 2015, the Council adopted the Herefordshire Local Plan - Core Strategy 2011-2031 (HCS) as the development plan. This document superseded the Unitary Development Plan and all planning policies relevant to this proposal.

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL PLANNING SERVICES DEVELOPMENT CONTROL
<b>20 JUN 2016</b>
To.....
Ack'd..... File.....

## Policy RA2 – ‘Housing in settlements outside Hereford and the market towns’

This policy is as follows:

*“To maintain and strengthen locally sustainable communities across the rural parts of Herefordshire, sustainable housing growth will be supported in or adjacent to those settlements identified in Figures 4.14 and 4.15. This will enable development that has the ability to bolster existing service provision, improve facilities and infrastructure and meet the needs of the communities concerned.*

*The minimum growth target in each rural Housing Market Area will be used to inform the level of housing development to be delivered in the various settlements set out in Figures 4.14 and 4.15. Neighbourhood Development Plans will allocate land for new housing or otherwise demonstrate delivery to provide levels of housing to meet the various targets, by indicating levels of suitable and available capacity.*

*Housing proposals will be permitted where the following criteria are met:*

- 1. Their design and layout should reflect the size, role and function of each settlement and be located within or adjacent to the main built up area. In relation to smaller settlements identified in fig 4.15 proposals will be expected to demonstrate particular attention to the form, layout, character and setting of the site and its location in that settlement and/or they result in development that contributes to or is essential to the social well-being of the settlement concerned;*
- 2. Their locations make best and full use of suitable brownfield sites wherever possible;*
- 3. They result in the development of high quality, sustainable schemes which are appropriate to their context and make a positive contribution to the surrounding environment and its landscape setting; and*
- 4. They result in the delivery of schemes that generate the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular settlements, reflecting local demand.*

*Specific proposals for the delivery of local need housing will be particularly supported where they meet an identified need and their long-term retention as local needs housing is secured as such.”*

I consider the proposed development against the criteria of Policy RA2.

### *Within and Adjacent to Main-Built Up Area*

Howle Hill has a dispersed settlement pattern. It comprises several clusters of development strung around a ring of lanes. Paragraph 4.8.12 of the HCS recognises that many rural settlements do not have a traditional village or nuclear centres and in many cases have a dispersed settlement pattern characteristic that should be respected in the consideration of new housing proposals.

The proposed dwelling would adjoin within the ‘Little Howle Farm’ cluster, a prominent, historical and integral element of the settlement as its name suggests. This cluster is separated from the two larger clusters of this

settlement. However, the key characteristic of a dispersed settlement is a cohesive collection of developed areas combining to create a single entity. Consequently, it is the spatial relationship of an individual clusters to other clusters that is the most relevant factor as to whether that cluster lies within the settlement.

In this instance, the Little Howle Farm cluster straddles the main route that passes through the settlement. It comprises an extensive developed area including six dwellings, large agricultural buildings, a telephone box and a village memorial. It also completes the ring of developed areas of Howle Hill rather than comprising a settlement outlier.

Paragraph 4.8.16 of the HCS explains that the purpose of seeking to locate residential development within or adjacent to the main built up area of settlements is to avoid unnecessary, isolated, non-characteristic and discordant dwellings that would adversely affect the character and setting of a settlement and its local environment. The proposal would not result in an isolated or discordant dwelling. Consequently, it would accord with the objectives of the HCS and by implication, Policy RA2.

Since the adoption of the HCS, the Council has granted planning permission for new houses at dispersed settlements under Policy RA2. In November 2015, planning permission was granted for a dwelling on land adjacent to 'Pool House', Preston Wynne (Council 152366) and in March 2016 for a dwelling on land adjacent 'Yewtree House' in the same settlement. Preston Wynne is a dispersed settlement to a far greater degree than Howle Hill. In both cases, the application sites lay within a string of very loosely connected dwellings extend well beyond the village road into open countryside. Planning permission was granted at committee earlier this year for the erection of a dwelling within a cluster of seven dwellings at Aconbury (Council reference: 153240) and for another dwelling at Little Birch in an area of highly dispersed development (Council reference: 160476). I also draw your attention to a positive response made by your Council to a Request for Pre-Application Planning Advice for the erection of a single dwelling in a highly dispersed settlement (Council reference: 160055/CE).

By any objective evaluation, the proposed development would relate far more closely to the main built up area of the settlement than these four approved schemes relates to their respective settlements. In the absence of any contrary guidance in the HCS, it is logical to conclude that the proposed development would lie within or adjoin the settlement of Howle Hill in accordance with the Council's own application of Policy RA2.

Consequently, the proposal would accord with this criterion of Policy RA2.

*Design and layout reflects size and function of settlement*

Policies RA1 and RA2 of the Adopted Core Strategy identifies that Walford Parish and Howle Hill should be subject to proportionate growth of a *minimum* of 14%. The Council's Rural Housing Background Paper 2013 identified that Howle Hill consists of 55 dwellings. Therefore, the minimum number of new houses to be approved in the parish should be 8 dwellings in accordance with Policy RA1.

The proposal is for a single dwelling thereby according with the provisions of Policies RA1 and RA2. The dispersed and low density of the proposed development would reflect that of the existing and approved dwellings on site and the existing dispersed settlement pattern.

The proposal would accord with this criterion of Policy RA2.

*Appropriateness to the form, layout and character of the site and its location*

The proposed development would reflect the pattern of development of the Little Howle Farm cluster and the settlement as a whole. The proposed dwelling would stand discretely upon a rear garden in a well-screened position. Its modest scale would enable it appear as a subservient built element of Little Howle Farm collective. By virtue of the tall mature boundary vegetation, it would not adversely affect the character of the surroundings.

The proposal would accord with this criterion of policy RA2.

*Making Best and Full Use of Suitable Brownfield Sites Wherever Possible*

The application site comprises part of the garden of Little Howle Farm. Although it is overgrown in parts, it is not readily recognised as 'brownfield land' as defined in the Core Strategy.

Irrespective of this, the inclusion of the words "wherever possible" in this criterion does not preclude a proposal where it does not entail the best use of brownfield land. Indeed, the application of Policy RA2 will usually entail the redevelopment of green field sites on the edge of settlements.

The proposal would accord with criterion of Policy RA2.

*High quality, sustainable and appropriate scheme*

The proposal would entail low-density built development with the proposed bungalow lying within a site very well screened by the existing boundary hedgerows and trees. This boundary vegetation would be unaffected by the proposal.

The proposal is for a small-sized, two bedroom bungalow comprising no more than 95 square metres of gross internal floor space. The removal of permitted development rights would limit the size of this dwelling to a modest-sized property.

The proposal would adjoin a built-up part of a settlement which has been earmarked by the development plan as one that should be subject to 'proportional growth'. Therefore, the Council will concede that the proposal would lie in a sustainable location.

The proposal would be clad in natural materials and located on an elevated plot relative to Little Howle Farm. However, its visual and landscape effect upon its surroundings would be modest by virtue of the aforementioned boundary vegetation and the modest size of the proposal. In all, the proposal would constitute a discrete addition to the settlement.

The proposal accords with this criterion of Policy RA2.

#### *Size, Type and Tenure is Required in the Settlement Reflecting Local Demand*

The village displays a variety of house types with a preponderance of large family dwellings. Only 2 of the 55 dwellings in the settlement comprise small (i.e. two bedroom) bungalows.

The *Rural Housing Background Paper*, March 2013 identifies a collective need for 12 affordable houses in Walford Parish which includes the settlements of Walford, Coughton, Kerne Bridge/Bishopwood and Howle Hill. The proposal would be modest in size and provide single floor living accommodation. Its size would be limited to the proposed 95 square metres. This limitation would suppress the open market value of this property and lend itself to being occupied by first time buyers or those seeking to 'down-size' from larger properties enabling either group to remain in the local community.

The proposal would not entail an 'affordable' house as defined in the Core Strategy but it will widen the local housing offer by providing a small bungalow in a settlement within which there is a paucity.

The proposal would accord with this criterion of Policy RA2.

#### *Contribution to the social well-being of the settlement*

The Glossary of the Core Strategy defines 'social well-being' as: "*the provision of development to assist with medical or social support*". This definition is rather unclear, particularly with regard to 'social support' and reference to other parts of the Core Strategy is necessary and justified to better understand its import and intent.

Paragraph 3.6 of the Core Strategy identifies the vision for social progress in the county to include the provision of *“....decent, affordable homes.....to meet the needs of all sections of the population, creating healthy, safe and secure, low crime, inclusive places and robust communities that promote good health and well-being...”*.

Consequently, Figure 3.1 identifies these features as being Core Strategy objectives of social progress. They reflect the National Planning Policy Framework which identifies (under Paragraph 7) the ‘social’ role of the planning system to include: *“supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; by creating a high quality built environment.....that support.....social ....well-being...”*

It has been demonstrated that the proposal will provide a single, small bungalow in accordance with Policy RA2 in so far as it relates to Howle Hill. It would add to the mix of dwelling types in the locality catering specifically for those seeking small bungalows in a settlement that has been identified as being a relatively sustainable village.

Policy RA2 states that *“..specific proposals for the delivery of local need housing will be particularly supported where they meet an identified need and their long-term retention as local needs housing is secured as such”*. The suggestion of removing permitted development rights from this property would retain it as a small dwelling and for this reason this proposal should be strongly supported under Policy RA2.

This proposal would accord with this criterion of Policy RA2.

#### Draft Walford Parish Plan 2006 and the Emerging Neighbourhood Development Plan

Responses to a questionnaire as part of the Parish Plan showed that a great majority of residents were against large-scale housing developments with three quarters of respondents expressing a preference for the development of new houses at affordable prices for local people (paragraph 3.5.8, page 33 refers).

The responses received to a questionnaire relating to the emerging Neighbourhood Development Plan showed broad support for the following:

- The erection of bungalows (77%), family housing (95%) and self-build dwellings (69%);
- New homes being spread over several sites (90%) and;
- For development not to be restricted to local residents only (74%).

The characteristics of the proposed dwelling would match the preferences expressed by local residents. It would entail the erection of a single, self-build

bungalow. If approved, it would ease down-sizing by occupants thus freeing-up a family-sized houses in the village to meet the preference for such accommodation expressed by the parishioners.

## **Conclusion**

The proposed development would accord fully with Policies RA1 and RA2 of the Herefordshire Local Plan – Core Strategy 2011-2031 which is the most relevant development plan policy to the proposed development.

The proposed dwelling would lie within or adjoin the dispersed settlement of Howle Hill within the terms of Policy RA2. Its design, scale and layout would reflect the size and function of this settlement and local demand and it would constitute high quality and sustainable design to the site and its surroundings.

However, it is material that the Council cannot currently demonstrate a five year housing land supply. As a consequence, Policies RA1 and RA2 amongst other policies area 'out of date' and can be afforded only limited weight in decision taking. However, the fact that Policy RA2 identifies the settlement as suitable for proportionate housing growth attests to the principle of this proposal according with Council rural spatial strategy. Under these circumstances and notwithstanding my earlier comments, even if it were to be concluded by the Council that the proposal would not adjoin the settlement, I contend that this fact alone would not justify the refusal of permission. There is no material planning difference in sustainability terms between the erection of the proposed dwelling and one on a site adjoining the largest built component of Howle Hill.

I would be willing to attend a site meeting if that would assist your deliberations.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Smith MRTPI

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