

Planning Policy Comments

Application No	APP/20/00302
Address	16 Selborne Avenue, Havant, PO9 4PX
Development	Erection of 1No. 3bedroom detached dwelling (revised)
Case Officer	TP
Comments By	JB
Date of Comments	23 April 2020

I have been asked to provide comments on the application of the Flood Risk Sequential & Exception tests for this application. I note that the scheme is a resubmission of APP/19/01254. The flood risk evidence remains the same as for that scheme. On that basis, the comments below raise the same issues as for the previous scheme.

The applicant has provided a detailed Sequential & Exception Test document prepared by consultants. It clearly sets out the flood risk issues of the sites, as well as the parameters applied to the sequential and exception tests.

Sequential Test

I agree with the consultants that national guidance is not prescriptive about the area of search to be applied to the sequential test. Instead, a pragmatic approach should be taken, appropriate to local circumstances. While I cannot find a reasoned justification for the area of search chosen, I am content with the search being confined to the Leigh Park area of the borough, due to the small size (one dwelling) of the proposed development.

To inform the review of alternative sites in this area, various Local Plan background documents and sites identified in them have been taken into account, in particular the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and the Council's Local Plan Sites Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. I accept that none of these show suitable alternative sites.

The applicant has also assessed sites allocated for development in the adopted Local Plan, in particular the small garage sites in Leigh Park allocated for residential development under policy L2. The applicant has identified one site that meets the search parameters and could be a suitable alternative: the Forestside Avenue parking area (site L146). The applicant rejects the site based on the availability of parking and potential for overlooking. However, since the site is subject to an allocation for residential development, I am unable to accept the argument that the site is not suitable for one dwelling.

As well as council documentation, the applicant states that they consulted commercial property agents. This is a recommended course of action to satisfy the sequential test, particularly for small sites of less than 5 dwellings, which are less likely to be considered in strategic planning documents. The sequential test document includes no evidence that these searches took place, but having undertaken a search myself for potentially available land, I have no reason to disbelieve the conclusion that these searches yielded not results for suitable alternative sites.

Overall, I am unable to conclude that the sequential test has been passed, since a small site allocated for residential development in the defined search area has been identified as potentially suitable, but subsequently rejected.

Exception Test

Nevertheless, I have also considered the information on the exception test. For the exception test to be passed, according to paragraph 160 of the NPPF, it should be demonstrated that:

a) the development would provide wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh the flood risk; and

b) the development will be safe for its lifetime taking account of the vulnerability of its users, without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and, where possible, will reduce flood risk overall.

I have noted the reasons given on page 24 of the applicant's Sequential & Exception Test report that state that the development would satisfy part a) of the exception test. I accept that the development is an area well served by facilities and services. While this is a sustainability benefit over other sites that may not have such access, it is not a benefit that the development is providing to the community, which would outweigh the flood risk; Further the report places strong reliance on the scheme boosting the supply of homes, sustaining local schools and creating a significant number of jobs. I do not consider that any of these sustainability benefits can be reasonably attributed to a one dwelling scheme. I am therefore unable to conclude that the exception test has been passed.

Conclusion

Both the sequential and the exception test must be passed for development to be considered acceptable.

The sequential test is not considered passed, as an allocated site within the search area exists, which would be suitable for this development.

The exception test is not considered passed, as it is not accepted that this one dwelling would provide wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh the flood risk.

Overall, in the light of flood risk, I am therefore unable to support the scheme in principle.