
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 November 2016

by Nick Palmer BA (Hons) BPI MRTPI

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

Decision date: 21 November 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/L2630/W/16/3157083

80/82 London Road, Wymondham, Norfolk NR18 9BP

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Steven Shorten against the decision of South Norfolk District Council.
 - The application Ref 2016/0864, dated 12 April 2016, was refused by notice dated 8 June 2016.
 - The development proposed is 2 detached dwellings and double garages and 2 single garages.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in the appeal are:
 - i) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; and
 - ii) consideration of housing land supply and relevant planning policies for the location of housing development including the sustainability of the proposal.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. The appeal site is located in the open countryside to the south-west of Wymondham. It comprises a pair of semi-detached houses in large gardens which are within a loose grouping of dwellings on the former route of London Road and Bradman's Lane. Adjacent to the site is a detached house with a large garden and on Bradman's Lane there is a pair of semi-detached bungalows and a further detached bungalow. The surrounding land is open farm land with fields divided by hedgerows and some belts of trees and areas of woodland. The area between the old route of London Road and the present route is wooded and the trees generally screen views of the site from the main road.
 4. Although the site is not prominent in relation to the main road it is clearly visible from the old route of London Road and from the adjacent properties. The gardens are enclosed by low hedges and although there are trees along parts of the front and rear boundaries the site is generally open. Although new
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planting could be secured by a condition this would be unlikely to fully screen the proposed new dwellings and garages which would be prominent in the context of the immediate surroundings of the site. They would infill the open frontages of the site providing a denser pattern of development which would be more akin to a suburban area than the rural area in which the site is located.

5. The site is within an area described as 'Wymondham settled plateau farmland' in the South Norfolk Place Making Guide. This is a large expanse of flat open land which includes built up areas. Outside the built up areas, individual dwellings and farm buildings are generally widely dispersed in a rural landscape with strong open horizons. The site is within a small group of dwellings but the dwellings are in spacious settings and informally sited. The proposed development would consolidate the built form of the group and would significantly erode the spacious quality of the area. For these reasons the proposed dwellings and garages would be out of character with their surroundings. The proposal would not respect, conserve or enhance the landscape character of its immediate environment as required by policy DM 4.5 of the Development Management Policies (DMP)¹ and would adversely affect the character and appearance of the area.
6. Furthermore for the reasons given the proposal would not respect local distinctiveness including landscape character and the setting of settlements as required by Policy 2 of the Joint Core Strategy².
7. The Council's reasons for refusal make reference to the size, scale and massing of the proposed dwellings. They would be larger than each of the existing semi-detached houses but I do not find that they would be unduly large in relation to those houses. However for the reasons given they would have a dominant effect in the context of the character of their surroundings.
8. I have taken into account the nature of the site in that this forms residential garden land and as such could accommodate domestic outbuildings without the need for planning permission. However this does not alter the visually intrusive effect that the proposal would have in relation to the area.

Housing Land Supply, Planning Policies and Sustainability

9. The site is outside the development limit for Wymondham as defined on the adopted proposals map. The appellant says that the development limit is about 400m away and I saw on my visit that there is housing development on the former route of London Road and recent development at Abbey Road. Although London Road has no footpath or lighting such facilities are available further along the road where the built up area starts and it would be possible to walk or cycle into the town.
10. The Council says that it cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites as required by paragraph 47 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). The appellant confirms that the site is available for development. Paragraph 49 of the Framework states that policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date where there is no five year supply. The proposal would not accord with the requirement of policy DM 1.3 of the DMP that new development takes place within development

¹ South Norfolk Development Management Policies Document (2015)

² Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk (2011/2014)

boundaries but in the absence of a five year supply that policy requirement is out-of-date and so I can give little weight to it.

11. In the absence of the requisite housing land supply the proposed dwellings would be of benefit. No evidence of the extent of the shortfall is before me. However it is likely that the two proposed dwellings would be of only limited benefit in addressing the shortfall. Accordingly I give limited weight to that benefit.
12. On the other hand I have found there to be harm in terms of the adverse effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area. One of the core planning principles in the Framework, at paragraph 17, is that the character of different areas should be taken into account and the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside recognised. Taking into account the clearly open rural character of the immediate area and the urban character of the proposal this harm would be significant and I give it significant weight. This significantly and demonstrably outweighs the limited weight that I have given to the identified benefit.
13. The proposal would be accessible to the urban area on foot or by bicycle with access to public transport services including a main line rail station. There is a wide range of facilities available in the town. Nonetheless it is likely that occupants of the dwellings would use the car. That said, journeys into the town would be short. For these reasons the proposed development would be reasonably sustainable in terms of reducing reliance on the car. This aspect of the proposal would generally accord with the three dimensions of sustainable development.
14. The proposal would accord with the economic dimension in terms of providing jobs and contributing to the local economy during construction as well as the general support that would be given to the local economy by its occupants.
15. The proposal would also accord with the social dimension in providing new housing in a generally accessible location. However the harm to the character and appearance of the area would not accord with the environmental dimension. For this reason when considered as a whole the proposal would not be a sustainable form of development.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Nick Palmer

INSPECTOR