
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 January 2017

by Simon Warder MA BSc(Hons) DipUD(Dist) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 2 February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/W3520/W/16/3158593

Land adjacent Street Farm, The Street, Stowlangtoft IP31 3JX

- 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 The Stowlangtoft Estate (Mr R Catchpole) against the decision of Mid Suffolk District Council.
 - The application Ref 2254/16, dated 29 April 2016, was refused by notice dated 23 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is the erection of detached dwelling and garage. Construction of vehicular access.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the appeal site is sustainably located having regard to national and development plan policies.

Reasons

3. Amongst the aims of the settlement hierarchy set out in Policy CS1 of the Council's Core Strategy 2008 (CS) are to distribute development in the 'best practicable, sustainable option' and to ensure that development is directed to locations where it will have the greatest benefits for rural sustainability. The appeal site is located at the eastern end of Stowlangtoft, which is categorised as a 'countryside village' for the purposes of the hierarchy and has no settlement boundary. Policy CS2 restricts development in such locations to defined categories. There is nothing to suggest that the appeal proposal would fall within any of those categories, or that it would be used as an agricultural workers dwelling under the terms of Mid Suffolk Local Plan 1998 (LP) Policy H10. Policy H7 of the LP seeks strict control over new housing outside of settlement boundaries in order to protect the character and appearance of the countryside
 4. There are no local facilities or services in Stowlangtoft. Although the appellant advises that there is bus route to Bury St Edmunds and Diss, I have not been made aware of the timing or frequency of services. The nearest local facilities are in Bradwell Ash and Norton at least 2.3km from the site along routes which are unlit and have no footpaths. Further facilities are available in Ixworth (some 4.5km) and Walsham le Willows (around 5.5km). Nevertheless, it is likely that most trips from the proposed dwelling would be by private car.
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Whilst this may be true of many existing dwellings in countryside locations, I am required to determine the appeal having regard to up to date policies. In this regard I find that the proposal would not accord with National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) paragraphs 17, 34 and 35 which seek to locate development to give priority to pedestrian, cycle and public transport movements.

5. Framework paragraph 55 advises against isolated new homes in the countryside, but recognises that, in rural areas, housing in one village may support services in a village nearby. Whilst the appeal site is not isolated from other established built development, in view of the scale of the proposal and the limited opportunity for travel by sustainable modes, its benefits in supporting local services would be very modest.
6. The appellant has drawn my attention to two appeals where residential development in countryside locations has been found to be sustainable. Each proposal must be considered on its merits. The appeal site in the Moat Farm Barns decision¹ is located approximately half a kilometre from two settlements providing a modest range of services. Therefore, whilst the Inspector found that future occupiers would be largely reliant on the private car, that site would appear to be significantly closer and more accessible to local facilities than the current appeal site.
7. The East Barton Road site² is in another local authority area where different development plan policies apply. Whilst the Inspector noted that the site lies between two villages with local facilities some 1-2 miles away, the decision turned on the relationship of the proposed dwellings to nearby development and the extent to which the proposal accorded with development plan policies for housing in the countryside. Those policies do not apply to the current proposal. Nor did the Inspector in the East Barton Road case reach a conclusion on the sustainability of the travel patterns generated by the proposal. As such, I am not persuaded that either of the cited decisions provides a robust justification for the sustainability of the appeal site location.
8. Consequently, I find that the proposal would not be sustainably located having regard to Framework paragraphs 17, 34 and 35 and CS Policies CS1 and CS2.

Other Matters

9. The Council accepts that it cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing land as required by Framework paragraph 47. Paragraph 49 of the Framework says that relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date in these circumstances. Limited weight can, therefore, be attached to LP Policy H7, or to CS Policies CS1 and CS2 insofar as they relate to the supply of housing. Nevertheless, their broad aims for the sustainable location of development are consistent with the Framework.
10. The appellant also argues that CS Policy CS1 is in conflict with the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) since it seeks to restrict development in countryside villages, whereas the PPG advises that all settlements can play a role in delivering sustainable rural development. However, as Stowlangtoft is not categorised as a settlement for the purposes of the Core Strategy and I have

¹ Appeal ref: APP/W3520/16/3144431

² Appeal ref: APP/E3525/W/15/3139957

already concluded that Policy CS1 carries limited weight with regard to the supply of housing, this consideration has not been determinative in this case.

11. I have had regard to the other concerns expressed locally, but none has led me to a different overall conclusion.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

12. Framework paragraphs 7 and 8 require the economic, social and environmental roles of sustainability to be considered together. The proposal would make a very limited and short term contribution to the economic role of sustainability through the construction activity.
13. Framework paragraph 47 seeks to boost the supply of housing and this consideration is given greater weight by the absence of a five year supply of housing in the District. Nevertheless, the creation of one new dwelling would make a very modest contribution to the supply of housing in the area and I have already found that it would not provide significant support for local services and facilities. The proposal would, therefore, make a limited contribution to the social role of sustainability.
14. With regard to the environmental role, the appeal site is located to the east of a group of residential and agricultural buildings at Street Farm. It is bounded to the east and south by farmland and to the north by The Street which, at this location, has a rural character. Notwithstanding the mature hedges on the site's eastern and roadside boundaries, it is prominent in views on the approach from the east. The site, therefore, has a countryside character and contributes positively to the setting of Street Farm and the rest of Stowlangtoft.
15. The development of a one and a half storey dwelling, detached garage, new access and associated domestic paraphernalia would have an urbanising effect on the character of the site and extend built development into an area which currently contributes to the openness of the countryside. Consequently, the proposal would not accord with Framework paragraph 17 insofar as it requires regard to be had to the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.
16. I have also found that the development would not be sustainably located. The proposal would, therefore, have a significantly negative effect on the environmental role of sustainability.
17. Consequently, I conclude that the adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal. As such, the proposal would not amount to sustainable development and so is not supported by the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in Framework paragraph 14 or Policies FC1 and FC1.1 of the Council's Core Strategy Focused Review 2012.
18. For the reasons set out above, the appeal should be dismissed.

Simon Warder

INSPECTOR