
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 31 January 2017

by Amanda Blicq BSc (Hons) MA CMLI

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

Decision date: 10 February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/J3530/W/16/3159011

Wynneys Hall, Saxstead Road, Dennington, Suffolk IP13 8AP

- 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 E Sheeran against the decision of Suffolk Coastal District Council.
 - The application Ref DC/16/2232/FUL, dated 27 May 2015, was refused by notice dated 20 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is erection of 1.5 storey 4 bay cartlodge with ancillary car parking.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for erection of 1.5 storey 4 bay cartlodge with ancillary car parking at Wynneys Hall, Saxstead Road, Dennington, Suffolk IP13 8AP in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref DC/16/2232/FUL, dated 27 May 2015, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Promap Site Location Scale 1:1250 Licence 100022432; 16/03/0010 Rev B.
 - 3) The development hereby permitted shall be used solely for domestic activities associated with the occupation of Wynneys Hall and its associated buildings.

Procedural Matter

2. The Council submitted a plan showing the settlement boundary of Dennington as part of its evidence, but there was no accompanying policy context to confirm its source or status. I invited the Council to submit the relevant policy base during the appeal, but what was supplied were further copies of policies from the Local Plan¹ (LP). These policies refer to physical limits boundaries in relation to settlements but do not indicate in what source documents such boundaries are to be found. As such, in the absence of information clarifying the status of the plan showing the settlement boundary, I give it limited weight in my reasoning.

¹ Suffolk Coastal District Council, Local Plan adopted July 2013

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the countryside.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located to the north west of a cluster of buildings comprising Wynneys Hall. These are set back and largely screened from Saxstead Road by other buildings and trees. To the north of Wynneys Hall, there is a large grassed open space backing onto agricultural land.
5. The development would comprise a large cartlodge, built of traditional materials and in a vernacular style. Its southern elevation would be located some 10 metres outside the settlement boundary referred to above, and there would also be an extended driveway running approximately parallel to and just outside the settlement boundary, linking the cartlodge to a hardstanding area outside the host dwelling's frontage.
6. The Council is concerned that the cartlodge would be outside Dennington's settlement boundary and would represent creeping domestication, to the detriment of the character and appearance of the countryside, and the setting of Dennington itself, which is a small linear village.
7. The Council has stated that there is a clear difference in the character and appearance of land within and outwith the settlement boundary. The Council also states that in the vicinity of the appeal site the land outside the settlement boundary is open countryside with a mature landscape in a peaceful setting, with no domesticity or activity associated with domestic life. However, my observations at the site visit lead me to disagree with the Council on this point.
8. To the immediate north of Wynneys Hall, as noted above, there is a large, well-maintained expanse of grass which is lined with new tree planting. The adjoining plot, to the immediate west of the appeal site, also has the appearance of a garden, with well-maintained short grass, wood piles and ornamental trees. Whilst there is an absence of domestic buildings north of the settlement boundary as shown on the plan, in this location at least, it does not mark a clear transition between domestic and rural character.
9. Although the cartlodge would be an isolated structure relative to the other buildings associated with Wynneys Hall, it would be located near the plot boundary, where in addition to the newly planted trees, there are existing garden trees providing screening from the south and west. I noted on my visit that until the newly planted trees provide a screen, there could be views of the cartlodge from the agricultural land beyond the grassed area. However, there do not appear to be any public viewpoints to facilitate that view. In any case, at distance the cartlodge would appear to blend in with the existing cluster of buildings of Wynneys Hall and the neighbouring dwellings.
10. Consequently, whilst I agree with the Council that the cartlodge would encourage some domestication of land to the north of the Wynneys Hall buildings, this is land that already has a semi-domestic appearance. Furthermore, it cannot be seen except by individuals in neighbouring gardens or at distance from the adjoining agricultural land. As such I disagree with the Council that the cartlodge would cause harm to the character and appearance

of the countryside, particularly as the building proposed would reflect the vernacular style of older dwellings in the village.

11. In addition, whilst I appreciate the Council's concern to prevent domestication of the countryside on the fringes of Dennington, the settlement boundary in the area of the appeal site appears to be a fairly arbitrary line that includes ancillary buildings in neighbouring garden plots and appears to cut across rear gardens in others. Moreover, although the Council's evidence refers to mature landscape character and the setting of Dennington, there is no reference to landscape character assessment or guidance which might have supported their concern regarding the landscape surrounding the village. Consequently, as the cartlodge would not be particularly visible and would be sited on land that already has a semi-domestic character, I am unable to conclude that the development would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area.
12. I appreciate that Paragraph 17 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires planning to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, but as reasoned above, I find no conflict in this regard.
13. In the light of the above, I find no conflict with LP Policy DM21 which advises that proposals that seriously detract from the character of their surroundings will not be permitted, or LP Policy DM8 which states, in relation to the extension of residential curtilages, that they should reflect the scale and location of the dwelling and not result in visual intrusion.
14. Furthermore, although I concur that the cartlodge would be outside the settlement boundary, there is no evidence before me to indicate the weight attributable to this boundary. In any case, the supporting text to LP Policy SP29 indicates that the aim of this policy, which limits new development outside settlement boundaries, is to sustain the environmental assets of the countryside. As I have not found harm in relation to the environmental assets of the countryside, I find no conflict with LP Policy SP29.

Other matters

15. I appreciate that the Council has had discussions with the appellant in relation to outbuildings and the proximity of the host dwelling to the settlement boundary. However, I have to determine the appeal before me. In any case, although I note that the Council suggested that the cartlodge should be located within the existing cluster of buildings, two of these have distinctive contemporary styling. Were the cartlodge to be located within that cluster there would be an uneasy juxtaposition of modern and traditional design which would appear cramped, and would not enhance the overall appearance of any of those individual buildings.
16. The appellant has argued that the case is of national interest. However, I have determined the appeal on its merits and have given this no weight in my reasoning.

Conditions

17. I have considered the conditions put forward by the Council against the requirements of the national Planning Practice Guidance and the Framework. In respect of the plans, I have imposed a condition specifying the drawings upon which I have based this appeal, as this provides certainty.

18. In order to ensure the local planning authority has control over the use of the dwelling, I have imposed a condition restricting its use.
19. Where necessary and in the interests of clarity and precision I have altered the conditions to better reflect the relevant guidance.

Conclusion

20. For the reasons given above and taking all matters into account, I conclude that the development would not be contrary to the relevant policies of the Council's Local Plan and that therefore the appeal should be allowed.

Amanda Blicq

INSPECTOR