
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 February 2017

by Nick Palmer BA (Hons) BPI MRTPI

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

Decision date: 06 March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/F2605/W/16/3162645

Land adjacent to The Bungalow, Bow Street, Great Ellingham, Norfolk

- 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 & Mrs Hall against the decision of Breckland District Council.
 - The application Ref 3PL/2016/0765/F, dated 20 June 2016, was refused by notice dated 26 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is construction of a single dwelling for the use of the applicant with associated on-site parking and landscaping provision and the construction of a cart lodge and store.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in the appeal is whether or not the proposal would accord with national and local planning policies for housing development in the countryside having specific regard to the accessibility of the site to services and facilities by sustainable means.

Reasons

3. Bow Street is a narrow lane which links Hingham Road with Watton Road and is in the countryside near Great Ellingham. There are sporadic dwellings along the lane and a group of houses which I understand have recently been constructed on the site of a former sawmill. The appeal site is an open paddock which is opposite those dwellings and between Hollycroft Farm and a large house. The site lies outside any settlement boundary as defined in the development plan.
4. Great Ellingham is defined in policy SS1 of the Core Strategy and Development Control Policies (CSDCP)¹ as a Local Service Centre Village. It has a number of facilities to meet the day to day requirements of its residents, which include a primary school, shop, post office, community hall and public house. Most of those facilities are about 1 mile away from the site although I understand the school is less than this distance. I saw on my visit that there are no footpaths or street lighting on Bow Street or on Hingham Road for approximately half a mile before the built up area. That road is a busy main road which carries traffic at up to the national speed limit.

¹ Breckland Core Strategy and Development Control Policies (2009)

5. The occupants of the proposed dwelling would have to walk along the main road to gain access to local services and facilities and to bus services, the nearest bus stop being about 0.9 mile from the site. For the reasons given this would be hazardous and unattractive and so it is likely that the occupants would be highly reliant on the private car. The busy nature of the road and traffic speeds may also limit the attractiveness of that route for cycling.
6. The market town of Attleborough is about 3 miles away and this may limit the length of car journeys but nonetheless the proposal would not make the fullest use of walking, cycling and public transport which is one of the core planning principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). In a previous appeal decision² for a proposed dwelling on the site my colleague came to a similar conclusion on the accessibility of the site by sustainable means.
7. When it made its decision the Council's housing land supply was less than 5 years. However since then the Council has identified a housing land supply of 5.2 years.³ This is based on an objectively assessed need that derives from a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) that was undertaken jointly with a number of other authorities. The annual requirement of 596 dwellings from the SHMA is significantly below the CSDCP requirement of 780 dwellings. The CSDCP was based on the East of England Plan which has been revoked. While the SHMA figure may be more up-to-date than the CSDCP requirement, the latter remains a requirement of the development plan whereas the need figure identified from the SHMA has not been tested through examination. Given the Framework requirement to boost significantly the supply of housing and a lack of evidence to demonstrate that the CSDCP is out of date I take the view that a five year supply of deliverable housing sites has not been robustly demonstrated.
8. In the absence of the required five year supply the Framework states that policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date. Paragraph 14 of the Framework states that permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole.
9. The proposal would not accord with policies CP14 and DC2 of the CSDCP which direct new housing development to sites within the defined settlement boundaries. However in the absence of a demonstrated five year housing land supply I give limited weight to those policies. In the absence of a five year supply the proposal would be of benefit in providing a new unit of housing but the scale of that benefit would be limited.
10. I have found that the occupants of the proposed dwelling would be dependent on the car to gain access to services and facilities. On this basis the location would be unsustainable. The proposal would not accord with paragraph 55 of the Framework which requires that isolated housing in the countryside, including that which is isolated from services and facilities, should be avoided.
11. The character of the area is predominantly open and rural and the proposal would introduce further built development. However the existing group of

² APP/F2605/W/15/3019435

³ Breckland Statement of Five Year Housing Land Supply (30.09.2016)

buildings forms part of that character and the proposal would be sited within that group. It would also be substantially screened from view from the road by a row of trees along the frontage of the site. The proposal would for these reasons only have a limited effect on the character and appearance of the area but that effect would nonetheless be adverse.

12. I give significant weight to the harm I have identified in terms of the lack of accessibility by sustainable means. I give further limited weights to the conflict with development plan policies and to the harm to the character and appearance of the area. On the other hand I give limited weight to the benefit in terms of housing provision. The weights that I have given to the harms significantly and demonstrably outweigh the weight that I have given to the benefit of the development.
13. The proposal would accord with the economic dimension of sustainable development in as far as employment and associated benefits to the economy would be provided during construction. The provision of a new unit of housing would accord with the social dimension. The appellants have explained that the dwelling would be designed to minimise energy use and that sustainable materials would be used in construction. These aspects accord with the environmental dimension. However there is no evidence before me that the proposal would be of social or economic benefit to the local community and this limits the extent to which it would accord with the social and economic dimensions.
14. The harms that I have identified weigh clearly against the environmental dimension of sustainable development. For the reasons given when considered as a whole the proposal would not be a sustainable form of development and would not accord with national and local planning policies for housing development in the countryside.

Conclusion

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

Nick Palmer

INSPECTOR