

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 February 2017

by D. M. Young BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI MIHE

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

Decision date: 7 March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/V2635/W/16/3163100

Land at Gatehouse Lane, North Wootton, Norfolk PE30 3RJ.

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr D Mitchell against the decision of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 16/00417/O, dated 29 February 2016, was refused by notice dated 7 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is a new residential dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The planning application was submitted in outline with all matters reserved for future approval. I have dealt with the appeal on that basis treating the site plan as illustrative.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the development on, firstly, the character and appearance of the countryside including the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and, secondly, highway safety.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal site comprises an area of paddock land on the south side of Gatehouse Lane, a narrow rural lane to the north of North Wootton. The land appears to be used for grazing in connection with an existing stable block on the site. It is proposed to erect a 2-bedroom dwelling which would be served via an existing access from Gatehouse Lane.
 5. Despite the presence of other dwellings and the West Norfolk Rugby Club nearby, the area is lightly settled and unmistakably rural. Although the site is well screened from Gatehouse Lane by mature landscaping, it has an open aspect to the south and therefore has visual exposure in northward views out of the village. From here, the site contributes positively to the open rural character of the AONB.
 6. There is no dispute that the appeal site is located in the countryside as defined in the Local Plan. Policy CS06 of the "*Local Development Framework Core*
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Strategy 2011" (the CS) states that the countryside should be protected for its intrinsic character and beauty and that the development of greenfield sites will be resisted unless essential for agriculture or forestry. Although the CS pre-dates the Framework, the aims of Policy CS06 are generally consistent with *"The National Planning Policy Framework"* (the Framework) which, amongst other things, advises that new isolated homes in the countryside are to be avoided unless there are special circumstances. .

7. A core planning principle of the Framework is to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and to promote local distinctiveness and high quality design. These objectives are reflected in Policy CS06. According to the Council, the site is also within the AONB where paragraph 115 advises that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty.
8. I acknowledge that the existing landscaping along Gatehouse Lane would obscure, perhaps even conceal, views of the dwelling. However, it would be visible in longer distance views from the south from where it would appear, irrespective of its detailed design, as a stark visual intrusion into the open landscape of the AONB. The residential occupation of the land around the dwelling is likely to lead to the introduction of car parking, boundary treatments and residential paraphernalia all of which would give the land a domestic appearance thus harming its open and rural character.
9. As I saw when I visited the site, it is an undeveloped greenfield space. There is no evidence before me to suggest the dwelling is essential for agriculture or forestry needs. Moreover, I have found no evidence of any identified local need or a significant contribution to the enhancement or maintenance of the rural community.
10. Based on the foregoing, I conclude that the development would harm the character and appearance of the countryside including the AONB. It would thus conflict with Policy CS06 of the CS as well as advice in paragraphs 55 and 115 of the Framework. It would not therefore amount to sustainable development.

Highway safety

11. I acknowledge that Gatehouse Lane is substandard in a number of respects. However, the amount of traffic generated by the development would be small. It is also pertinent that the rugby club generates significant volumes of traffic particularly at weekends. The Council has not provided any evidence to show that this or any of the existing residential traffic has led to any notable safety problems.
12. This suggests to me that drivers are acutely aware of the limitations of this local route and drive accordingly. On this basis, I have no reason to think that future occupiers of the development would not drive in a similar manner.
13. I therefore conclude on the second main issue that the development would not harm highway safety. It would thereby accord with Policy CS11 of the CS which seeks to ensure new development provides safe and convenient access for all road users.

Conclusion

14. I have noted the appellant's comments in relation to the planning history of the site, other developments in the vicinity and the location of the AONB. However, these matters do not lead me to a different conclusion.
15. For the reasons given above and taking into account of all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

D. M. Young

Inspector