
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 February 2017

by Jonathan Hockley BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 16 March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/J3720/W/16/3164225

Napton Bridge Inn, Southam Road, Napton-on-the-Hill CV47 8NQ

- 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 Ron O'Reilly against the decision of Stratford on Avon District Council.
 - The application Ref 16/02318/FUL, dated 12 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 7 September 2016.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of existing public house; erection of five dwellings and a garage block and all associated works; creation of footpath along A425 Southam Road. Re-submission of 15/03245/FUL.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this case is whether the proposed development provides a suitable site for housing, having regard to the character and appearance of the area and the accessibility of services.

Reasons

3. Napton-on-the-Hill has a distinctive shape and settlement form, with two main areas; a larger southern centre and a separate area to the north. The two areas are connected by Vicarage Road/Butt Hill, and the majority of the main services in the village, such as the village shop and post office, primary school and village hall are located in the southern centre. The northern area contains the Kings Head pub and a range of houses, and is based on the junction of the A425 and Butt Hill. The appeal site lies to the west of this area.
 4. The site comprises the Napton Bridge Inn, which, as its name suggests, is located adjacent to a bridge which takes the A425 over the Oxford Canal. The Inn is set down below the height of the road and is a white rendered two storey property with rooms in the roof. The building has two main frontages, with the primary elevation facing the A425 and a secondary elevation facing the canal. The building has been much extended and altered over time and includes a pitched 2 storey outrigger to the rear, a single storey part pitched roof and part flat roof extension to side and two red brick single storey flat roofed extensions fronting the canal, as well as other varying extensions and alterations. As a result the footprint of the pub is fairly loose and sprawling. The pub's car park is located on the west side, with a beer garden to the north along the side of the canal. At the time of my visit the pub was derelict.
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5. The Inn and adjacent canal are separated from the built up area of the village; heading east from the pub there are fields on both sides of the road prior to the property of Westcott on the southern side of the road. The road then rises in a sweeping bend from where more development is located, including the closest development on the north side of the road, 'Endene'. Although there are signs on the opposite side of the road and canal for 'Napton Industrial Estate', at the time of my visit the road that would serve the estate was a stub. My attention is drawn to the existence of consent for housing on land to the east of Westcott; however, as above there is a significant gap between the site and Westcott itself. Whilst I note that the pub would have previously served an element of the village's population, I do not consider therefore that the Inn lies on the edge of, or adjacent to the village boundary. The pub appears to be isolated and set on its own in a rural landscape.
6. The proposal seeks to demolish the Inn and construct a block of 5 4 bedroom dwellings. A separate garage block would also be provided. A large section of the former beer garden would be converted to a paddock.
7. The substantial front elevation of the proposal would have a pitched roof and 3 gables, with the intervening area of roofscape containing 4 pitched roof dormer windows. Whilst described as 2½ storey in height the design of the proposal with the prominent gables would appear 3 storey. The eastern most unit would have a dual frontage to allow the property to address both the road and the canal, and the rear elevation includes multiple Juliet balconies. A submitted computer generated image of the proposal shows varying materials on the proposal with brickwork, rendered areas and a central tiled gable.
8. I note that the volume of the proposal would be similar to that of the existing pub. However, in form and massing terms the proposal would look significantly different. At present whilst the pub's footprint is fairly substantial, by virtue of its overall design the building follows the contours of the site, presenting its main façade to the highway but having subservient extensions to the side and rear to provide additional volume. From the highway much of the additional rear volume of the pub is not immediately apparent and the side extension appears fully subordinate.
9. However, although the proposal scheme would be set further back within the site than the pub, the scheme would present a very substantial block to the highway. Whilst I appreciate that the differing materials and design detailing of the scheme attempts to break up this massing, the proposal would still have the mass and bulk of a large 3 storey block, with the gables adding to the impression of weight in the design. The overall size and mass of the single block would, I consider, appear out of place and unconnected to its rural setting. I note that the scheme would allocate an area of the pub garden to create a paddock. However the potential beneficial effect of this upon the local landscape would be outweighed by the adverse effect of the design of the proposal, and in any event at present the pub garden is open and does not harm the landscape.
10. There is no footpath along the A425 towards the village until the north side of the sweeping uphill bend commences. To overcome this issue the appellant proposes to construct a footpath from the Inn to link up with the village. This would assist in providing access to the village for future residents of the proposed houses, but given the distance to the settlement; and particularly the

distance to the majority of the services in the village, I consider that the vast majority of day to day trips that future residents would make would be via private transport. Although the appellant notes that buses travel along Southam Road, I have little evidence concerning their frequency or destinations.

11. Policies CS.5, CS.9 and AS.10 of the Core Strategy¹ together state that all forms of development will improve the quality of the public realm and enhance the sense of place, reflecting the character and distinctiveness of the locality, and that the landscape character and quality of the District is maintained by ensuring that development minimises and mitigates its impact. Proposals should be sensitive to their setting, landscape character and topography of the site and locality. In the countryside proposals will be assessed against the principles of sustainable development, including the need to minimise impact on the character of the local landscape and prioritise the re-use of brownfield land, and residential small scale schemes would be appropriate within the physical confines of a village. Policies CS.15 and CS.16 allocate Napton-on-the-Hill as a category 2 local service village, where development will take place on sites identified in a neighbourhood plan and through small scale schemes on suitable sites within the physical confines of the village.
12. Whilst the proposal would take place on previously developed land, I do not consider that it lies within the confines of the village and neither would the scheme minimise its impact on the character of the local landscape or be sensitive to its setting or topography. I therefore consider that the proposal would be contrary to these policies.
13. The proposal would create economic benefits in terms of the construction of 5 houses. Economic and social benefits would also accrue from the future residents of the properties. I am also conscious of the benefits of the regeneration of the brownfield site that the scheme would entail. There is no disagreement between the parties that the Inn is no longer viable, and on the evidence provided I see no reason to disagree with this viewpoint. Internally on my visit the Inn was already showing some signs of dilapidation, and some minor evidence of fly tipping was visible outside. The building is likely to continue to depreciate and the proposal would regenerate the site. I also note the evidence relating to the options that have been considered for the regeneration of the site and the conclusions of the appellant that permanent residential use is the only viable option.
14. However, I am not convinced that such considerations outweigh the harm that the scheme would cause. Whilst the proposal would provide new houses on a brownfield site, there is no evidence that there is a lack of supply in the District, and the Council state that they are able to demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing land. Whilst there would therefore be some benefits to the scheme, these benefits would not outweigh the harm that the proposal would cause in terms of its effect on the character and appearance of the area or its lack of accessibility to services, and the proposal would not therefore constitute sustainable development. Moreover, due to the design of the scheme nor do I consider that the proposal would improve the attractiveness and tourism potential of the local area.

¹ Stratford-on-Avon District Core Strategy 2011-2031,

15. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would not provide a suitable site for housing, having regard to the character and appearance of the area and the accessibility of services. The proposal would be contrary to policies CS.5, CS.9, CS.15, CS.16, and AS10 of the Core Strategy and to the National Planning Policy Framework, which states as a core planning principle that planning should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to making places better for people (paragraph 56).
16. Therefore, for the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, including the pre application advice from the Council on design issues, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Jon Hockley

INSPECTOR