
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 February 2017

by Helen Heward BSc (Hons) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 20th March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/B3030/W/16/3162218

Harlow Field House, Station Road, Edingley, Newark, NG22 8BY

- 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 David Islip against the decision of Newark & Sherwood District Council.
 - The application Ref 16/00571/FUL, dated 8 April 2016, was refused by notice dated 10 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as "Conversion of an existing blockwork rendered and tile outbuilding to form dwelling, including small rear extension".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this case is whether or not the proposed conversion of a stable building would amount to sustainable development in the countryside.

Reasons

3. The adopted housing target in the Newark and Sherwood Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2011 (CS) is derived from the East Midlands Regional Plan Strategy which has been revoked and predates the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (Framework). The housing requirement in the CS was not derived to meet the full objectively assessed need (OAN). Therefore the housing requirement in the CS is out of date.
 4. CS Policy SP3 and Policy DM8 of the Newark and Sherwood Allocations and Development Plan Document 2013 (DPD) stem from and reflect the housing requirement in the CS. Policy SP3 restricts new housing in rural areas to sustainable accessible village locations and states that beyond the Principal Villages new housing will be restricted to that which meets identified proven local need. Policy DM8 relates to Policy SP3 and provides more detailed guidance for development in the open countryside. Amongst other things, Policy DM8 restricts new dwellings and limits the conversion of existing buildings to dwellings. In these ways Policies SP3 and DM8 are policies that control the supply of housing. Consequently they cannot be considered to be up to date and the weight I attach to them is limited.
 5. Paragraph 55 of the Framework advises that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. For example, where there are
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- groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby. Local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances, one example given is where the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting.
6. The appeal site is a former stable building within the grounds of Harlow Field House, which is an isolated dwelling surrounded by farmland. The site is located some way outside of the settlement of Edingley. It is accessed by relatively narrow country lanes. Beyond the village these are largely unlit and have no dedicated footway. The proposal would result in another dwelling in this isolated location.
 7. Edingley is accessed by a relatively narrow country lane which, outside of the village, is largely unlit and without a dedicated footway. I observed vehicles travelling at some speed in the vicinity of the appeal site. The only refuge for a pedestrian would be a grass verge. I do not think it likely that the occupiers of the dwelling would regularly walk to use the church, community hall and public house in Edingley, particularly the young, elderly, less able, or those with small children.
 8. It would not be an unreasonable cycle ride, but most local services are provided in Southwell and Farnsfield which are further away. The village may be served by a local bus service but it did not appear that there are any bus stops on Station Road in the vicinity of the appeal site. I consider it most likely that the occupiers of the proposed dwelling would rely on the use of a car for the majority of their trips to shops, services and other facilities. In these ways it would not be a sustainable location for development.
 9. At the front, the roof projects over a path creating a covered walkway, not untypical of stable buildings. The dwelling would extend to the edge of this overhang. From what I observed on my visit and having studied the plans it appears to me that this path is not part of the foundation or floor slab of the building. I think it likely that this area would require new foundations and a new exterior wall along the entire length of the building and as such it would amount to more than 'infilling' of the existing building. The Council inform me that this would add 25m² and that a proposed extension to the rear would add another 21m², and they calculate that in total the proposal would extend the floorspace of the dwelling by 44%.
 10. Paragraphs 4.14 and 4.16 of the Council's Supplementary Planning Document "Conversion of Traditional Rural Buildings", 2014, (SPD) provide some useful guidance in this regard. They explain that conversions should normally be contained within the confines of the original building and that any new build element should be strictly subordinate in scale. This proposal would significantly go beyond the confines of the existing building and an increase in floorspace of 44% would not be subordinate.
 11. The explanatory text to Policy DM8 at paragraph 7.49 explains that buildings in the countryside which are no longer needed or suitable for their original purpose are mostly in unsustainable locations. Other than where they are very close to settlements, the conversion to dwellings is likely to be a very unsustainable use. Consequently the Council will only support the principle of this where the architectural or historical merit of the building(s) outweighs their unsustainable location.

12. The former stable building is functional in design and appears relatively modern. Rather than charming, I found it to be quite utilitarian in appearance. It is put to me that it is closely associated with the original farmhouse but I find little evidence to say that it is of architectural or historical merit.
13. The Council submits that the definition of 'traditional' used by English Heritage applies to pre 1940 buildings and there is very little evidence before me to say that this building dates to that time or before. I am not persuaded that it is a traditional building, nor am I persuaded that the references to stables in the SPD mean that all stable buildings will be suitable for conversion.
14. On my visit I found the site to be well screened from public views and to be generally tidy and the building appeared in reasonable order. Hedgerows with trees provide a strong green feature at the front and side of the site. The proposal includes the creation of a new access through the hedgerow and between trees. The new front elevation would be built in traditional brickwork and other elevations would be clad in horizontal boarding. The plans indicate some hard landscaping, there is an 'Arboricultural Implications Assessment' and a Bat Survey but little specification of proposed landscaping, arboriculture or ecological measures. Rather it is suggested that such matters could be conditioned. All in all I am not persuaded that there is evidence to say that the proposal would amount to an enhancement of the immediate setting.
15. I conclude that the proposal would result in a new dwelling in an isolated location and would not amount to sustainable development in the countryside. I attach substantial weight to the environmental harms this would cause. The proposal would be contrary to advice at paragraph 55 of the Framework and provisions in DPD Policy DM8 and the SPD for conversion of buildings of architectural or historic merit in unsustainable locations, although the weight I attach to the conflict with the development plan is limited.

Other matters

16. The appellant refers me to a decision of another Inspector dated 7 January 2016. In that case¹ the Inspector concluded that the Council did not have a five year land supply. The Council advises that it has produced a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which has produced an OAN of 454 dwellings per annum and that on this basis the Council can demonstrate a five year supply. The OAN has yet to be tested through the Local Plan Review process and that is the correct forum for the testing of such evidence. Although I have had regard to the conclusions of my colleague in APP/B3030/W/15/3006252, I find that there is insufficient evidence in this planning appeal to enable me to conclude that the Council does not have a five year housing land supply. However as I have already found the relevant policies to be otherwise out of date, this is not determinative in this case.
17. The proposed development would provide economic benefits through the conversion of the building. The appellant presently resides in Harlow Field House and would move into the new dwelling thereby releasing that dwelling for another family with a net increase of one additional household. The contribution of one additional dwelling to the housing supply would be positive, but very limited. There is little evidence of the housing needs of the local area but the proposed conversion would add an additional two bedroom dwelling

¹ APP/B3030/W/15/3006252

potentially reducing the need for a new build dwelling elsewhere. The weight in favour I attach to these economic and social gains is limited.

18. As a conversion the proposal would involve the reuse of a limited amount of resources, but the proposal also includes new building works and I am not persuaded that there is any significant environmental gain in this respect.

Conclusions

19. I conclude that the proposal would result in a dwelling in an isolated location would not amount to sustainable development in the countryside and I attach substantial weight to the environmental harms this would cause.
20. The proposal would be contrary to advice at paragraph 55 of the Framework and provisions in DPD Policy DM8 and the SPD for conversion of buildings of architectural or historic merit in unsustainable locations, although the weight I attach to the conflict with the development plan is limited.
21. Overall, I find that the adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the limited social and economic benefits. Therefore, and having taken all other matters into consideration, the appeal is dismissed.

Helen Heward,

PLANNING INSPECTOR