
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 April 2017

by Nick Palmer BA (Hons) BPI MRTPI

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

Decision date: 26th April 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/L2630/W/17/3167112

Follies Barn, Long Lane, Bracon Ash, Norfolk NR14 8AN

- 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 Ray Wickers against the decision of South Norfolk District Council.
 - The application Ref 2016/2287, dated 26 September 2016, was refused by notice dated 23 November 2016.
 - The development proposed is the erection of 1 N^o dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in the appeal are:
 - i) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; and
 - ii) the accessibility of the proposal to services and facilities by sustainable means.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. The appeal site is a vacant plot of land which fronts onto Long Lane and is between the garden of Follies Barn and an adjacent bungalow. I saw on my visit that there is another bungalow on the opposite side of the road, a bungalow next to Follies Barn and a house on the western side of the road. The site is outside any development boundary as defined in the South Norfolk Local Plan (LP)¹ and is within the countryside for planning policy purposes.
4. The dwellings in the immediate vicinity form a loose grouping with the characteristics of sporadic development in the countryside. The general setting is open and verdant with trees and hedges along both sides of the road. The proposed dwelling would follow the linear pattern of development along the eastern side of the road and would be between two existing dwellings. However there is generous space between Follies Barn and the adjacent bungalow and the proposal would be visually intrusive in the context of that space and the predominantly open surroundings. Although there is an existing

¹ South Norfolk Local Plan Development Management Policies Document (2015)

hedge along the frontage and trees within the site the dwelling would remain visible and prominent from Long Lane.

5. The appellant states that the site was formerly part of the garden to Follies Barn. I noted that the site is fenced off from the garden and I have some doubt as to whether the site is previously developed land as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). The Framework encourages the reuse of such land for development but nevertheless advises that it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed. Irrespective of whether or not the site falls within this category this does not alter my conclusion on this main issue.
6. I take into account the large new housing development which is underway about 400 metres to the north of the site but this does not alter the character of the immediate surroundings. For the reasons given the proposal would not respect the rural landscape and would not accord with policy DM4.5 of the LP which has this requirement or with the Framework in terms of recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. For the reasons given I find that the proposal would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the area.

Accessibility

7. Mulbarton is designated as a Service Village in the Joint Core Strategy² and has a range of services and facilities including shops, a school and public transport services to Norwich. The appellant advises that a new surgery is to be constructed as part of the nearby development. Long Lane is narrow and has no footpaths or street lighting in the vicinity of the site and for a distance of about 400 metres to the north but from that point there are footpaths into the village. The appellant says that local residents regularly walk along this route. Many of the local services and facilities are likely to be within reasonable walking distance of the site. However while there are verges along the road the lack of footpaths and lighting along much of its length would be likely to deter pedestrian access.
8. The appellant has drawn my attention to other appeal decisions which examined accessibility to services and facilities in rural areas. It is clear from those decisions that sites that are outside development boundaries are not necessarily inaccessible by sustainable means and that where car use is necessary, journey lengths may be minimised if there are centres nearby.
9. In this case options for sustainable travel would be available and any car journeys to facilities in Mulbarton would be short. Having said this for the reasons given I find that the occupants of the proposed dwelling would be likely to rely on the car for transport to a large extent. This limits the degree of accessibility to services and facilities by sustainable means.

Overall

10. The Council advises that it cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites. In this circumstance its policies for the supply of housing, including those that restrict housing in the countryside are not up-to-date. Paragraph 14 of the Framework states a presumption in favour of sustainable

² Greater Norwich Development Partnership Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk (2011/2014)

development and that where policies are out-of-date permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development. The proposal would not accord with policy DM1.3 of the LP which restricts development outside defined development boundaries. However I give limited weight to this policy conflict for the reasons given.

11. The proposal is for a self-build dwelling which is a type of housing for which there is an identified need. There is a statutory duty on local planning authorities under the Housing and Planning Act 2016 to give suitable development permission in respect of enough serviced plots of land to meet the demand for self-build housing in each base period. The Council expects that its statutory requirement in this respect will be met and on this basis the proposal would not be critical to meeting that requirement.
12. The proposal would be of benefit in addressing the housing supply shortage and in providing a unit of self-build housing. It would accord with policy DM3.1 of the LP which requires a range of dwelling types to meet the requirements of different households, as identified through the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. However because the scale of the proposal is limited in terms of the overall housing requirement and the self-build requirement I give limited weight to the benefit of the proposal in these respects.
13. I have found that the proposal would be harmful in terms of its effect on the character and appearance of the area and I give significant weight to this consideration. Although I have found the proposal to have limited accessibility by sustainable means, options for sustainable transport are available and this matter is neutral in the overall balance. The significant weight that I have given to the harm significantly and demonstrably outweighs the limited weight that I have given to the benefit.
14. The proposal would accord with the social and economic dimensions of sustainable development in providing a new unit of housing which may benefit the rural community and support local services and facilities. Construction of the dwelling may benefit the local economy. However the harm to the character and appearance of the area would not accord with the environmental dimension. The limited accessibility by sustainable means would also weigh against the environmental dimension to some extent in terms of emissions from private car use. For these reasons when considered as a whole the proposal would not be sustainable.

Conclusion

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

Nick Palmer

INSPECTOR