



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 April 2017

by L Fleming BSc (Hons) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 28 April 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/K2610/W/16/3165420

Land at Buxton Road, Buxton Road, Horstead With Stanninghall, Norwich NR12 7EX

- 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 Alan Browne against the decision of Broadland District Council.
 - The application Ref 20161100, dated 14 June 2016, was refused by notice dated 16 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is erection of 5 No dwellings with shared access (outline) (self-build including 1 No affordable plot).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The application was submitted in outline with all detailed matters reserved apart from the access. I have dealt with the appeal on that basis, treating the plans as illustrative only.
3. I have also taken the development description from the Council's decision notice as this more accurately describes the proposal following an amendment made to the scheme during the planning application process.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area;
 - whether the proposed development would amount to sustainable development having regard to the development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The appeal site is a narrow strip of land which forms part of a wider field positioned between two detached properties in spacious plots on the edge of the village of Horstead. There is a hedgerow along the appeal site road frontage and to the north and south are views over the open countryside. Thus
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the area has a spacious rural character which creates a soft transition from the countryside to the main built up part of the village.

6. I acknowledge that the appeal site does not form part of any significant or historic landscape features which the Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) suggests need to be retained or enhanced. I also note that design parameters would be provided to prospective self-builders and landscaping including hedgerows and trees could be provided to soften views of the development in any direction.
7. However, the illustrative details show five relatively large detached dwellings and garages. Even though the proposed dwellings could be set back from the road and positioned with space between them, the proposal would inevitably introduce a significant bulk of development along the Buxton Road frontage on the edge of the village. In my view, this would not amount to infilling and instead would create a ribbon of frontage development along the south side of Buxton Road and thus a narrow linear extension of the settlement into the countryside.
8. The proposed development would therefore restrict views over the open countryside to the south. Moreover, through the inevitable bulk of development in place of an open field, the proposed development would erode the soft transition from the countryside to the main built up part of the village. This would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area and harmful to the landscape setting of the village.
9. For these reasons, the proposed development would be in conflict with Policy 2 of the Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk (2014), Policies GC4 and EN2 of the Broadland District Council Development Management Development Plan Document (2015) (DMDPD) and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which, taken together, aim to ensure good design and that new development does not harm the character and appearance of an area and important views over the landscape.

Sustainable development

10. Policy GC2 of the DMDPD states new development will be accommodated within settlement limits. Furthermore, outside of these limits development which does not result in any significant adverse impact will be permitted where it accords with a specific allocation and/or policy of the development plan.
11. The appeal site is close to the village of Horstead, but outside of the settlement limit. It does not form part of an allocation nor does the proposal accord with any other specific policy in the plan. Thus whilst close to the village of Horstead the appeal site is effectively in the countryside.
12. It is contested whether the Council is able to demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing land in accordance with paragraph 49 of the Framework. I have considered the detailed evidence with regard to the correct geographical areas to use for the purpose of the calculation and whether the development plan figures reflect the objectively assessed need for housing in the area. I have also considered the local sites referred to as COL1 and COL2 in the Broadland District Council Site Allocations Development Plan Document (2016) and the appellants concerns over their deliverability as well as the overall delivery rates of new housing in the area. I have also noted the appeal

decision¹ relevant to this matter. However, overall I find the evidence on the five year land supply to be inconclusive.

13. Nevertheless, even if the Council cannot demonstrate a five year supply, and saved Policy GC2 of the DMDPD which seeks to restrict new dwellings in the countryside is therefore out of date, the proposal would need to be considered in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development. In which case, planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the Framework taken as a whole.
14. Paragraph 55 of the Framework encourages housing in rural areas where it will maintain or enhance the vitality of rural communities but requires isolated new homes in the countryside to be avoided unless there are special circumstances. The proposed dwellings would be close to the village of Horstead, which benefits from a range of services and facilities and public transport connections to larger settlements. Thus, I do not consider the occupants of the proposed dwellings would be isolated.
15. The proposal would provide five new dwellings adding to the supply of housing in the area. I am satisfied there is a strong demand for serviced self-build plots in the locality and the appeal proposal would make a significant contribution towards meeting that demand. I have also considered the Unilateral Undertaking which would ensure that one of the proposed dwellings would be affordable. There would also be economic benefits in terms of customers and employees for local businesses and economic benefits associated with construction. I have also noted the benefit of extending the footpath.
16. However, due to the scale of the proposed development the benefits to the rural community are relatively small in scale and would have a negligible influence on the vitality of the community. Thus, whilst the vitality of the rural community would be maintained it would not be enhanced.
17. Therefore, whilst the provision of five self-build plots weighs significantly in favour of the proposal and even if I were to accept that affordable housing should be provided on the site, when all of the benefits of the scheme are combined they are significantly and demonstrably outweighed by the harm to the character and appearance of the area I have identified above. Consequently, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, I conclude that the proposal is not sustainable development.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons set out above, I therefore conclude that on balance the proposed development would not accord with the development plan and would be in conflict with the Framework. Thus having had regard to all other matters raised the appeal should be dismissed.

L Fleming

INSPECTOR

¹ Appeal reference: APP/D/0840/A/13/2209757