
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 August 2017

by Paul Jackson B Arch (Hons) RIBA

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

Decision date: 14 August 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/J3530/W/17/3172682

Red Lodge, Bruisyard Road, Cransford, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP13 9PD

- 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 Peter Robinson against the decision of Suffolk Coastal District Council.
 - The application Ref DC/16/3959/OUT, dated 21 September 2016, was refused by notice dated 6 February 2017.
 - The development proposed is the erection of 2 dwellings.
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Preliminary matters

1. The above description of development is a shortened version of that on the application form. I have taken the full description into account.
2. The application is submitted in outline with all matters reserved.

Decision

3. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are as follows:
 - The effect on the character and appearance of the area;
 - The sustainability of the proposal, having regard to its location in the countryside; and
 - The effect on ecological diversity.

Reasons

5. The appeal site comprises the garden associated with the gate lodge for the adjacent Cransford Hall. Originally used for vegetable produce for the hall, it became a domestic garden but in recent years has become overgrown. The site lies well outside the small village of Cransford, in a loose grouping of half a dozen houses in open countryside. There is only sporadic housing development nearby on Bruisyard Road and the site lies on relatively high ground with views over fields.
 6. The development plan for the area comprises saved policies of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (LP) and the 2013 Suffolk Coastal District Local Plan Core Strategy (CS) and Development Management Policies (DMP). The overall thrust of policy is to relate new housing development to employment, transport and infrastructure by means of a settlement hierarchy based on sustainability principles; giving priority to previously developed land in and around built up
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areas. The scheme would be highly visible on relatively high land. However the dwellings are designed and laid out, as built development, they would compromise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

7. The proposed development would be around 1 kilometre (km) from Cransford, a village classified as an 'other village' in the settlement hierarchy identified in development plan policy. That is a settlement with few or minimal facilities where only minimal housing growth is anticipated. Potential future occupiers would be remote from shops and other facilities without a footway to Cransford, let alone the nearest service centre at Framlingham which is about 4 kilometres distant. They would need to use a motor vehicle for many day to day requirements. The development would not meet any of the exceptional circumstances set out in CS policy SP28.
8. CS policy SP29 seeks to sustain the countryside as an important economic social and environmental asset. The proposal would not satisfy any of the criteria in this policy whereby new housing might be allowed. Whilst it might be 'minor infilling', it would not be well related to any existing sustainable settlement and would not meet criteria (e) of DMP policy DM3.
9. Turning to ecological matters, the mature oak and ash trees along the eastern boundary with the road would be likely to be of considerable biodiversity value. DMP policy DM27 requires such interests to be protected. The crowns appear healthy and there is little evidence to suggest that the trees are unusually affected by disease, to the extent that they are a risk to the public or to potential future occupiers. Development of the site would not necessitate their removal. In these circumstances, if I was otherwise minded to allow the appeal, a planning condition could be attached to any outline permission requiring their protection and an ecological survey which would identify any measures necessary to conserve and manage them for the future.

Other matters

10. Representations have been made by the Council regarding the need to demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land. The appellant was asked to comment on the Council's decision to challenge recent decisions by Inspectors allowing housing development in part because the Objectively Assessed Need figure may be too low and/or the rate of annual completions may not be sufficient. If there is not a 5 year supply in terms of the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and relevant policies for the supply of housing are consequently considered to be out of date, then paragraph 14 says that permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole. In this case, it is relevant that a core planning principle of the NPPF is that planning should take account of the roles and character of different areas and that the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside should be recognised. Moreover, the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, which has economic, social and environmental roles. The proposed scheme would have a limited and temporary economic benefit and a social benefit in contributing to the vitality of a rural village, but those could also be fulfilled by development in a more sustainable location. It would fall far short of satisfying the environmental role. The development plan places it a long way down the hierarchy of locations where development would be

acceptable. Even if there is not a 5 year supply of housing land (which the Council disagrees with), looking at the NPPF as a whole, the benefit of 2 new housing units would be greatly outweighed by the disadvantages of this location.

11. I have had regard to the unmaintained state of the site and the potential for it to be improved but that is a matter for the owner. This matter does not weigh heavily in favour of development.
12. I conclude that although the proposed development would not conflict with the ecological diversity aims of the development plan, it would not be well related to any existing sustainable settlement and would noticeably diminish the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. There would be a significant conflict with the sustainable development aims of policies SP1, SP1A, SP19, SP29 and DM3 of the CS and DMP; and national policy in the NPPF.
13. For these reasons, the appeal should not succeed.

Paul Jackson

INSPECTOR