



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 June 2019 by Darren Ellis MPlan

Decision by Susan Ashworth BA (Hons) BPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 July 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/W3520/W/19/3226282

Corern, Rattlesden Road, Rattlesden, Bury St. Edmunds, IP30 0RZ

- 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 Philip Baker against the decision of Mid Suffolk District Council.
 - The application Ref DC/19/00225, dated 17 January 2019, was refused by notice dated 12 March 2019.
 - The development proposed is the erection of one bungalow.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Preliminary Matter

3. The application was submitted in outline with all matters; appearance, access, landscaping, layout and scale, reserved for subsequent approval. Subsequently I have assessed the appeal proposal on that basis.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 1. Whether the site is a suitable location for housing with particular regard to its accessibility to local services and the character and appearance of the area
 2. The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons for the Recommendation

Whether the site is a suitable location for housing

5. The appeal site comprises an open field, attached to a smallholding known as Corern, which includes a variety of agricultural/industrial buildings and a bungalow, situated in a countryside location around two miles from the settlement of Woolpit to the north and approximately one mile from Rattlesden to the south. The proposal seeks outline permission for the erection of one bungalow. Given that the application is in outline, no details of the proposed
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dwelling have been submitted although I understand that the house is to be designed to meet the needs of the elderly.

6. The Council has set out a settlement hierarchy in Policy SCS1 of the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy, to distinguish between the roles and functions of different areas and to guide the location of future development. Woolpit is identified a Key Service Centre and Rattlesden a Primary Village, indicating that there is a range of services available locally. However, the site lies outside the boundary of those settlements in an area of countryside where development is limited to specific categories as defined in Policy CS2 in order to support the rural economy. Policy CS2 is not entirely consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which is a material consideration. Nevertheless the proposal falls outside any of the specified categories and would therefore conflict with it.
7. In terms of distance, the site is within walking and cycling distance of the nearby settlements. However, whilst I noted that a section of the road in front of the site linking Woolpit with Rattlesden is straight with good forward visibility, the lack of footpaths or street lighting and speed with which vehicles might travel, make it unattractive as a walking or cycling route after dark and is particularly unlikely to appeal to all sections of the community, including the older residents for whom the appellant advises the dwelling would be planned. I noted the location of public footpaths near the site that lead to Rattlesden which offer an alternative route. However, these footpaths follow a more circuitous route to the settlement and are also unlikely to be attractive after dark.
8. There is no public bus service in the vicinity and although the appellant advises that there is a limited school bus service along Rattlesden Road this would not be appropriate for the residents' day to day needs. Consequently, access to and from the site would therefore be largely dependent on private cars to access services and facilities.
9. Whilst I acknowledge that there is nothing in the Framework to suggest that the use of a private car would not in itself make a development unsustainable, it is clear that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Whilst the site is not isolated, in the sense that it adjoins existing buildings, I am not persuaded by the appellant's argument that Corern constitutes a settlement in its own right or, for the above reasons, that it is well connected to the services and facilities that are provided within the settlements.
10. For these reasons, the proposal would be contrary to the development strategy set out in Policies CS1 and CS2 and the Framework objective of maximising the use of sustainable transport modes.

Character, appearance and intrusion into the countryside

11. The area surrounding the site is characterised by swathes of gently rolling open countryside punctuated by individual or small groups of buildings. The character of Rattlesden Road, unlit, narrow, without footpaths and bound by vegetation is consistent with that of a rural lane. The appeal site, which is grassed, has an open appearance. It is bound by a low hedgerow to the

- roadside, and is visually prominent from the road. It currently contributes positively to the rural character of the countryside.
12. The construction of a dwelling on the site, regardless of scale and appearance would be visible from the road and would reduce the open qualities of the site. Whilst I acknowledge that this is a substantial site that could physically accommodate a dwelling, the proposed development would alter the character and appearance of the land from farmland to domestic.
 13. I acknowledge that from certain vantage points the proposal would be seen against the backdrop of the of the existing built development. That development, which is well established, appears as a traditional group of farm buildings with associated workers bungalow. The proposal would serve to expand the quantum of development and introduce further domestic activity in an essentially rural environment. There is no evidence before me that the site has been previously developed, and whilst it may be within the same landownership as the adjacent land, the Framework establishes that it should not be assumed that the whole curtilage should be developed.
 14. Various design options for the proposed dwelling have been discussed, albeit briefly, in the appeal documentation. However, as this is an application for outline permission, none of these options form part of the proposal. I am not therefore persuaded that the design of the proposal would mitigate the harm to the character or appearance of the site. In addition, the appellant refers to an intention to provide landscaping around the site which would provide screening of the proposed dwelling. Landscaping is a reserved matter and there are no details before me but nevertheless such landscaping would take time to become established and would not be a permanent feature. Moreover, I am unconvinced that screening is an argument that can mitigate the harm of an inappropriate form of development.
 15. I understand that the appellant, who grew up in the adjoining bungalow, intends to live in the proposed dwelling. However, there is no justification, either in terms of the appellant's personal circumstances or in terms of a need for an additional residential unit to serve the business, to justify an additional dwelling on the site.
 16. For these reasons, the proposal would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the countryside and as such would be contrary to Policies GP1, H3, H13 and H15 of the Mid Suffolk Local Plan 1998 and Policy CS5 of the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy 2008 which seek in various ways to ensure that development does not have any significant adverse impact on its surrounding area with regard to its character and appearance.
 17. In the decision notice the Council makes reference to Policy CL2 of the Mid Suffolk Local Plan, which is relevant for sites within Special Landscape Areas. No evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that the site is within a Special Landscape Area, and accordingly this policy is not determinative in my consideration of this appeal.

Planning Balance

18. There is a disagreement between the parties about whether the Council can now identify a 5 year supply of housing land.

19. Whilst paragraph 59 of the Framework refers to significantly boosting the supply of housing, the provision of one additional unit would make little meaningful difference. There would be a small social benefit in providing an extra housing unit although that benefit is reduced by the distance of the site from local services and facilities and lack of sustainable transport options. Economic advantages would also arise from the construction and occupation of a new house. However, the harm to the character and appearance of the area identified would be significant and as a result the environmental role of sustainable development would not be achieved.
20. Therefore, even if policies for the supply of housing are treated as being out of date, and the tilted balance of paragraph 11 of the Framework applied, the adverse impacts of the proposal, set out above, significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits that would flow from the provision of one new dwelling, when assessed against the Framework taken as a whole. Moreover, for the reasons set out above, the proposal does not constitute sustainable development, which the government is seeking to promote.
21. The appellant has referred me to an appeal decision concerning a proposal for 49 dwellings in a rural area on the edge of Woolpit¹. The site is located outside of the settlement boundary, and is therefore in the designated 'countryside'. However, its northern and eastern boundaries adjoin the defined settlement. Moreover, given that that proposal was for considerably greater number of dwellings, the two proposals are not directly comparable.
22. I have also been referred to a decision in Doncaster² where a development of 600 houses were allowed despite the Local Authority having a housing land supply in excess of 10 years, as the most important policies were considered to be out of date. I do not have the full details of this case before me but nevertheless the residential development in Doncaster was for substantially more housing than is the subject of this appeal. Consequently, I am not persuaded that these appeals decisions justify the proposal before me.

Conclusion

23. For the reasons given above, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

Darren Ellis

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

24. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

S Ashworth

INSPECTOR

¹ Appeal ref: APP/W3520/W/18/3194926

² Appeal ref: APP/F4410/W/17/3169288