



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 September 2019

by Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11th October 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/E2734/W/19/3222663

Agricultural Field off Moor Lane, Ferrensby, Knaresborough HG5 0PZ

- 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 Desmond and Charlie Cockshott against the decision of Harrogate Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 18/03846/OUT, dated 12 September 2018, was refused by notice dated 14 December 2018.
 - The development proposed is the construction of 6 new residential properties and new access road with all matters reserved.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matters

2. The application was submitted in outline with all matters reserved for subsequent approval. I have assessed the proposal on that basis.
3. Notwithstanding the address of the site in the above heading, which is taken from the application form, most of the evidence before me refers to the highway that passes the land in question as Arkendale Road. This description is consistent with the roadside sign in the nearby grass verge and the notation shown on the appellants' proposed site plan. For consistency, I, too, describe the highway adjacent to the site as Arkendale Road.
4. The appellant has submitted a Planning Obligation, dated 22 April 2019, in the form of a Unilateral Undertaking (UU) under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended. The UU seeks to commit the appellants to making a financial contribution towards affordable housing at a later stage.

Main issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the local area.

Reasons

6. The site is part of a larger field that occupies a prominent location on the fringe of the main built up area of Ferrensby. Several buildings are evident just to the west of the site, which present a hard built profile to the edge of the settlement. From within and near to the site, a mix of buildings and uses in a loose pattern of development are also visible on the opposite side of Arkendale

Road. There are, however, more open views towards and across the site from several locations most notably along Arkendale Road, looking southwards. From this vantage point in particular, there is a very strong degree of visual inter-connectivity between the site and the open landscape beyond. Given that open rural context, the appellants' view that the proposal would form a modest and sustainable extension to the main built up area is, to my mind, overstated.

7. Specifically, the new dwellings would obtrude into a large open field, palpably extending the built up area into the surrounding rural landscape. It would transform its character from an area of pastoral openness to one occupied by a substantial new built form where people would live and visit. The obtrusion would be most acutely felt from Arkendale Road as it passes the site. From this location, the very strong sense of encroachment into the countryside would be evident not least because the proposal would significantly curtail the expansive view across the field. That each of the 6 plots could also accommodate good-sized domestic garden would visually accentuate the intrusion, as would the introduction of a new access road.
8. The new dwellings, indicatively laid out in a familiar linear way with some buildings behind others, would not necessarily be out of place among the varied pattern of existing development. I also agree that the site could not reasonably be described as isolated because it is not remote from existing development. It does, however, occupy, a visually important location at the interface between the settlement and the landscape. For the reasons given, the proposal would fail to preserve the rural pastoral setting of the village, which is identified as an aim of the Harrogate District Landscape Character Assessment (LCA).
9. The new buildings could be low level and sited to take advantage of the gently sloping ground with additional planting to visually soften and partly screen them from public and private views. Even so, the proposal would still draw the eye because the new buildings would stand within a large open field that, at present, adds to the spacious feel and rural character of the local area. With its open largely grassed area and boundary vegetation, the site blends seamlessly into the rural landscape. Even with conditions relating to planting, boundary treatment and materials, in addition to those that would cover the reserved matters such as scale and access, the new development would still appear as a visually disruptive and an unwelcome addition to the local area.
10. My attention has been drawn to the Council's recent decision to grant planning permission for 18 dwellings on land off Harrogate Road. From the limited information provided, this scheme differs in nature, scale and location to the proposal such that few direct parallels can be drawn between them. In any event, each proposal should be assessed on its own merits, as I have done. I also note the appellants' points that the village boundary walls would not be extended and that new housing development has taken place both close to the site and in the local area.
11. On the main issue, I conclude that the proposed development would bring about a significant and adverse change to the agrarian landscape and unduly erode the open rural context of Ferrensby. It would therefore seriously harm the character and appearance of the local area. Accordingly, the appeal scheme conflicts with Policies C2 and HD20 of the Harrogate District Local Plan, Policies EQ2 and SG4 of the Harrogate District Core Strategy and the Council's

LCA. These policies and guidance aim to ensure that development adds to the spatial qualities of the area; respects landscape character; is appropriate to the form and character of the settlement; and safeguards the environment.

Other matters

12. Although the Council states that it can demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), the proposal would boost housing supply, which is a Government objective. Once complete, the proposal would widen the choice of housing in the local area. Two of the dwellings would be self-build, which is a form of development that is supported by the Framework. There would also be economic benefits from the sale of materials during the construction phase, job creation and from spending by future occupiers that would support local services and facilities and those in other settlements. Travel vouchers could be offered to the occupiers of each new dwelling. These considerations all weigh in support of the proposal.
13. On the other hand, the Framework states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural environment; recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside; and ensure that development adds to the overall quality of the area. The proposal fails to adhere to these key principles. To my mind, the balance of national policy is firmly tipped against the appeal scheme. When assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, the adverse impacts of granting planning permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the appeal scheme.
14. According to the appellants, the site was selected for housing some 50 years ago and deemed suitable for development in the 2015 version of the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment. I have, however, assessed the proposal in the light of the development plan, national planning policy and other material considerations as they currently apply.
15. I also note that the appellants have well established and close family ties to the local area. However, this consideration does not outweigh the serious harm that I have identified.
16. The Council and others raise several additional objections including access to local services, facilities and public transport, highway safety, overdevelopment, light, drainage and loss of agricultural land. These are all important matters and I have taken into account all of the evidence before me. However, given my findings on the main issue, these are not matters that have been critical to my decision.
17. Although a UU has been submitted, it is not necessary for me to look at this document in detail or the issue of contributions towards affordable housing because the proposed development is unacceptable for other reasons.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR