



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 October 2019

by P Mileham BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 08 November 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/P0240/W/19/3234442

Hoo Lane Farm, Hoo Lane, Wootton MK43 9EH

- 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 Andrew Evans against the decision of Central Bedfordshire Council.
 - The application Ref CB/19/00939/FULL, dated 4 March 2019, was refused by notice dated 15 May 2019.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of agricultural barn and creation of a single dwelling with associated parking.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The Central Bedfordshire Local Plan was submitted for examination in April 2018. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) sets out at paragraph 48 that Local Authorities can attribute weight to emerging plans depending on their stage of preparation. Whilst the examination is at an advanced stage, the plan is not yet adopted and policies may still be subject to some change. I have not been provided evidence on the status of any unresolved objections to the policies indicated, and as such, I attach limited weight to them at this time.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - Whether the proposed development is in a suitable location for housing;
 - The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area;
 - The effect of the proposed development on protected species.

Reasons

Suitable Location for Housing

4. The appeal site is a single storey agricultural barn located in the countryside outside of the settlement boundary of Marston Moretaine which is identified in Policy CS1 of the Central Bedfordshire Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Document (2009) (CSDMPD) as a Minor Service Centre.

The village of Wootton is located nearby (within Bedford Borough Council's administrative area) and has a good range of local services and facilities including a library, village hall and primary school. Policy DM4 of the CSDMPD directs new infill development to locations within the defined settlement envelopes. The site is remote from the main part of the village and outside of any defined settlement envelope. There is no footway or cycle path linking the site to either the village of Wootton or Marston Moretaine, or any streetlighting present in this area. I have not been provided with any evidence of nearby public transport routes or their frequency. As a result, future occupants would be heavily reliant on the use of private transport to access services and facilities to meet day-to-day needs.

5. Paragraph 79 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), seeks to avoid isolated new homes in the countryside. The proposed development would be located next to the existing property at Hoo Lane Farm and would share a principal means of access. As such, it would not be isolated in terms of the Framework.
6. My attention has been drawn to a fallback position established by the prior approval for the conversion of the existing barn to a residential dwelling. The approval remains extant and there is a reasonable likelihood of this being implemented. It is perhaps pertinent to point out that the Council would not have been able to consider the locational suitability of the fallback approval by virtue of the provisions of Class Q of the General Permitted Development Order (England) (2015). In any case, the effect of the appeal proposal over the fallback would be to increase the number of bedrooms and provide an additional parking space. As such, there is a likelihood of a greater number of future occupiers of the appeal proposal and accompanying private vehicles generated above the fallback. This would inevitably result in the need for additional private vehicles movements to access services and facilities beyond the level resulting from the fallback.
7. In light of the above, I conclude that the proposal would not be in a suitable location for housing. This would be contrary to Policies CS1 and DM4 of the CSDMPD which seek to direct new residential development to within defined settlement envelopes.

Character and Appearance

8. The appeal site is located in close proximity to the existing two storey dwelling at Hoo Lane Farm. The surrounding landscape is gently undulating with an open character that allows for long views to the south and west, and there are also views possible across to the A421. The site is bounded along its north east border by a tall hedge which screens the majority of the existing barn from Hoo Lane.
9. Whilst the proposed development would occupy a similar siting and footprint to the existing barn, it would be significantly taller. As a result, it would be more visible in the landscape and the site would be read as a pair of detached two storey dwellings, rather than a two storey dwelling and a converted single storey rural building. The additional visibility of the building in the landscape would result in a proposal that would be visually intrusive in an area where there is very limited existing development. The additional garden land proposed to the rear of the proposed plot would also introduce additional domestication and residential paraphernalia into the countryside. This would

result in a significant intrusion into the countryside above the change of use of the barn.

10. Having regard to the above, I consider the proposed development would result in harm to the character and appearance of the area. This would be contrary to Policies CS14, CS16, DM3, DM4 and DM14 of the CSDMPD which collectively seek for proposals to respect the varied countryside character of the area, be appropriate in scale and design to their setting and not support proposals that have an unacceptable impact on the landscape quality of the area.
11. The proposal would also fail to accord with paragraph 130 of the Framework which indicates planning permission should be refused for development that fails to take into account the character and quality of an area.

Protected Species

12. The site is currently occupied by an agricultural barn. There is no evidence included with this appeal to indicate that the development would not result in harm to protected species or other associated matters for which, given the location and nature of the building, there is an increased likelihood of their presence. Bats in particular. The appellant has indicated that a survey was not requested by the Council in their consideration of the prior approval. However, and since the appeal proposal would result in the complete demolition of the barn as opposed to a change of use, it is a materially different situation.
13. Paragraph 170 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. In the absence of any evidence to suggest the development will not harm protected species I consider the appeal proposal does not comply with the Framework in this regard.

Conclusion

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

P Mileham

INSPECTOR