
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 November 2019

by Graeme Robbie BA(Hons) BPI MRTPI

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

Decision date: 22 November 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/R2520/W/19/3235976

land adjacent to No.1 Sutton Road, Beckingham, Lincolnshire LN5 0RD

- 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 John Daubney against the decision of North Kesteven District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/0621/FUL, dated 23 April 2019, was refused by notice dated 10 July 2019.
 - The development proposed is erection of a new single storey dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - Whether or not, having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the appeal site is an appropriate location for residential development; and
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

Location

3. Policy LP2 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (CLLP) sets out a settlement hierarchy which underpins the CLLP's broad spatial strategy for the District as set out by CLLP policy LP1. Beckingham is defined as a tier 6 settlement; a small village. CLLP policy LP2 goes on to state that such settlements will accommodate small scale development of a limited nature in 'appropriate locations' but limited to 'around 4 dwellings'.
4. Below such settlements within the hierarchy lie hamlets¹ and the open countryside². CLLP policy LP2 helpfully offers definitions of key terms relied upon in this policy. Hamlets are defined as having a dwelling base of at least 15 units and within such, single dwelling infill developments in 'appropriate locations' will be supported in principle. Countryside locations lie beyond the defined tiered settlements.

¹ Tier 7

² Tier 8

5. Having regard to the definitions offered, an 'appropriate location' is considered to be one that does not conflict with development plan and national planning policies when taken as a whole. Furthermore, it goes on to state that if developed, an appropriate location would retain the core shape and form of the settlement, not significantly harm the settlement's character and appearance and the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside or rural setting of the settlement.
6. The main body of the village of Beckingham is situated around the residential block formed by Chapel Street, School Lane and Sleaford Road. Beyond this broad cluster of buildings, the settlement is somewhat truncated to the north by the line of the A17. To the east, the approach to Beckingham is taken from the A17, a short slip-road leading directly past the village name signs, a distinctive 5-bar gate feature on either side of the road and 40mph speed limit signs.
7. The junction of Sleaford Road with Sutton Road is located just inside the 40mph speed limit sign, a short distance from the 30mph signs and the main body of the village that lie further to the west. The appeal site is, in turn, located a short distance south along Sutton Road between the village playing fields and an adjacent to a row of seven pairs of semi-detached dwellings on the eastern side of the road. On the opposite side of Sutton Road lie expansive views across open fields, above which the rooftops and church tower of Beckingham can be seen.
8. However, whilst these features are visible from the appeal site and elsewhere in the vicinity of the appeal site along Sutton Road, these open and expansive views over farmland give Sutton Road an evident rural character. Moreover, due to the location of the appeal site relative to these fields, there is a clear visual and physical separation between Beckingham and Sleaford Road on the one hand, and the appeal site's location on Sutton Road on the other. There is therefore no sense of a continuous built form of Beckingham along Sleaford Road towards Sutton Road, or along Sutton Road itself.
9. I have also had regard to the location of the appeal site relative to the row of seven pairs of semi-detached dwellings (14 dwellings in total) to the south of the site. CLLP policy LP2 is clear in their approach to residential development in hamlets. I agree with the Council that to consider this group of houses a hamlet for the purposes of CLLP policy LP2 would indeed be generous, as it does not meet the definition thereof. However, CLLP policy LP2 is quite clear that an 'appropriate location' is one which, amongst other factors, would retain the core shape and form of the settlement³ and would not be within the developed footprint of a hamlet⁴. The proposal, by virtue of the appeal site's location, relative to Beckingham and for the reasons I have set out above, is neither and would not achieve either aim.
10. I accept that there is a small group of buildings on the eastern side of Sutton Road at its junction with Sleaford Road. However, these are physically and visually separated from Beckingham as, in turn, the appeal site is from both that group and Beckingham. I also saw that the appeal site lies next to an open playing field with a small amount of play equipment within it and that there is a footpath along one side of Sutton Road and Sleaford Road leading

³ In the case of tier 6 small villages

⁴ In the case of tier 7 hamlets.

back into Beckingham. Nor do I doubt that residents of other properties along Sutton Road may consider themselves to be resident in, and of, Beckingham. However, CLLP policy LP2 refers to the 'core shape and form' of a settlement, and so neither the resident's sense of place, nor the presence of village name signs, pavements or speed limits alter my conclusions in this regard. These factors do not alter my conclusion that the appeal site is not located in an appropriate location relative to Beckingham as defined by CLLP policy LP2.

11. The appeal site would not be an appropriate location for residential development for the purposes of LP2 as it would not retain the core shape and form of Beckingham. Nor, even if I were to concur with the Council's generous inclusion of the appeal site within a hamlet, do I consider that the proposal would be an infill plot. Nor, in the further alternative, has the appellant sought to demonstrate that the proposed dwelling would be essential to the effective running of a rural enterprise in the countryside. Thus, the proposal is contrary to CLLP policy LP2, and also to CLLP policy LP55 regarding residential development in the countryside.

Character and appearance

12. I saw that there is an unassuming building of rather functional appearance currently located within the appeal site. It is not clear as to what it is currently used for, but its appearance, scale and materials do not strike me as being particularly unusual in rural countryside locations. Moreover, it has a discrete presence, largely hidden by the substantial roadside hedgerow which screens much of the site's interior and the building itself from wider view.
13. The proposal would introduce a residential property to a site that is not, for the reasons set out in the preceding section, an 'appropriate location' for residential development. The site is visually and physically detached from Beckingham and the introduction of a residential building, and the residential garden use of the plot around it, would be at odds with the prevailing and largely agrarian landscape in which the site lies. The proposed bungalow would share little visually within the seven pairs of semi-detached dwellings to the south which would emphasise its incongruous nature, character and appearance, and would extend the presence of domestic residential properties further along Sutton Road beyond the existing small grouping to the south, thereby introducing an urbanising residential use into an otherwise open countryside setting.
14. I note that the appellant indicates a willingness to consider suggestions for design changes. However, I have to consider the proposal before me as it was considered by the Council. Thus, a white rendered bungalow may appear somewhat stark in comparison with the brick-built two storey dwellings to the south. A planning condition to submit and agree final construction materials may be a means to ensure alternative facing materials, and I accept that the substantial roadside hedge would largely filter views of the proposed dwelling from certain viewpoints along Sutton Road. However, from what I saw during my visit to the site, I am not persuaded it would do so at all times of the year, or from all angles.
15. Moreover, even if partly screened from the roadside, the proposal would nevertheless introduce a form of development and use of the land around it that would erode in a piecemeal fashion the site's countryside setting and character. The proposal would, for these reasons, fail to protect the setting of

site, the surrounding landscape and of Beckingham and would fail to achieve the high quality design sought by CLLP policies LP17 and LP26, respectively.

Other Matters

16. I have noted the appellant's apparent frustration with the Council regarding the issuing of the formal decision on his planning application. However, such matters are between the appellant and the Council and do not fall to me under the terms of this appeal.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons set out, and having considered all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Graeme Robbie

INSPECTOR