The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 November 2019

by T A Wheeler BSc (Hons) T&RP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 December 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/H0520/W/19/3233797
Land adjacent to Capricorn House, Fen Road, Pidley, Huntingdon

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Mrs S Austin against Huntingdonshire District Council.
- The application Ref 19/00429/FUL, is dated 28 February 2019.
- The development proposed is Proposed erection of 2no detached dwellings and attached garages.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed and planning permission refused.

Procedural Matter

2. The Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (the Local Plan) was adopted on 15 May 2019 and I consider the proposal against the policies in that plan. The Council has confirmed those policies it considers to be of relevance to the appeal in the reason for refusal provided in its statement. The appellant has not disputed the Council's statement in this respect and I therefore consider the proposal against these policies.

Main Issues

3. These are:

    - Whether the site is in a suitable location for housing;
    - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

A suitable location for housing?

4. The site is located close to the settlement of Pidley, situated between Somersham and Warboys. It comprises a grassed field, bounded to the front by Fen Road, a public right of way to one side and a new house to the other. To the south of the site is a fenced enclosure, possibly a paddock, and to the north is a golf course. The site rises away from Fen Road.

5. The centre of Pidley can be accessed on foot from the site. However, there are few services there other than the public house. There are bus stops but I have no information on the level of service, although the Council describes this as limited. There is also a restaurant at the golf centre. Therefore, it is likely that

the occupiers of the proposed houses would have to use private cars for day to day trips to the nearest villages with local shops and at times further afield for a broader range of goods and services. The Framework seeks to ensure that new development can take up opportunities to use modes of transport other than the private car, whilst recognising that the opportunities to do so may be less in rural area.

6. The Framework also seeks to promote rural housing where it will enhance the vitality and viability of rural communities, for example where development may help support services in a nearby village. The proposal would make some contribution in this respect however this would be modest given the scale of development.

7. Other benefits of the proposal would include the employment created during the construction of the dwellings, although this would be short lived.

8. I therefore conclude that the proposal would not provide a suitable location for new housing development, in conflict with Policy LP9 of the Local Plan which seeks, amongst other things to ensure that development takes place within small settlements only where the location is suitable in terms of the level of services and infrastructure within the settlement and opportunities exist to use modes of transport other than the private car, and the Framework which has similar aims.

Character and Appearance

9. The site is located beyond the built up area and forms part of the countryside surrounding the settlement. Although not forming part of any particular landscape designation, that does not mean it is of no value and it contributes to the rural character and setting of the village.

10. The proposed design of the dwellings would reflect the local vernacular and would be accommodated comfortably on the site. However, despite this the gap between Capricorn House and a group of houses to the east, would be significantly reduced, contributing to the sense of urbanisation.

11. I therefore conclude that the proposal would result in significant harm to the rural character and appearance of the area, contrary to Local Plan Policy LP9, which has regard to the effect of development on the character of the immediate area, and PolicyLP10, which amongst other things requires that proposals must recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the Framework which has similar aims.

Other Matters

12. The appellant has drawn a comparison with the outline planning permission granted for the recently constructed house adjacent to the appeal site, Capricorn House[1]. The circumstances in that case were rather different to the appeal proposal, since the proposal was within the grounds of an existing house, and at the time of the decision was reached, the Council was unable to demonstrate that it had a 5 year supply of housing land. The so called tilted balance applied to the decision to grant outline planning permission. I therefore give limited weight to the existence of this other planning permission in my decision.

[1] Local Planning Authority reference 18/00077/OUT

13. The Council has concerns regarding the adequacy of a traffic survey provided by the appellant. However, it does not form part of the reason for refusal supplied in the appeal. The appellant has provided plans to show the visibility splays that would be provided and the outstanding issue is whether the speed of traffic on Fen Road is such that these would be sufficient in terms of highway safety. In view of my conclusions on the appeal I do not need to reach a finding on this aspect.

14. A unilateral undertaking has been submitted relating to a payment for the provision of bins. Given my conclusions it is not necessary for me to look into this matter further.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given the appeal is dismissed and planning permission refused.

Tim Wheeler

INSPECTOR