The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 December 2019

by J Williamson BSc (Hons) MPlan MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date:09 January 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/H0520/W/19/3237270
93 Peterborough Road, Farcet, PE7 3BN

- 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 Mrs Kate Stockley against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
- The application Ref 19/00292/OUT, dated 14 February 2019, was refused by notice dated 19 June 2019.
- The development proposed is outline planning application for up to 6 dwellinghouses (all matters reserved except means of access), requiring demolition of host dwelling and equine facilities.

Procedural Matter

1. The appellant has confirmed that the description of development was changed during the application with their agreement, reducing the number of dwellings from up to 10 to up to 6. I have determined the appeal on this basis.

Decision

2. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The village of Farcet, which is designated as a 'small settlement' within the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (May 2019) (LP), is located broadly to the south of Peterborough. It is surrounded by open countryside with the A605 at the northern tip of the village dividing it from the built-up area to the north.

5. The site comprises a two-storey semi-detached dwelling and its associated curtilage, plus land to the rear of the dwelling which includes various domestic-looking outbuildings, stables, a corrugated barn, a disused poly-tunnel, a manege and an area of greenfield land west of the manege.

6. The proposal is for outline planning permission to erect up to 6 dwellings, with all matters reserved except for access. The proposal also includes demolition of the existing semi-detached dwelling and all other buildings and structures within the site.

7. Beyond the northern boundary of the site is open countryside. To the west of the site is also open countryside…but where the 'built-up area' ends and the open countryside begins is not delineated on any LP map. However, paragraphs 4.80 to 4.85 of the LP seek to define the 'built-up area' to assist in the application of LP policies. Thus, the 'built-up area' is considered to be a distinct group of buildings that includes 30 or more homes. 'Built-up areas' include residential, community, retail and employment buildings which are predominantly surrounded by other buildings. There is no dispute between the parties that the buildings within the site form part of the built-up area.

8. Land which relates more to the group of buildings rather than to the surrounding countryside is also considered to form part of the 'built-up area'. Thus, it is possible for sport and recreation facilities, such as the manege, to be considered as part of the 'built-up area'. The manege has buildings close to its eastern and southern sides. It also has a line of trees along its northern edge, located on part of the northern boundary of the site. The buildings and the trees separate the eastern half of the site, physically and visually, from the surrounding countryside, which results in it being read as part of the 'built-up area' rather than the countryside. As such, I consider that the land up to the western boundary of the manege falls within the 'built-up area'. Consequently, I consider the land west of the western boundary of the manege, which is approximately half of the site, to lie within the countryside, separate from the 'built-up area' and not well-related to it.

9. Bearing in mind my conclusion above regarding the boundary between the 'built-up area' and the countryside, the indicative plans suggest that up to 6 dwellings and a required turning area would result in the proposed development encroaching into, and therefore eroding, the countryside. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area. As such, the proposal would not accord with LP policies LP 9, LP 10, LP 11 and LP 12 which, collectively, and among other things, allow for development within the built-up area of small settlements or land well-related to it, restrict development to specific opportunities provided for in other LP policies (which the proposal does not satisfy), support development that responds positively to its context and require development to contribute positively to the area's character.

Other Matters

10. The National Planning Policy Framework supports the Government's objective to significantly boost the supply of housing. Although the Council can currently demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land it is acknowledged that this is not a maximum. The provision of 5 additional dwellings (over and above the one that would be demolished) would make a positive contribution to the provision of housing within the area, to which I attach moderate weight. I note that permission has previously been granted for 2 dwellings, broadly within the area where the buildings to the rear of the existing dwelling are located. There are no insurmountable issues in respect of all highway matters, residential amenity, ecology and drainage. I accept that, given the existing tree line along the northern boundary of the site, and the extent of land within the ownership of the appellant, a suitable landscaped edge could be provided around what I deem to be the 'built-up area'. The site is within a sustainable location, with access to some services and facilities and the proposal would help sustain the rural community. The location provides access to some bus services and some

opportunities for walking and cycling would be provided. I also acknowledge that the proposal would provide some economic benefits. However, these considerations, neither individually or collectively, outweigh the harm to the character of the area, due to encroachment into and erosion of the countryside, I have identified.

11. The appellant has drawn my attention to other housing developments that have either been considered or allowed in the area. However, I do not have the full details of any of these schemes and therefore cannot be sure that they are comparable in all respects to the proposal before me.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons outlined above, I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

J Williamson
INSPECTOR