



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 December 2019

by K Savage BA MPlan MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 January 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/A2470/W/19/3237829

**Country Lounge Cafe & Bar, 5 Glaston Road (A47), Morcott, Oakham
LE15 9DL**

- 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 A Freeman against the decision of Rutland Council.
 - The application Ref 2019/0005/FUL, dated 3 January 2019, was refused by notice dated 29 March 2019.
 - The development proposed was originally described as: Erection of five holiday chalets with associated storage facilities and car parking adjacent to the existing Country Lounge cafe and bar.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr A Freeman against Rutland Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Procedural Matter

3. The description of development on the application form refers to five chalets; however, this appears to have been an error as the plans and supporting information relate to four chalets, and the Council advertised the application as such. I have therefore considered the appeal as being for four chalets.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the proposal would represent a suitable location for tourism development.

Reasons

5. The appeal site lies adjacent to a cluster of roadside development on the A47 road at the village of Morcott, which includes a petrol filling station, repair garage and shop, a hotel and the Country Lounge Café & Bar, which has accommodation within the building. The proposed chalets would be located on an undeveloped area of land to the side of the Country Lounge and to the rear of the garage/shop building. Whilst this surrounding development forms the immediate context of the appeal site, all of it lies beyond the settlement limits of Morcott and is regarded as being in the countryside for planning purposes. This was evident at my site visit where the site adjoins open fields to the side and rear, with the wider countryside visible for a distance in several directions.

6. The Council does not take issue with the design of the chalets or their effect on the character and appearance of the area. The Council's concern instead relates to the location of the chalets and resulting reliance by visitors on the private car to travel, along with a lack of evidence to demonstrate a need for the chalets to be located where they are proposed.
7. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) supports sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside.¹ It also recognises that sites to meet local needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport, but adds that developments should exploit any opportunities to make a location more sustainable, such as improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport.²
8. Locally, Policy CS1 of the Rutland Core Strategy (July 2011) (the CS) sets out principles of sustainable development, including minimising the need to travel and locating development wherever possible where services and facilities can be accessed safely on foot, by bicycle or public transport. Policy CS4 seeks to direct development to the most sustainable locations and states that, in the countryside, development will be strictly limited to that which has an essential need to be located there and restricted to particular types of development which support the rural economy. Policy CS15 supports new overnight accommodation in line with the location strategy of Policy CS4, and where the development would benefit local communities and support the local economy.
9. Policy CS7 of the Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document (October 2014) (the SAP) supports non-residential development in the countryside which is, amongst other things, essential for provision of visitor facilities for which the countryside is the only appropriate location. This support is subject to a number of criteria, including that the development would be in an accessible location and would not generate an unacceptable increase in the amount of traffic movements including car travel. Policy SP25 of the SAP sets similar criteria.
10. The location of the appeal site next to the A47 main road and the self-catering nature of the chalets would encourage arrival of visitors by private modes of transport, as those staying for extended periods would need to bring provisions and equipment, unlike hotel or B&B stays, which would be impractical to bring by public transport. The nearest bus stop is some 650 metres away in Morcott, operating a two hourly service between Uppingham and Stamford and calling at Rutland Water. Though the bus stop is walkable along a footpath, the limited service, with no buses in the evenings or on Sundays, would inevitably restrict its utility for visitors to the chalets.
11. I recognise that self-catering chalets are often located away from built-up areas, as their attraction lies in factors such as a quiet environment, proximity to nature and countryside views. Indeed, many occupants may be more willing to walk or cycle longer distances for recreational purposes, and the appellant points out nearby cycling routes, though the closest is some 1.5 miles away. However, the start of any journey on foot or by bicycle would be along the A47, which I saw to be a consistently busy and noisy main road with traffic travelling

¹ Paragraph 83

² Paragraph 84

at speed. To my mind, these road conditions would not encourage visitors to choose walking or cycling over the car.

12. While the convenience store and public house are clearly accessible on foot and would offer value to visitors by providing a place to eat and drink and somewhere to pick up a few essentials, they would be unlikely to meet all the needs of those taking self-catering holidays. Moreover, Morcott does not offer other facilities beyond a church and a second public house. Given the distances visitors would therefore have to walk or cycle to reach other services or attractions, and by way of the busy A47, I find that the location of the chalets would not encourage use of sustainable modes of transport, but would instead prompt the majority of additional journeys to be taken by the private car.
13. I recognise that there is broad support for tourism development within the CS and the Discover Rutland's Tourism Vision 2016-2019 document. However, this policy support is not unqualified, but is subject to specific criteria in respect of location and accessibility by sustainable means of transport, which I have found would not be met. Moreover, beyond the proximity to the immediately adjacent facilities, the evidence before me does not persuasively demonstrate that it would be essential for the chalets to be located at the appeal site. For the reasons set out, therefore, I find that the proposal would not represent a suitable location for tourism accommodation and would thus conflict with Policies CS1, CS4, CS15, SP7 and SP25 and the stated aims of the Framework.
14. In reaching a view, I acknowledge that the proposed chalets would add to the amount and range of tourist accommodation in the area; however, this benefit would arise regardless of the location chosen. I also note the appellant's indication of strong demand for the chalets which would contribute to the rural economy; however, this contribution would be modest in scale given the small number of units proposed. As such, I afford these benefits limited weight overall.
15. I have had regard to a number of planning permissions referenced by the appellant which were granted for purportedly similar development, and to two appeal decisions referenced by the Council. Whilst there are some similarities in either the location or type of development, I do not have full details of the site circumstances or the evidence before the Council/Inspectors in each case to determine if they are comparable to the appeal before me. This limits the weight I afford to them and I have considered the appeal on its own merits.
16. Although no objection was raised in respect of highway safety, living conditions or design, these are neutral matters weighing neither for nor against the proposal in the planning balance.

Conclusion

17. The proposal results in conflict with the development plan which is not outweighed by the limited benefits of additional tourist accommodation and rural economic activity. There are no other material considerations, including the Framework, which indicate that a decision should be made at variance with the development plan. For these reasons, the appeal is dismissed.

K Savage

INSPECTOR