
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 February 2020

by S Tudhope LLB (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 March 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/W3520/W/19/3238658

Part OS 8814, (Between Grange Cottage & Grange Bungalow), Weybread Road, Syleham IP21 4LW

- 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 Ms Wendy Revell against the decision of Mid Suffolk District Council.
 - The application Ref DC/19/01669, dated 4 April 2019, was refused by notice dated 5 June 2019.
 - The development proposed is Erection of 2 No Dwellings & Garages and associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matters

2. The address of the site is set out in slightly different ways on the application form, appeal form and the Council's decision notice. I have used the address from the application form.
3. The application was submitted in outline with all matters reserved for future consideration. I have assessed the appeal on this basis and treated the site layout plan as being submitted for indicative purposes.
4. The Council refers to Policy H10 of the Mid Suffolk Local Plan 1998 (MSLP) in their decision notice. This policy deals with dwellings for key agricultural workers. There has been no evidence provided that this appeal relates to a dwelling for an agricultural worker, and as such, this policy is not relevant to the determination of this appeal. I have dealt with the appeal on this basis.

Main Issues

5. The main issue is whether the proposed development would be in a suitable location having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), local planning policies and accessibility to services and facilities.

Reasons

Location of development

6. The appeal site is a parcel of agricultural land, currently fallow, situated on the north side of Weybread Road, Syleham. The site constitutes a break in linear

development which extends westward to Wingfield Road. To the east a single, two storey dwelling, set within a generous plot, marks the end of built form along this road. A single storey dwelling is situated to the west of the site and a farm complex is opposite. To the rear of the site is an open agrarian landscape.

7. Syleham village is designated as countryside by Policy CS1 of the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy 2008 (MSCS). The appeal site therefore lies within the open countryside for planning policy purposes. Policy CS1 states that in the countryside, development is restricted to particular types of development listed in Policy CS2. The appeal scheme is not for any type of development supported and is therefore contrary to Policy CS2.
8. Policies FC1 and FC1.1 of the Mid Suffolk Local Development Framework Core Strategy Focused Review 2012 (CSFR) aim to ensure that development proposals reflect a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This is interpreted and applied locally to the Mid Suffolk context through the MSCS and CSFR.
9. I conclude that the proposal would be contrary to the spatial strategy in Policy CS1 and CS2 of the MSCS, as it would encompass housing outside a defined settlement boundary. This conflict also results in the proposal being contrary to Policies FC1 and FC1.1 of the CSFR which require, amongst other things, proposals to contribute to meeting the objectives and policies of the MSCS.

Accessibility to services and facilities

10. Even though the site is not isolated in the context of the Framework and does not fall to be considered under Paragraph 79 of the Framework, there are no day-to-day services or facilities within the village. The surrounding roads are narrow, unlit and without footpaths. It is undisputed between the parties that future occupiers would be reliant on private motor vehicles to access services and facilities.
11. The nearest settlement designated as a 'key service centre' is approximately 3 miles from Syleham where schools, shops and other facilities can be accessed. Although this would be a short journey, a significant number of regular journeys would be highly likely to be further afield, to larger settlements, in order to access a full range of services, facilities and employment opportunities. I consider that in this particular location the addition of two dwellings would add significantly to the journeys which already occur from this location. The proposed development would not therefore provide a suitable location for housing in respect of accessibility to services and facilities.
12. I conclude that the proposal would conflict with saved Policy H7 of the MSLP, Policies CS1 and CS2 of the MSCS, and Policies FC1 and FC1.1 of the CSFR which jointly seek, amongst other things, to control development in the countryside, direct development to higher order settlements which have a greater range of services and facilities, define the types of development that would be appropriate in the countryside and support the presumption in favour of sustainable development. For the same reasons it would also fail to promote walking, cycling and public transport use as advocated by the Framework and would conflict with paragraph 103 of the Framework which seeks to maximise sustainable transport solutions whilst recognising that these will vary between urban and rural areas.

Other Matters

13. The appellant has indicated that the Highway Authority has not objected to the proposal and no concerns have been raised in respect of contaminated land, archaeology or impacts on the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring properties. These are matters that would be required by the Council's policies for all development and therefore have neutral weight in relation to the proposal.
14. The appellant also suggests that with the Government support for a switch to electric powered cars, travel distances to services and facilities become increasingly less important when fossil fuels are not being consumed. Whilst this may be the case, I have no evidence to suggest that future occupiers would utilise this technology nor any means by which to require them to do so. Such future potential for reliance on greener technology does not alter my consideration that the site would be an unsuitable location for new housing.
15. The Parish Council have indicated support for the proposal, stating that it would be a small infill development on a scale the village can absorb. Whilst I acknowledge this support, I have no substantive evidence to demonstrate that the proposal would enhance or maintain the vitality of the community, or that it would meet an identified local need. Therefore, I give this matter neutral weight in my considerations.

Planning Balance

16. The Council has confirmed that its housing land supply position is set out in its position statement published September 2019, which demonstrates that they have a supply of 5.66 years. I have no substantive evidence before me to suggest otherwise. However, irrespective of the housing supply position, there is no dispute between the parties that the policies most important for determining the application (CSFR Policy FC1 and Policies CS1 and CS2 of the MSCS) are out-of-date and that paragraph 11 d) of the Framework applies. This states that permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies of the Framework as a whole.
17. The proposal would have economic benefits in terms of creating short-term employment through the construction of the development and by future occupiers supporting local businesses. However, as it is for only 2 dwellings, the economic benefits would be very modest. The proposal would comply with the Framework policy to boost the supply of housing, but this contribution would be limited and would not contribute to any identified shortfall. In addition, no concern has been raised in respect of any harm to the character and appearance of the area. Nonetheless, this would be a requirement of any new development and this matter is therefore neutral in the balance.
18. Against these limited benefits, the proposal would result in a high dependency on the use of private motor vehicles for access to services. As such it would conflict with the Framework policies that seek to minimise the need to travel and promote the use of sustainable transport. I give this matter considerable weight.
19. Overall, I find that the adverse impacts of the proposed development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against

the policies of the Framework when taken as a whole. Therefore, the proposal would not represent sustainable development.

Conclusion

20. For the above reasons the appeal is dismissed.

S Tudhope
Inspector