
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 February 2020

by Edwin Maund BA (Hons) MSc Dip UP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7th April 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/V0510/W/19/3236247

14A The Cotes, Soham CB7 5EP

- 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 H Edwards against the decision of East Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/00042/FUL, dated 8 January 2019, was refused by notice dated 14 June 2019
 - The development proposed is the conversion of an existing building to a dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - Whether the site is a suitable location for the development proposed, having regard to access to local services and facilities; and
 - the effect of the proposed development on the local housing land supply.

Reasons

Accessibility

3. The appeal site is located off a narrow lane within a small group of dwellings in a rural area. This narrow lane is a private road of approximately 200m in length which links to the main road. To the west parallel to this is Blackberry Lane a footpath which also provides vehicular access to the site.
4. The building to be converted is situated to the north of the existing property and a separate detached annexe. The building is a single storey brick structure which already has the appearance of a detached bungalow, with double glazed windows and doors. The fixtures and fittings had not been finalised but the inside at the time of my visit was laid out as a three bedroomed bungalow with one ensuite, a family bathroom, kitchen/diner, utility room and separate lounge.
5. The appeal site sits some 600m outside the town envelope and the main facilities and services are around 1.5km away. The adjoining section of road has no footpath and is unlit. Due to the distance involved and the unsuitability

for pedestrians, I consider the occupiers of the proposed dwelling would be highly reliant upon the car to gain access to facilities and services.

6. Previous appeal decisions have been brought to my attention for this site and an adjacent site, for both a dwelling and annexe. In each case the Inspectors found the site to be poorly located relative to local services and facilities. I have seen nothing at my visit, or in the written evidence before me that would suggest any change in circumstances which would lead to a different conclusion in respect of the reliance upon the car to access facilities and services.
7. I consider therefore the proposal would be in conflict with policy GROWTH 2 and ENV 2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2015) which amongst other things seeks to direct new development to the most sustainable locations, provide good access to public transport and reduce the need to travel.

Housing Land Supply

8. The Council accepts it is unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites in accordance with paragraph 73 of the Framework. As such, relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date and paragraph 11 (d) should be applied. The Council does not dispute this position.
9. The Council have confirmed that at their most recent assessment the supply was down to 3.70 years, a significant shortfall, which I attribute significant weight.
10. The Framework defines the three facets to sustainable development as, social, economic and environment. These facets need to be considered jointly and are mutually dependent on one another.
11. There would be a social benefit in providing one extra house and a small economic benefit from its occupation, which would make a contribution towards the aims of the Framework as expressed in paragraph 78 in supporting local services and facilities. However, this contribution would be modest in scale and as such I have accorded it only minimal weight in my decision.
12. However, I must weigh this against the substantial environmental harm which would result from the creation of an additional dwelling in the countryside where occupiers would be heavily reliant upon the car to access facilities and services. There would also be significant social harm in having a further dwelling distant from community facilities, contrary to the approach encouraged in the Framework at paragraph 102.
13. When assessed against the policies in the framework taken as a whole, the adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. Therefore, the proposal would not be a sustainable form of development. The conflict with the development plan is not outweighed by other considerations including the Framework.

Other Issues

14. The appellant has referred to a planning permission granted at 27 The Cotes Soham, which the Council advise was issued in error. In these circumstances, I do not consider it could be regarded as a precedent although I can understand the frustration for the appellant.

15. Reference was additionally made to appeals in Suffolk and Norfolk. Limited details have been provided for me against which any comparison could be made as to how similar they are to the appeal proposal. Moreover, each application must be considered on its own merits.
16. The appellant has additionally expressed concerns in respect of the conduct of the Committee in coming to their decision, however the appeal process limits the matters which I can consider to only the planning merits of the case.

Conclusions

17. For the reasons given I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

Edwin Maund

INSPECTOR