
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 October 2019

by S D Castle BSC(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14th April 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/W/19/3225647

Rose Villa, Little Heath, Gamlingay SG19 3LL

- 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 Manley against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref S/3066/18, dated 09 August 2018, was refused by notice dated 04 October 2018.
 - The development proposed is 2 new 4 bed detached houses with associated parking and garages.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this appeal are
 - Whether or not the appeal site is a suitable location for new housing; and
 - The effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Location

3. The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 (SCLP) uses development frameworks to define where policies for the built-up areas of settlements give way to policies for the countryside. The development would result in 2 additional dwellings in the countryside, outside of any defined development framework. It would be contrary to SCLP Policy S/7 which seeks to restrict housing development in the countryside in order to prevent encroaching urbanisation of the countryside and to prevent incremental growth in areas with few services and little or no public transport.
4. Little Heath does not include any key services or facilities, such as a primary school, playground, public house or shops. The nearest such facilities are located at Gamlingay, an identified Minor Rural Settlement by SCLP Policy S/9. The route from the site to Gamlingay is, in significant part, unlit and without footways or any specific facilities for cyclists. As such, there would likely be a limited use of walking and cycling to access services given the conditions of the route and the distances involved. I have no evidence of the frequency and reliability of any public transport serving Little Heath. These factors would

significantly reduce the likelihood that car trips to local services would be replaced by more sustainable transport modes.

5. Rose Villa and its outbuildings are located at the northern end of the site. The appeal site is, however, predominantly undeveloped. The proposed dwellings would not be contained within the existing built form of Little Heath, rather they would project and encroach into the open countryside.
6. The appeal site is not, therefore, a suitable location for housing as it conflicts with SCLP Policy S/7 which seeks to restrict development outside of development frameworks. Policy S/9 of the Local Plan is not relevant to the harm identified, as it relates to development within identified development frameworks.

Character & Appearance

7. The appeal site is located within the hamlet of Little Heath, a semi-rural settlement located to the south west of the larger village of Gamlingay. Little Heath is characterised by a mix of residential, equestrian, agricultural and some commercial uses, all located off an unmade access road. The dwellings include a wide range of designs and finishes but are predominantly detached and set back from the highway within sizable plots. Rose Villa, a gable roofed bungalow, and a number of outbuildings, are located at the northern end of the site. The majority of the site is, however, undeveloped and does not appear distinctly separate from the adjoining agricultural land to the south and east. The mix of rural uses, variety in design of dwellings and open spaces between dwellings gives Little Heath its distinct semi-rural character.
8. Whilst recent developments have resulted in a more built-up character to Little Heath, the appeal site continues to provide a valuable undeveloped gap in the settlement. The undeveloped area of the site allows for significant views into the surrounding open countryside, linking the settlement to the wider rural area and contributing significantly to the semi-rural character of Little Heath. This site is particularly prominent in the street scene due to its focal location on the outside corner of a 90-degree bend in the road. The proposed detached dwellings, given their relatively uniform arrangement and appearance, would lead to a significantly more urbanised street scene, adversely affecting the semi-rural character and appearance of Little Heath. Whilst there is sufficient space around the dwellings for significant landscaping, this would not maintain the undeveloped character of the site or the visual link into the open countryside. The development would, therefore, represent a harmful urbanising encroachment into the countryside at this focal location.
9. The proposal is, therefore, harmful to the character and appearance of the area contrary to SCLP Policy HQ1 which requires development to preserve or enhance the character of the area and to create a positive sense of place whilst also responding to the local context and respecting local distinctiveness. Nor would the proposal accord with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), including paragraph 127 which has similar aims.

Other Matters

10. The Council advises that it is now able to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites and this position has not been challenged by the appellant's submissions. Furthermore, the most recent Housing Delivery Test

measurement of 95%¹ has no consequences for how planning applications for the supply of housing will be determined. As such, the conflict with the recently adopted policies relating to settlement boundaries carries full weight.

11. I have had regard to the appeal cases put before me, including the outline permission granted immediately to the north of Rose Villa². That appeal related to a single dwelling on a significantly smaller and less prominent plot that is more contained by existing built form than this proposal. As such, the effect of the current proposal on the character and appearance of the area would be substantially different. I have also had regard to the permissions for housing granted by the Council put before me. Those permissions, and the above referred appeal decision, were determined prior to the adoption of the SCLP and when the Council had a different housing land supply position. In light of the adoption of the SCLP, the policy context has changed and the appeal proposal falls to be determined with regard to these up to date policies. The appeal decision and permissions referred by the appellant have, therefore, been afforded limited weight in this decision given their material differences when compared to the circumstances of this appeal.
12. I have also had regard to the recent appeal decisions for dwellings in Little Heath referred to by the Council³. Both were determined after the adoption of the SCLP and conclude that, given conflict with Policy S/7, the appeal sites are not in a suitable location for the new housing proposed. Notwithstanding all the above referred appeals and previous planning permissions, I have considered the appeal on its own merits.
13. I acknowledge that the proposal would result in some economic and social benefits, including through its construction and as a result of a slight increase in spending and patronage of services in the local area in accordance with paragraph 78 of the Framework. The proposal would also make a limited contribution to the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. I am aware of the importance of windfall housing and that housing targets should not be considered as a cap on the delivery of housing. I also note that existing wildlife habitats will be protected and enhanced, and that the dwellings would be built to a high standard in regard to sustainability and energy efficiency. However, as the proposal is for only 2 dwellings, the benefits identified attract limited weight.

Conclusion

14. Overall, there are no material considerations, either individually or in combination, of sufficient weight to outweigh the identified conflict with the development plan, nor do they indicate that the proposal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan.
15. For the above reasons, the appeal is dismissed.

S D Castle

INSPECTOR

¹ Housing Delivery Test 2019 – Published 13 February 2020

² APP/W0530/W/17/3188047

³ APP/W0530/W/18/3209141 & APP/W0530/W/18/3212778