
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 March 2020

by S Tudhope LLB (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 April 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/K2610/W/19/3238309

Land adjacent to Pinewood Farm, Grange Road, Hainford, Norwich NR10 3BJ

- 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 Mr M Simper against the decision of Broadland District Council.
 - The application Ref 20190723, dated 26 April 2019, was refused by notice dated 24 June 2019.
 - The development proposed is a dwelling and garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The application was made in outline with all matters reserved. I have had regard to the submitted plans but have considered all elements of these drawings as indicative.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are (i) whether the site would be in a suitable location for the proposed development having regard to the development strategy for the area and accessibility to services and facilities; (ii) the effect of the proposed development on highway safety; and (iii) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Location and access to services and facilities

4. Policy GC2 of the Broadland District Council Development Management Development Plan Document 2015 (DM) sets out that new development, unless according with a specific allocation and/or policy of the development plan, and which does not result in any significant adverse impact, will be accommodated within settlement limits. The site is located outside of the settlement boundary of Hainford and is therefore within the countryside for planning policy purposes.
5. Policy GC2's supporting text explains that a settlement hierarchy is in place to achieve growth targets in a sustainable way and seeks to focus residential developments in settlements which are well-linked and well-related to existing development, services, facilities and employment opportunities.

6. The appeal site is situated to the north of Grange Road outside of the designated settlement boundary. Hainford is defined as an “other village” by Policy 16 of the Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk 2014 (JCS) which indicates that there are limited facilities and public transport links. These include a primary school, a public house, a recreational area and I am advised that a limited bus service to the nearest larger centres is available.
7. Given the village has limited services and facilities, occupiers of the proposed development would have to travel onwards for services and facilities in higher order settlements. The evidence indicates that the site is not well served by public transport. In addition, there are no footpath links from the site and the roads are narrow and unlit. I therefore consider that occupiers of the proposed development would be likely to be highly reliant on private motor vehicles to access community facilities such as shopping, employment, healthcare, leisure and entertainment. Whilst dependence on private vehicles may be expected in more rural locations, the proposal would only exacerbate this level of reliance. Although the appeal site is not isolated, this matter does not address the lack of accessible local services.
8. I conclude that the site would not be in a suitable location for the proposed development having regard to the development strategy for the area and accessibility to services and facilities. The proposal would conflict with DM Policy GC2 and the sustainability requirements of DM Policy GC1. The proposal would also be contrary to Policies 1, 6 and 16 of the JCS which each promote access to services and the use of sustainable transport.

Highway Safety

9. The access to the site is via a private drive from Grange Road. There is restricted visibility from the access at its junction with Grange Road. This highway has no footpath provision and is unlit. The access is of narrow width adjacent to the junction and the lack of passing and/or turning facilities along the length of the access makes it likely that vehicles entering the access would on occasion meet exiting users, resulting in vehicles reversing out onto the highway. This would be to the detriment of the safety of other users of the highway including pedestrians.
10. I accept that Grange Road is not a particularly busy road and that traffic speeds are low. I am also cognisant that there are existing vehicular movements associated with the current use of the site, although there is disagreement between the parties as to the level of movements generated. However, the stated movements are not directly comparable with the level of movements that the proposed development would generate, as they do not account for the additional movements that would result from the proposal itself.
11. The evidence indicates that the existing business use is quite low key and there is no indication that the static caravan has been used other than for ancillary purposes and would not therefore be likely to generate any separate movements. I have carefully considered the totality of the highway evidence before me, including the references to related traffic surveys. Nevertheless, it remains that there is potential for conflict between vehicles, and between vehicles and pedestrians, when using the access onto Grange Road.

12. I therefore conclude that the proposal would result in unacceptable harm to highway safety. Thus, it would conflict with DM Policy TS3 which resists development where it would result in any significant adverse impact upon the satisfactory functioning or safety of the highway network.

Character and appearance

13. The appeal site is situated to the north of Grange Road and the private drive currently serves two dwellings. These dwellings lie to one side of the site and agricultural land borders the rear boundary and part of the other side boundary. The site fronts onto the private drive with an existing access onto this drive positioned in the south east corner of the site.
14. The character of the area is semi-rural with domestic curtilages generally backing onto agricultural land. Although I do not consider the site to be an infill plot, it is situated adjacent to dwellings, and appears as a parcel of land in a line with other domestic boundaries and distinct from the neighbouring agricultural field. As such, the proposed development would be capable of following the existing pattern of development without extending beyond an existing boundary or encroaching onto agricultural land.
15. Any views of the proposed development would be limited and would be within the context of the grouping of other dwellings. I do not consider that the scheme would remove a buffer between the existing development and the wider countryside. I conclude that the proposal would not have an unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the area.
16. I therefore find no conflict with DM Policies GC4 and EN2 which seek to protect the character and appearance of the area.

Other matters

17. I have been referred to a recent planning permission for a new dwelling which would be accessed from the same private driveway as the appeal proposal. Although the highway authority also objected to that scheme, the precise circumstances were not the same as the appeal proposal. That scheme was situated within the designated settlement boundary. In addition, it was considered by the Council that the proposal would result in a comparable number of vehicular movements along the access as was already in existence in connection with that particular site. In any case, I have considered this appeal on its own merits.
18. The appellant has made reference to extracts from reports by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs¹ and the National Housing Federation² with regard to their findings about the numbers of home workers in rural areas and housing supply problems in rural areas. Mention is also made to a review of the rural economy and housing by Lord Taylor. In addition, I have been referred to the Housing White Paper's³ acknowledgement of the ongoing problems with housing supply in rural areas; the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) confirmation that all settlements can play a role in delivering sustainable development in rural areas; and a further Government document⁴ which notes

¹ Rural Home Working (date not provided).

² Broken Market, Broken Dreams (date not provided).

³ Fixing our Broken Housing Market (date not provided).

⁴ Towards a One Nation Economy: A Ten Point Plan for Boosting Productivity in Rural areas 2015.

that lack of housing in rural areas is a particular constraint to entrepreneurial mobility. However, these documents should be read alongside and in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and other parts of the PPG which seek to guide housing to the most suitable locations. For the reasons given above, this would not be a suitable location for the proposed dwelling. As such, the information provided does not alter my findings on the main issues.

Planning balance

19. The appellant considers that the Council's housing land supply position is not clear and has referred me to an appeal decision⁵ which he considers supports his assertion. However, as part of the appeal the Council has provided an update to its housing land supply and delivery position which is more recent than that appeal decision. The Council's Annual Monitoring Report 2017-2018, published October 2019, sets out that a deliverable 6.54 years supply of housing sites can be demonstrated across the joint Greater Norwich Authorities' area. This is based on the standard methodology for the calculation of Local Housing Need given that the Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk 2014 (JCS) is more than five years old, with the Broadland district demonstrating a supply of 7.33 years.
20. I have not been provided with any substantive, more up-to-date evidence to the contrary and therefore I have no reason to disagree with the Council's expressed position. I conclude that the evidence before me indicates that a five year supply of deliverable housing sites for the area can be demonstrated. Consequently, paragraph 11.d) of the Framework is not engaged.
21. The proposal would have economic benefits by way of the support for construction jobs during the build and indirect jobs at that stage in associated industries. There would be the support for services by future occupiers, the potential for delivery of an energy efficient property and the incorporation of unspecified measures for conserving and enhancing the natural environment. These benefits would be modest commensurate with the scale of development proposed. The proposal would boost the supply of housing as required by the Framework, but the contribution of one dwelling would be small and would not in this case contribute to any evidenced shortfall. In addition, the lack of harm to the character and appearance of the area and the potential for good design are essentially neutral matters in the overall planning balance.
22. The Framework places emphasis on managing patterns of growth to support objectives including opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use, and mitigating any adverse environmental impacts of traffic. I have found that the development would result in its future occupants being highly reliant on the use of private motor vehicles to access services and facilities, resulting in negative environmental effects. I have also found that the proposal would be harmful to highway safety. I attribute significant weight to the conflict with the most important development plan policies in this appeal.
23. Overall, I find that the benefits that would arise would not outweigh the harm caused by the proposal. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and there are no material considerations to outweigh this conflict.

⁵ APP/K2610/W/18/3205832

Conclusion

24. For the above reasons the appeal is dismissed.

S Tudhope
Inspector