
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 September 2019 by C McDonagh BA (Hons), MA

by Susan Ashworth BA (Hons) BPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19th May 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/L2630/W/19/3234180

Brick Kiln Farm, Cross Road, Starston, IP20 9NH

- 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 Samuel Carter against the decision of South Norfolk District Council.
 - The application Ref 2018/2577, dated 19 November 2018, was refused by notice dated 30 January 2019.
 - The development proposed is a new dwelling on the footprint of the former Cart Lodge.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue for consideration in this appeal is whether the site would be a suitable location for housing having regard to the access to facilities and services.

Reasons for the recommendation

4. The appeal site comprises the curtilage of Brick Kiln Farm, which includes the farmhouse, garden, hardstanding and a large agricultural building. Access is taken from that existing off Cross Road. The proposal involves the construction of a red brick, two-storey dwelling with a pantile roof. Evidently a building known as the 'Cart Lodge' once occupied this footprint, although there was nothing visible here at the time of the site visit. The site is bound by open fields on three sides and a dwelling on the other side.
5. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material circumstances indicate otherwise. In this case the relevant development plan is the South Norfolk Local Plan Development Management Policies Document (LP). Policy DM1.3 of the LP sets out the Council's development strategy to guide new development to sustainable locations in accordance with a settlement hierarchy. New development should normally be located within the defined

development boundaries of settlements and only in exceptional cases will development proposals in the countryside be supported including where other policies allow for development outside the boundary or the proposal demonstrates overriding benefits in terms of economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability.

6. The site is outside of the settlement boundary of Starston and is therefore in the countryside for planning policy purposes. No other policies which may have permitted the development have been drawn to my attention and I note that the Council can currently identify a 5 year supply of housing land, and an excess of available housing within countryside areas. There is no convincing evidence before me that disputes this.
7. I acknowledge that there would be a limited benefit to the economy through the initial construction of a further dwelling within the locality of Starston and subsequent investment into the local community. I also acknowledge the support of the Parish Council for this development and their desire to encourage housebuilding in the village in general to revitalise the community.
8. However, the Council's officer report states that Starston is classified as an 'Other Village' in the Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk (JCS), which indicates limited facilities and public transport are available. The town of Harleston is located circa 1.6km from the appeal site when travelling along Cross Road and Bunn's Lane and contains a range of services and facilities for nearby residents. However, while this distance could be walked or cycled, the route involves a single-track road with no street lighting or pavements. Accordingly, it would be unlikely that pedestrians or cyclists would regularly favour this route, particularly in hours of darkness, due to the unlit nature of the public right of way and the potential for high speed traffic along the highway. I therefore consider that occupiers of the proposed development would be likely to be reliant on the private car to access community facilities such as shopping, healthcare, leisure and entertainment. Evidently there is a local bus service, but I have not been provided with details as to whether frequent daily services are available or from where these depart/arrive relative to the appeal site.
9. Furthermore, Policy DM 3.10 of the South Norfolk Local Plan Development Management Policies Document (LP), states such development should seek to utilise all opportunities to integrate with local sustainable transport networks. Paragraph 103 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) suggests that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas. Nonetheless, increasing the number of dwellings in this location would increase the need to travel by private motorised transport which is the least sustainable travel option available. This would create additional pollution and wastage of natural resources, contrary to the aim of encouraging sustainable development. I would agree that the rise of internet use has facilitated access to some services such as banking, employment and shopping which has in turn reduced the need for occupiers to travel. However, this would not prevent trips to and from the site, for example by delivery vehicles, and would also fail to address the future occupiers' needs to access such things as education.
10. I acknowledge that the dwelling would lie within a cluster of three properties and has been designed to reflect the footprint and profile of the Cart Lodge.

The Council has not objected to the proposal on those grounds. However, this is a neutral matter rather than a benefit of the scheme. Whilst I note the appellant's assertion that this is a 'brownfield' site, there is limited evidence before me in that regard. The definition of previously developed land in the Framework specifically excludes land that is or was last occupied by an agricultural building.

11. I have taken into account that the proposed dwelling would be occupied by a family from within the local community and that there is local support for this. However, there is no evidence before me relating to local housing need and availability, and no mechanism to ensure that the dwelling would be occupied by a member of the community in perpetuity. This limits the weight I can give to the matter as a benefit of the scheme.
12. Accordingly, the scale of the development would determine that the limited benefits identified would not be significant in terms of their overall contribution to sustaining facilities and services and do not equate to the overriding benefits necessary to make the development acceptable in terms of Policy DM1.3.
13. The appellant has drawn my attention to an approved development of 3 dwellings in the area to highlight similarities between this example and the proposed. However, I have no details of this development, or the circumstances that led to its approval before me and cannot therefore be sure that it is directly comparable to the appeal proposal. As such, this is not determinative in favour of the proposal. Similarly, an extant permission on the site to rebuild the Cart Lodge is referred to by the appellant although there are limited details of this before me. Accordingly, whilst I have taken this into account as a material consideration, I have determined the appeal on its own merits.
14. Consequently, I conclude that the site would not be a suitable location for housing. It would not therefore accord with the sustainable development objectives of the Framework or Policies DM1.3 and DM3.10 of the LP. Together these seek to ensure that new development is located so that it positively contributes to sustainable development, minimises the need to travel and gives priority to low impact modes of transport.

Other Matters

15. The site lies adjacent to Starston Grange, a timber framed house dating from the C17, which is a Grade II listed building. S66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) requires me to have regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of the listed building. No objection has been raised by the Council on this matter.
16. I noted on site the proximity of a large agricultural building which already impacts on the setting of the listed building. Moreover, the proposed dwelling would be separated from the listed building by dense boundary treatment between the two properties and I therefore concur with the Council that in this context, the proposal would have a neutral impact and would thereby preserve the setting of the listed building in accordance with S66 (1) of the Act.

Recommendation

17. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

C McDonagh

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

18. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

S Ashworth

INSPECTOR