
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 June 2020

by William Cooper BA (Hons) MA CMLI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23rd June 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/F2415/W/19/3243092

Land adj. South Lodge, London Road, Great Glen, Leicester LE8 9DJ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Messrs J Pounds & S Singh against the decision of Harborough District Council.
 - The application Ref: 19/00843/OUT, dated 22 May 2019, was refused by notice dated 18th July 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as proposed development to create 3 number 3 bedroomed residential 'mews' style properties.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed

Procedural Matters

2. The appeal proposal relates to an outline planning application, with all matters reserved except for access and layout. Indicative details submitted with the planning application have been taken into account insofar as they are relevant to my consideration of the principle of the development on the appeal site.
3. Since the Council's decision, the updated Great Glen Neighbourhood Plan Review Referendum Version 2011 to 2031 (NP) was made in February 2020, and has become part of the development plan. The main parties have had opportunity to comment on the engagement of the NP in respect of the appeal proposal.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the proposed development's location is suitable, with particular regard to connection to settlements, local housing need and the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. The site is within the garden of the single-storey South Lodge dwelling. It contains a brick outbuilding and some hard surfacing. The site is bounded on two sides by an access drive which leads to Stoneygate School to the south-west.
6. The proposed development would form part of a loose cluster of properties along with South Lodge, the school, boarding kennels and dwellings at Nos 1 and 3 London Road. As such, the proposal would not constitute isolated development. Nevertheless, paragraph 79 of the National Planning Policy

Framework does not imply that a dwelling has to be 'isolated' in order for restrictive policies to apply, and there may be other circumstances when development in the countryside should be avoided.

7. Policy GG2 of the NP sets out an approach of careful control of development in the countryside beyond the Great Glen settlement boundary. Policy GD4 of the Harborough Local Plan 2011-2031 (2019) (LP) allows for the possibility of new housing in the countryside, including outside Rural Centres, in a limited range of circumstances. These include, under criterion 1.a, housing on small sites of no more than 4 dwellings which are within or physically and visually connected to settlements and which meet a local need for housing of a particular type, including small dwellings for the elderly and starter homes, where evidenced through a rural housing needs survey or a neighbourhood plan.
8. The appeal site is located in the countryside around 1km from the built-up edge of the village of Great Glen, and lies outside the latter's settlement boundary, as defined in the NP¹. Great Glen is categorised in the LP as a Rural Centre, offering a number of key services. The village has facilities including pub, Co-op store, village hall, church and medical centre.
9. From what I saw during my site visit, substantial intervening rural fields, and hedge and tree lines together contribute to a prevailing sense of separation between the main built-up area (BUA) of Great Glen village and the site. Moreover, the pavement between the BUA and the access to the site is of limited prominence and usability as it is narrow and unlit, and vegetation alongside it substantially draws the eye from it.
10. There is emphasis in supporting text paragraph 4.7.2 for Policy GD4 of the LP that restricting development in the countryside helps with reduction of carbon emissions by reducing travel distances and reliance upon the private car.
11. The site is a modest walk and a short drive time from the centre of Great Glen. The regular X3 bus service runs between Market Harborough and Great Glen, with a bus stop on London Road near the site. These are connecting factors, with some degree of non-car transport possible for future occupiers of the proposed dwellings. However, the following combination of factors dilute the connection, in transport terms, between the site and settlements: the need to access a wider range of services and facilities than is available in the village, including leisure and employment in the settlements of Leicester and Market Harborough; the lack of bus shelter at the stop near the site; and the unlit nature of the footpath from the site to the village. Consequently, the proposed development would result in substantial reliance on the private car by future occupiers of the proposed development.
12. The appellant considers that the site is sufficiently close to Great Glen to be considered to adjoin it. However, the above combination of factors leads me to find that, overall, the site is physically and visually more separate from than connected to the BUA. Therefore, the proposed location does not satisfy the connection part of criterion 1.a of Policy GD4 of the LP.
13. The need for smaller dwellings to give young people, families and older people who wish to downsize the opportunity to stay in Great Glen Parish is a key housing issue identified in the NP. This need is evidenced in the Great Glen

¹ Figure 3.

Parish Neighbourhood Plan Housing Needs Report June 2016. It is reflected in Policy GG4 of the NP, which requires that within the local housing mix, priority should be given to smaller family homes (3 bedrooms or fewer), starter homes, and those suitable for older people (especially those who wish to downsize).

14. The proposal is for three-bedroom homes, which the appellant has indicated could be detailed up to provide an appropriate mix of smaller properties at reserved matters stage. Given the above, it is likely that the proposed development would provide smaller homes, in accordance with the local housing need part of criterion 1.a of Policy GD4 of the LP, and Policy GG4 of the NP.
15. However, given that criterion 1.a of Policy GD4 of the LP requires a combination of the connection *and* local housing need tests to be met, the proposal would not fall within the limited range of circumstances for new housing in the countryside defined in the Policy.
16. Turning to the character and appearance of the area, Policy GG3 of the NP requires 'windfall' housing development to, amongst other things, b) avoid contributing to the outward extension of the BUA, and c) respect the shape and form of Great Glen.
17. Given the separation between the site and BUA described above, and the limited scale of proposed development, the proposal would not contribute to extension of the BUA. As such, it would not conflict with criterion b) of Policy GG3.
18. Appearance, landscaping and scale are yet to be addressed at reserved matters stage. Existing hedging in the vicinity would provide some screening of the proposed development. However, judging by the proposed site layout and indicative streetscene, the row of three dwellings would result in a noticeable step-up in residential built mass and associated domestic paraphernalia, including vehicles, in the countryside, both in its own right and cumulatively, in addition to nearby South Lodge. The above effects would be visible from the following viewpoints: looking towards the site from the road and pavement on London Road; from South Lodge and within the appeal site; and from the shared access drive to South Lodge and Stonegate School, which runs close to the eastern and southern perimeters of the appeal site.
19. Taking the above together, I find that the proposal would have a detrimental urbanising effect on, and erode the rural identity of, the countryside setting of the village of Great Glen. This would not respect the shape and form of Great Glen, which is characterised by the development focus within the BUA, the latter of which is articulated by the residential site allocation in the NP for around 10 dwellings within the village settlement boundary. Taking the above together, I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area. As such, it would conflict with Policy GD8 of the LP and with criterion c) of Policy GG3 of the NP, which together seek to ensure that development complements local character.
20. Drawing the strands together, the proposed development's location would not be suitable in respect of connection to settlements, and the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

21. I recognise that the proposal would respond to local need for smaller dwellings. Within the context of an undisputed supply in the district of deliverable housing sites of around seven years, the proposed three houses would make a modest contribution to local housing supply, with associated socio-economic benefit during and after construction. The proposed development would make efficient use of previously developed land. However the public benefit is limited by the scale of proposed development, and would not outweigh the totality of the identified harm and the conflict with the development plan.

Conclusion

22. For the reasons above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

William Cooper

INSPECTOR