



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 August 2020

by Michael Boniface MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 August 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/P0240/W/20/3248678

Road Farm, How End Road, Houghton Conquest, MK45 3JS

- 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 Kelly against the decision of Central Bedfordshire Council.
 - The application Ref CB/19/03304/FULL, dated 27 August 2019, was refused by notice dated 30 January 2020.
 - The development proposed is four new build bungalows following demolition of existing barn.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the site is a suitable location for the proposed development having regard to accessibility of local services and facilities.

Reasons

3. Policy CS1 of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (2009) (CS&DMP) sets out the development strategy for the area to focus development at the larger settlements and growth areas, with limited growth in rural areas. Policy DM4 defines the type of development that will be supported in different locations, within and beyond settlement envelopes. The appeal site is located in countryside, beyond any defined settlement envelope. There is agreement between the parties that the proposed development is in conflict with both policies CS1 and DM4 of the CS&DMP.
4. Although the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) now encourages development that would support thriving rural communities and seeks to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside rather than protect it, I do not consider Policy DM4 to be inconsistent with these objectives or otherwise out of date. The Framework also requires that patterns of growth are actively managed by the planning system and that is what these policies seek to do, apparently successfully given the Council's housing land supply position. I do not accept that the policy imposes a blanket ban on development in the countryside as provision for development considered acceptable in rural areas is made in other policies of the CS&DMP. Therefore, I attach significant weight to these policies.
5. The proposed bungalows would replace an existing dilapidated barn close to other residential properties and the hamlet of How End. However, there are no

services and facilities in the immediate locality, the nearest shop, pub and school being located in the village of Houghton Conquest, which is some distance away. Given the distance involved and the absence of footpaths on the winding country roads leading to the village, the likelihood of future residents walking to fulfil their day to day needs is very unlikely and the potential for supporting the vitality of the village, small.

6. A bus stop is located close to the site, served by an hourly service to larger settlements where a greater range of services and facilities are available. A community bus service also serves the area. Although these services would facilitate sustainable travel to some extent, recognising that the opportunities to maximise the use of sustainable transport varies between urban and rural locations, they would not mitigate the inherent absence of day to day facilities in this location and it is likely that new residents would quickly become reliant on private vehicles as a faster and more convenient alternative.
7. I note that the development would make a contribution towards local housing supply and mix, would make use of some previously developed land and would have some local economic benefits arising from the construction and habitation of the dwellings. The removal of an area lawfully used for the storage of materials might have some benefit to the living conditions of nearby occupants, though there is no evidence before me to suggest the use is currently problematic. These benefits attract limited weight given the scale of the development and the contribution that would be made.
8. There is a suggestion that the building to be demolished could be converted to a residential use using permitted development rights after following the prior approval process. There is insufficient information before me to conclude that this is the case but even it was, there is no suggestion that the number of dwellings proposed as part of this appeal could be achieved by such means. Therefore, such an alternative would not be as harmful as the appeal proposal and does not justify the proposed development.
9. I acknowledge that other residential developments have been granted planning permission in rural areas, but I have seen none that are directly comparable to that proposed in this appeal in terms of scale and location. The other schemes referenced do not alter my conclusion in relation to this case, which I have considered on its own merits.
10. The appeal site is not a suitable location for the development proposed and would lead to an unsustainable overreliance on private vehicles. The development would conflict with policies CS1 and DM4 of the CS&DMP. There are no material considerations that outweigh the harm I have identified or indicate a decision other than in accordance with the development plan.
11. In light of the above, the appeal is dismissed.

Michael Boniface

INSPECTOR