
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 August 2020

by I A Dyer BSc (Eng) MIHT

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 August 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/F2605/W/20/3248744

Beetley Nurseries, Elmham Road, Beetley NR20 4BP

- 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 & Mrs J Leveridge against the decision of Breckland Council.
 - The application Ref 3PL/2019/0796/F, dated 28 June 2019, was refused by notice dated 17 September 2019.
 - The development proposed is new detached two storey dwelling and garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. Since the planning application was determined, the Breckland Local Plan -2019- (the new Local Plan) has been adopted by the Council. The policies within the Breckland Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Development Plan Document -2009- are no longer extant. The parties have had an opportunity to comment on the new Local Plan in relation to the case during the appeal process.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are: -
 - Whether the site is a suitable location for a new dwelling having regard to local policy for the delivery of housing, and: -
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area with particular reference to the countryside.

Reasons

Suitable location for a dwelling

4. Beetley is a village identified in Policy GEN03 of the new Local Plan as a 'village with boundary'. The village retains a rural setting within open countryside. Within the village there are limited facilities and services, including a public house and school, together with bus services to the larger settlement of Dereham. A wider range of services is available in the nearby villages of North Elmham and Gressenhall, and the town of Dereham, which is some three miles away. Policy GEN05 restricts development outside the defined settlement boundaries to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Under Policy GEN05 development outside the defined settlement boundaries

- will only be acceptable where it complies with all relevant policies set out in the development plan, including, amongst others, Policy HOU04 which allows development immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary, subject to certain criteria.
5. The appeal site fronts onto Elmham Road and is part of a field laid to grass, but contains a number of trees. The site is bounded on two sides by mature hedging, including the side facing onto the road. These hedges provide a degree of screening of the development from the road and the village. Opposite the site, across Elmham Road lie open fields. Adjacent to the site lies Shortthorne Garden Centre which contains a number of buildings. Along Elmham Road development becomes increasingly sporadic, becoming open countryside, although beyond Shortthorne Garden Centre there is a recent development of holiday homes.
 6. There is no disagreement between the parties that the site lies outside the settlement boundary for Beetley as identified on the Proposals Map accompanying the new Local Plan. It is therefore designated as countryside. Together Policies GEN01, GEN03, and GEN05 establish a spatial strategy and development hierarchy that seek to protect countryside and concentrate development growth in more sustainable locations.
 7. Policy HOU04 allows development immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary, provided that it is supported by other policies within the development plan and satisfies other criteria, including the requirement that the development is of an appropriate scale and design to the settlement.
 8. Whilst not isolated from other buildings, the appeal site is separated from the settlement boundary by the intervening countryside, and the proposal would, therefore, be contrary to Policy HOU04.
 9. My attention has been drawn to a recent development on Green Lane¹. However I have little evidence regarding this development upon which to form an opinion as to whether it forms a direct contextual comparison to the proposal before me. I have, in any case, considered the proposal on its own merits.
 10. I therefore find that the proposal would not be a suitable location for a new dwelling having regard to local policy for the delivery of housing and is contrary to Policies GEN01, GEN03, GEN05 and HOU04 of the new Local Plan. For similar reasons the proposal would be contrary to the aims of those parts of the National Planning Policy Framework -2019- (the Framework) which seek to promote sustainable development whilst protecting the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

Character and appearance of the countryside

11. The proposal would extend development out into the open countryside along the open side of Elmham Road. The dwelling, together with its associated residential paraphernalia would increase the urbanisation of the countryside. Although screened from the road to a degree by the existing hedges this impact would be noticeable from the public highway. Whilst adjacent to existing buildings, the proposed dwelling would lie outside the perimeter of the group.

¹ Council Ref 3PL/2019/1062/O

In this context, the increased urbanisation of the countryside would constitute harm.

12. I therefore find that the proposal would result in harm to the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area and would, therefore, be contrary to Policies GEN02, GEN05, COM01 and ENV05 of the new Local Plan in as much as these require development to respect and be sensitive to the character of the surrounding area and make a positive architectural and urban design contribution to its context and location. For similar reasons the proposal would be contrary to the aims of paragraph 27 and Section 15 of the Framework, which have similar goals.
13. In as much as the proposal would be out-of-keeping with the character of the area it would also be contrary to Policy HOU04 of the new Local Plan, in that this requires that the development is of an appropriate scale and design to the settlement.

Other Matters

14. The development would provide benefits in terms of delivering an additional home to boost housing supply albeit that a single home would only have a limited benefit. The site is in the appellants' ownership and is available for development now and small sized sites are often built-out relatively quickly. There would be minor benefits to the local economy in terms of short term employment in the construction industry and longer term support to shops, businesses and facilities within the village.
15. However the site is some distance from the centre of the village and such facilities as there are within the village would need to be reached along unlit roads lacking footways. I have not been provided with any evidence relating to the frequency of bus services. It is likely, given the distances involved and nature of the intervening roads, which lack footways and lighting, that pedestrians and cyclists would be deterred from visiting these or the services in villages further afield. Although some opportunities exist for future occupants of the development to access the wider range of facilities and services further afield by more sustainable means, they would still be heavily reliant on the private car for their day-to-day needs.
16. Taken together, and given the scale of development, these limited benefits do not alter my overall conclusion.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above the appeal is dismissed.

I Dyer

INSPECTOR